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Peripheries of Power, Centers of Resistance: Anarchist Movements in Tampico & the  
Huasteca Region, 1910-1945

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies (History)

by

Kevan Antonio Aguilar

Committee in Charge:

Professor Christine Hunefeldt, Co-Chair  
Professor Michael Monteon, Co-Chair  
Professor Max Parra  
Professor Eric Van Young

2014



The Thesis of Kevan Antonio Aguilar is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Co-Chair

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University of California, San Diego

2014

DEDICATION:

For my grandfather, Teodoro Aguilar, who taught me to love history and to remember  
where I came from.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Peripheries of Power, Centers of Resistance: Anarchist Movements in Tampico & the  
Huasteca Region, 1910-1945

by

Kevan Antonio Aguilar

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies (History)

University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Christine Hunefeldt, Co-Chair

Professor Michael Monteon, Co-Chair

This thesis focuses on anarchist movements in the Mexican port city of Tampico from 1910 to 1945. Contrary to the objectives of the Mexican government, Tampico's anarchist communities resisted the institutionalization of revolutionary dissent. They utilized a variety of radical ideologies specific to the Huasteca region's social and cultural conditions to develop worker solidarity throughout the petroleum industry. By

analyzing this specific geographical space, a counter-narrative of the Mexican Revolution and its precedence is formed by assessing the significance of working class community interests in contrast to those of the post-revolutionary nation-state.

The purpose of this thesis is to explain the historical context in which anarchism formed in Tampico before and during the revolution. Secondly, it assesses the impact of anarchist consciousness amongst the region's petroleum workers throughout the 1920s. The thesis concludes with an examination of the institutionalization of labor conflict and its ramifications on radical movements in Tampico and throughout Mexico. My purpose is to provide insight into the port city's social, cultural, and political developments during the post-revolutionary period to problematize both the notion of the Mexican nation-state as well as worker's resistance to such manifestations.

## Introduction

During the summer of 1915, the small town of Rioverde became a hotbed of revolution. Located 132 kilometers east of the state capital of San Luis Potosí, the countryside heading towards the Huasteca Potosina erupted as the forces of Pancho Villa positioned themselves against the national government. At the same time, the newly formed Red Battalions of the Constitutionalist army travelled through Rioverde in search for the rebels. These battalions were formed with members of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*, an anarcho-syndicalist labor federation compiled of urban industrial and artisanal unions. Despite the contradictory alliance of anarchist groups collaborating with the government, *La Casa* was promised various labor concessions by the Constitutionalist government led by Venustiano Carranza. One morning, a local teenager named Zenón Aguilar watched his father and brother as they were executed by the anarchist militia as they worked in the sugar cane fields of Rioverde. Shortly before the attack, one of Zenón's brothers fled from his family's home to join the Constitutionlists, never to be seen again. Whether the attack was circumstantial or provoked by his brother's collaboration remained unknown. Nonetheless, the soldiers deemed the family a threat and imprisoned the young Zenón as his remaining relatives made plans to flee into the Huasteca region.

Zenon's family was accused of collaborating with the *Villistas*, or the *Zapatistas*, or some other rebel group, depending on the day you spoke to Zenón's younger sister Juana Villanueva-Rojas. Both Villa and Zapata were condemned by *La Casa* as reactionary threats that preferred traditional superstitions rather than the confederation's calls for modernity. When Zenón was released from the local jail, he and Juana boarded a

train heading towards the port city of Tampico, Tamaulipas where their mother and relatives had sought refuge. Fatherless and the oldest of the remaining sons, Zenón worked in the oil refinery and eventually joined the city's radical labor movement which had been developing throughout the course of the Revolution.<sup>1</sup> He would be joining a movement which was largely responsible for his family's persecution.

While Zenón resented the Constitutionalists who persecuted his family, a personal animosity towards anarchists did not deter his involvement in the unionization of Tampico's oil refineries and fields. Zenón's family states that although he was not particularly political, he believed in solidarity, mutual aid, and the ongoing struggle to better the lives of his family and fellow workers. The story of Zenón Aguilar is not that of a rank-and-file anarchist organizer, but the peculiar consequences of personal loss during Mexico's ten-year Revolution. Moreover, his story provides insight into the unique theoretical and practical development of anarchism in the Huasteca region's industrial center. Thousands of people from the Huasteca countryside followed similar routes of displacement due to the Revolution and eventually found work in the area's largest industry – petroleum. Unlike the formation of the Mexico City anarchist movement, opposition to tradition was a fruitless endeavor considering the amount of oil workers who moved between the port and their countryside homes. As the Revolution persisted, such migrations subsided and communities began to centralize, leaving the anarchists to determine how to develop a collective radical consciousness within Tampico's growing population.

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria Aguilar (daughter-in-law of Zenón Aguilar), January 26, 2014, San Bernardino, California.

The recruitment of what Julia del Palacio calls “transitional workers” in Tampico emerged surrounding the port’s historical relationship pertaining to geographical and political isolation.<sup>2</sup> For much of the city’s history since its foundation in 1823, Tampico’s economic significance remained disconnected to the rest of Mexico. Located on the country’s eastern Gulf coast, the city’s tropical location was more similar to neighboring Veracruz than the arid borderlands of its home state of Tamaulipas. Road conditions to the nation’s capital and neighboring cities such as San Luis Potosí, Ciudad Victoria, and Tula remained impassable during seasonal rains for most of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Despite the city’s isolation, it became the center of a wide array of national conflicts.

Between the years 1835 and 1840, five major insurrections occurred within Tampico, including the first French invasion of the city. In 1846, U.S. American naval ships blockaded and invaded the port, crippling its economic viability for two years.<sup>4</sup> These foreign invasions played a key role in the development of anti-imperialist sentiments among the region’s inhabitants during the twentieth-century. Much of this animosity was accentuated by port’s intrinsic economic link to the United States. During the late nineteenth century, approximately 78% of Tampico’s trade went to and from the United States.<sup>5</sup> Detached from the Mexican capital both geographically and economically, the

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<sup>2</sup> Julia del Palacio, “Peasants in the Oil Fields: Challenging State-Defined Citizenship Categories in Postrevolutionary Mexico” (paper presented at the Columbia University graduate student conference, “Questioning Spaces of Citizenship in Latin America and the Caribbean,” New York, New York, April 11, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Marcial E. Ocasio Meléndez, *Capitalism and Development: Tampico, Mexico, 1876-1924* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.



city's culture depended less on a collective national identity and more with the inhabitants who frequented the port for work or investment.

Foreign visitors remained a fixture of Tampico's population throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, yet the city's vastly indigenous population shifted towards a mestizo majority by the turn of the century. Due to Tampico's location on the Tamaulipas/Veracruz border, census data of the Veracruz's northern Huasteca region provides greater context to the city's demographic shift between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1885, 77,776 speakers of Otomí, Nahuátl, Tepehua, and Huastec inhabited Northern Veracruz, with Nahuátl speakers making up the largest demographic population of approximately 68%. The Spanish speaking population consisted of 59,612 inhabitants in 1885. By 1921, the region's population had a dramatic decrease in indigenous language speakers. With 44,449 indigenous language speakers, Spanish-speakers nearly doubled its size with 84,229 inhabitants.<sup>6</sup> While Tampico's population was significantly smaller than these demographic numbers (7,500 inhabitants in 1885 and a staggering 94,667 by 1921), the peripheral population's demography offers insight into a large portion of the transitional labor that worked in the Huasteca oil fields and refineries in and around Tampico.<sup>7</sup> With an ethnic population diverse though increasingly mestizo, a primary emphasis of anarchist organizing remained the collective class positions of the oil workers. The managerial class of the oil companies consisted of European and American owners and operators, thus perpetuating a distinct racial stratification.

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<sup>6</sup> Myrna Santiago, *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 29.

<sup>7</sup> Ocasio Meléndez, 257.

While pay remained relatively high within the petroleum industry, laborers experienced poor living and working conditions which became central points of contention. With the workers' families moving from the countryside to the city, education became an essential issue for labor organizers to resolve. As various anarchist unions formed among Tampico's working class population, they focused on providing lasting solutions to the problems experienced by workers which remained unresolved throughout the Mexican Revolution. Through their assessment of Tampico's political, cultural, and geographical regionalism, anarchist organizers developed a pragmatic societal structure that contrasted the Mexican state's objective to stabilize the national economy through capitalism and modernization. As Tampico's working class continued to mobilize well into the post-revolutionary period of the 1920s, attempts to suppress the radical labor movement developed through the institutionalization with the assistance of reform-orientated union leaders. While the Mexican government successfully stifled the labor movement's capacity to provoke mass insurrection by the end of the decade, the cultural and ideological foundations established by Tampico's anarchists persisted as a collective consciousness among the city's inhabitants throughout the 1930s. As the Mexican nation-state developed a cultural identity, anarchist organizers assessed their decreasing influence and focused on supporting international solidarity movements. Through the advancement of anarchist ideals as a cultural manifestation, Tampico's working class community developed a unique collective identity that emphasized revolutionary syndicalism, radical pedagogy, anti-imperialism, and internationalist solidarity.

These arguments contrast with the main current within the historiography of the Mexican working class, which proposes a mutual material interest between the post-

revolutionary government and laborers. Historian Alan Knight has claimed that the labor movement in Mexico emphasized development rather than a radical social revolution; an argument that has been upheld in other major studies of the Huasteca region's working class communities.<sup>8</sup> In turn, Knight's analysis downplays the significance of anarchist ideologies during and after the Mexican Revolution. The effects of such arguments perpetuate the homogenization of regionally-specific movements set within a broad national narrative that leaves a vague suggestion of circumstantial ambiguity.<sup>9</sup> However, Tampico's radical working class mobilizations suggest a significant counter-example in the history of the relationship between labor and the Mexican state.

Contrary to the primary tenets of developmentalism, the anarchists of the Gulf region adamantly rejected economic nationalism, patriotism, and land reform. While they certainly held onto ideals of anticlericalism - another major point in Knight's argument - they rejected economic nationalism in exchange for mutual aid and revolutionary syndicalism on both regional and international fronts. Moreover, anarchists and other regional movements preferred land expropriation over land reform. It is only through the later growth of the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* that a *nation-wide* developmentalist project emerged in Mexico. To maintain a thematic congruency, my thesis will focus solely on unions and organizations relating to Tampico's working class communities and omit discussions on the agrarian leagues that were also prominent

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<sup>8</sup> Works that focus on the role of developmentalism and the Mexican Revolution both nationally and among the Huasteca's working class communities: Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution Vol. 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986). Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution Vol. 2: Counter-revolution and Reconstruction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986). Johnathan C. Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Alan Knight "The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, c. 1900-1920," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 1. No. 1 (May, 1984), pp. 51-79.

during this period. My research attempts to problematize the analysis of any form of homogenous nation-based analysis of workers. Specifically, this work attempts to provide a historical context within a given space with social, cultural, and economic conditions not congruent to the more commonly used reference point of Mexico City.

Chapter 1 provides historical context to the early formations of Mexican anarchist movements during the first wave of European revolutionaries' migrations to Mexico beginning in the 1860s and their subsequent influence on the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). This portion of the thesis will also provide an analysis of two distinct tendencies that develop based on geographical spaces: anarchism in the countryside and anarchist formations in the city. While often viewed as interrelated within the historiography of Mexican anarchist movements, I argue that geographical spaces influenced the development of differing forms of anarchism during and after the Mexican Revolution. Using Tampico as an example of what I refer to as peripheral anarchism – the fusion of anarchist ideologies within geographical and political spaces located outside of the State's influence – I intend to demonstrate how radical ideologies manifested themselves due to particular geographical contexts. Tampico's historical trajectory offered a unique development of radical thought which combined the two major anarchist tendencies, anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-communism, into a pragmatic movement relative to the port city's unique social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances.

With the development of a state-backed labor federation the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* (CROM), the Tampico anarchist contingencies developed interregional networks with other organizers to challenge the State's efforts to institutionalize the revolutionary movement during the 1920s. Chapter 2 details the significance of the

*Confederación General de Trabajadores* (CGT), an anti-capitalist labor confederation that opposed the reformism of the CROM and promoted anarcho-communism with the aim to abolish all forms of authoritarian power. Consciousness-building tactics of the CGT helped assert and maintain Tampico's first manifestation of a shared anarchist culture during the Revolution. Such tactics included the promotion of direct action in the workplace, the establishment of schools for workers and their families, tenant strikes as well as the distribution of radical literature throughout the Huasteca oil fields and refineries. With a mobilized base throughout the region, threats to its sustainability developed with the CROM's sabotage of strikes and the use of government arbitration as a means to delegitimize the radical labor sentiments.

Chapter 3 explains the steady growth of authoritarian practices in the post-revolutionary government and its effects on anarchist movements in Tampico and throughout Mexico. As internal conflicts between organizers and the CGT flooded the anarchist press, regional conflicts became less significant to the preservation of a collective anarchist identity. However, remnants of the Tampico anarchist movement persisted among a new generation of workers in the city, though on a smaller scale when compared to the 1920s formations. As the Mexican state grew in institutional influence, organizers took note and developed new practices to maintain their significance. The rise of European fascism provided a stream of internationalist solidarity campaigns that provoked critical analyses of situations both in Mexico and abroad.

This study provides insight into the significance of anarchist consciousness and culture in Tampico throughout the twentieth-century. While I intend to do further research to expand my analysis in future works, it is my intention to provide the history

of the Tampico anarchists in order to challenge misconceptions about working class histories in Mexico. Tampico demonstrated a particular and unique example of anarchist organizing during the post-revolutionary period. In particular, it provides historical insight on anarchist movements influenced specifically by geographical spaces and how these movements' influences transcended the regions and border in which they developed within.

## **Chapter 1: Geography & Peripheral Anarchism in the Huasteca Region, 1860-1917**

*“We anarchists do not want to emancipate the people; we want the people to emancipate themselves.”*

*- Errico Malatesta, 1897*

The emergence of anarchism within Europe often overshadows the ideology’s world-wide resonance during the turn of the twentieth century. In Mexico, the early formations of the Mexican Revolution depended largely on the actions of anarchists and anarchist organizations. From 1906 through 1920, anarchism’s impact on the changed what initially developed as a critique of the Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz’s three decade rule to a national insurrection that lasted for over ten years. However, the development of anarchism was not based on a single belief, but rather varying forms of anarchism which constituted different forms of political praxes. In this chapter, I will discuss two of the major anarchist organizations of the Mexican Revolution; *El Partido Liberal Mexicano* and *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*. These organizations’ significance lies not only in their ideologies, but their relativity to specific geographical locations. I will detail the development of peripheral anarchism in Mexico and how geographical proximities altered the formation of revolutionary anarchist movements to the conditions in which they existed within.

### **Anarchism & its Geographical Origins:**

The arrival of anarchism to Mexico brought with it as much rhetorical debate as it did revolutionary fervor. Various social, cultural, political, and economic developments in Europe made it obligatory for anarchism to be able to shift and mold to a wide array of

circumstances. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss these *anarchisms* as a plurality of ideological thought and praxis to best understand their various ideological developments. Similarly to Europe, many of the arguments between various anarchist ideologies emerged in Mexico due to varying social and cultural climates. It is within these differences that Mexico's anarchisms took on unique characteristics both similar to and different from those of Europe. An investigation into the early formations of anarchist ideologies in Europe is necessary to comprehend the origins of this widely misunderstood philosophy and social movement.

The modern notion of anarchism first emerged with the writings of French philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. It was in Proudhon's 1840 work *What is Property?* in which he boldly argued that property was, in fact, theft. Proudhon, the first self-identified anarchist, declared that the very notion of private property perpetuated anti-social conditions in which instigated transitions away from communal land holdings. Moreover, Proudhon argued that the shift towards capitalism in turn stripped peasants of the ability to secure a living due to their obligation to provide wage-labor in order to survive. He declared,

Every capacity for labor being, like every instrument of labor, an accumulated capital, and a collective property, inequality of wages and fortunes (on the ground of inequality of capacities) is... injustice and robbery.<sup>1</sup>

Proudhon's critiques later influenced Karl Marx, who called his work "the first decisive, vigorous and scientific examination of property."<sup>2</sup> Marx's recognition of Proudhon's

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre Joseph-Proudhon, *What is Property?: An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government* (Princeton: Benjamin R. Tucker Press, 1876), 286.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, *The Holy Family*, quoted in *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Peter Marshall), 235.



analysis as a science reaffirmed the position that anarchism validated itself through empiricism and predictions of future economic circumstances. Both Marx and Proudhon's theories centered around the notion of a dialectical transition in society based on the scientific reasoning offered by their ideological standings. For Proudhon, however, science and reason proved that autonomous democratic associations could exist without the State. Rather, that human nature perpetuated the need for an anarchist society. He argued,

...[I]n a given society, the authority of man over man is inversely proportional to the stage of intellectual development which that society has reached; and the probable duration of that authority can be calculated from the more or less general desire for a true government, -- that is, for a scientific government. And just as the right of force and the right of artifice retreat before the steady advance of justice, and must finally be extinguished in equality, so the sovereignty of the will yields to the sovereignty of the reason, and must at last be lost in scientific socialism. Property and royalty have been crumbling to pieces ever since the world began. As man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy.<sup>3</sup>

The anarchism of Proudhon emerged out of France's economic transition away from the artisanal practices and towards industrialization. With an emphasis on the scientific rationalization of how people determine the implications of governance, Proudhon offered an entirely new method of viewing political dimensions. Marx's support of Proudhon's positions on a scientific analysis of economics and politics coincided with Marx's foreseeing of an inevitable dialectical transition away from capitalist society. While Karl Marx agreed with the basic premise of Proudhon's views, anarchist contemporaries of Marx critiqued his emphasis of an authoritarian dialectical process.

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<sup>3</sup> Proudhon, *What is Property?*, 277.

Proudhon's uncertainty as to how anarchism manifested itself within industrial societies presented space for interpretation among global anarchist movements. Rather than presuming the circumstances of various societies, the theory remained open for reevaluation within each geographic location. The value to these theories that has resonated most succinctly within anarchist movements is that of self-determination and anti-authoritarianism. Proudhon explained,

When, by philosophical analysis, one wants to take account of authority, of its principle, its forms, its effects, one recognizes quickly enough that the constitution of authority, spiritually and temporally, is nothing other than a preliminary organism, in essence parasitic and corruptible, incapable of producing anything by itself but tyranny and misery, whatever form it takes, whatever ideas it represents.<sup>4</sup>

Authority provided little or no benefit within the anarchist dialectical process; a notion that contrasted starkly with Marx's dialectical theory on the 'dictatorship of the proletariat, which emphasized the need to centralize leadership in revolutionary societies.<sup>5</sup> Though various forms of democratic processes have fluctuated throughout different streams of anarchism – from positions on majority rule, to consensus decision making, and even to individual acts of resistance – the emphasis on collective communities having control of their decision-making processes without obstruction has been the primary tenet among anarchist thinkers. One of the early followers of Proudhon, the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, spearheaded the promotion of anarchism's anti-authoritarian model of socialist revolution.

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<sup>4</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "The Nature and Destination of Government" from *Confessions of a Revolutionary: To Serve as a History of the February Revolution* (Paris: *La Voux de Pueple* newspaper, 1849). Taken from: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/proudhon/1849/government.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx, "Letter to Joesph Weydeymer in New York," published in *The New York Turn-Zeitung* (January 1, 1852). Cited from: [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/letters/52\\_03\\_05.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/letters/52_03_05.htm).

Mikhail Bakunin was born in Premukhino, Russia in 1814 to a noble family.

Unlike Proudhon's professional career as a print maker, Bakunin's upbringing offered the prospect of sustaining a privileged life. However, he renounced his family's social status and immersed himself within revolutionary anarchist movements beginning in 1844 when he moved to Paris for studies. He studied both Marx and Proudhon and soon emerged as a prominent figure within European revolutionary politics. Beginning in 1867, Bakunin collaborated with Marx in the International Workingman's Association, better known as the First International; Marx eventually expelled Bakunin from the organization in 1872. The schism between the Marxists and anarchists emerged over the issue of authoritarianism and Marx's emphasis of a vanguard movement to promote a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.<sup>6</sup> Bakunin argued,

The communist authoritarians wish to force class 'science's upon others, the social libertarians [i.e. anarchists] propagate empiric [sic] science among them so that human groups and aggregations infused with conviction in and understand of it, spontaneously, freely and voluntarily, from bottom upwards, organize themselves by their own motion and in the measure of their strength –not according to a plan sketched out in advance and dictated to them, a plan which is attempted to be imposed by a few 'highly intelligent, hone and all that' upon the so-called ignorant masses from above.<sup>7</sup>

For Bakunin, the role of the revolutionary was not to impose ideology but to allow collective groups to organize themselves. His notion of anarchism differed starkly from Proudhon's as it did not propose an urgent return to artisanal life, but rather that workers take control of Europe's newly constructed urban factories through revolutionary syndicalism. This notion of anarcho-syndicalism became prominent among artisans and

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850*, from *Selected Works Vol. 1* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, "Where I Stand," in *Bakunin's Writings*, edited by Guy A. Aldred (New York: Modern Publishers, 1947), ix-x.

industrial workers alike due to its implication that those who produced materials should have control over their production. He critiqued the notion of a vanguard movement, thus bringing a new development within anarchism relating to anti-intellectualism. Moreover, Bakunin's argument contends the notion of a widespread collective consciousness – a “class science” as he refers to it – but an awakening relating to the conditions among regionally prescribed groups.

Much of Bakunin's writings focused on such regionally-determined movements and drew heavily on the question of German workers and the use of political parties to eliminate class inequalities and stir up nationalist rhetoric. In the 1870 article “The German Crisis,” Bakunin argued,

As long as the German workers strive for the establishment of a national state- however popular and free they may imagine this State (and there is a far step from imagination to realization, especially when there is the fraternization of two diametrically opposed principles, the State and the liberty of the people, involved)- so long will they sacrifice the liberty of the people to the might of the State, Socialism to politics, international justice and fraternity to patriotism. It is clear that their own economic liberation will remain a beautiful dream, looming in the distant future.<sup>8</sup>

Bakunin's critique of nationalist movements had a profound impression on the development of anarchism in Europe and abroad. However, in the same vein as Proudhon, the ambiguous definition of anarchism led to interesting manifestations that permeated within its Mexican context later.

Despite Bakunin's critique of Marx's authoritarian vanguardism, he had no objections to supporting secret societies, most specifically the International Alliance of Social Democracy formed in October of 1868 – the organization which would ultimately

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<sup>8</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy* (New York: Revisionist Press, 1976), 30.

lead to his expulsion from the First International. Bakunin argued for secret societies as a necessary tactic to confront the State's suppression of anarchist organizing. He argued,

The State is the organized authority, domination, and power of the possessing classes over the masses ... the International wants only their complete freedom, and calls for their revolt. But in order that this rebellion be powerful and capable enough to overthrow the domination of the State and the privileged classes, the International has to organize itself. To attain its objective, it employs only two means, which, if not always legal, are completely legitimate from the standpoint of human rights. These two means are the dissemination of the ideas of the International and the natural influence of its members over the masses.<sup>9</sup>

Bakunin admitted the Alliance was a form of dictatorship but nonetheless necessary. In the vein of Marx's 'dictatorship of the proletariat', the Alliance was based on ethical stances which discredited any form of authority. Bakunin writes,

We must bring forth anarchy, and in the midst of the popular tempest, we must be the invisible pilots guiding the Revolution, not by any kind of overt power but by the collective dictatorship of all our allies [members of the anarchist vanguard organization International Alliance of Social Democracy], a dictatorship without tricks, without official titles, without official rights, and therefore all the more powerful, as it does not carry the trappings of power. This is the only dictatorship I will accept...<sup>10</sup>

Bakunin's secret societies also promoted the tactic known as 'propaganda by the deed,' or direct action through the use of violence against the State. While the argument is still highly controversial among anarchists today, Bakunin's position for the use of violence correlated with his support of secret organizations. Both notions developed on the brink of the Paris Commune of 1871, the socialist uprising which reformed Paris's geopolitical format towards a revolutionary city-state. The ideologies were utilized to counter the

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<sup>9</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, "On the Program of the Alliance," 1871. Cited from: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1871/program.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., "Letter to Albert Richard," 1870. Cited from: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1870/albert-richard.htm>

long-standing conundrum towards the relationship of anarchism and warfare. However, Bakunin made his stance quite clear by September of 1870, just six months before the formation of the Paris Commune. He wrote,

All of us must now embark on stormy revolutionary seas, and from this very moment we must spread our principles, not with words *but with deeds, for this is the most popular, the most potent, and the most irresistible form of propaganda* [emphasis mine]. Let us say less about principles, whenever circumstances and revolutionary policy demand it – i.e., during our momentary weakness in relation to the enemy – but let us at all times and under all circumstances be adamantly consistent in our action. For in this lies the salvation of the revolution.<sup>11</sup>

The argument for violence to spark social revolution would be utilized in anarchist movements throughout Europe and the world. Peter Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist who promoted anarcho-communism – a shift in anarchist thought leaning towards anti-authoritarian communist communities based on need rather than contribution – reinforced Bakunin by arguing for the “revolutionary workers’ movement...the milieu which, alone, will take arms and make the revolution.”<sup>12</sup> The contrasts between the earlier forms of anarchism would take on new ideological contours as they confronted new circumstances, new geographical proximities, and new revolutionaries to add to existing ideological formulations.

### **The Rise of Mexican Anarchisms, 1861-1900:**

In 1861, Plotino Rhodakanaty arrived in Veracruz, Mexico in the hope of spreading anarchism after hearing of the country’s sweeping constitutional reforms.

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<sup>11</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, “Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis,” (September, 1870) cited from: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1870/letter-frenchman.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Kropotkin, “Letter to Nettlau,” cited in *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism*, by Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 304-305.

Rhodakanaty, originally from Greece, was interested in Mexico due to the land redistribution policies promoted in the Constitution of 1857, as well as the ascendancy of liberal reformer Benito Juárez to the presidency.<sup>13</sup> The liberal reforms offered the potential of reclaiming lands, specifically throughout the preservation of community-controlled *ejidos*. Much to the dismay of Rhodakanaty, the policies had been largely ignored and thus he shifted his interests to mobilizing agrarian communities based on socialist ideals. Soon after his arrival, he focused on the development of a study group called *El Grupo de Estudiantes Socialistas*, which went on to revive the defunct *La Sociedad Particular de Socorros Mutuos*, as well as create their own Bakuninist secret society known as La Social.<sup>14</sup> Rhodakanaty's ideologies laid somewhere between those of Proudhon and Bakunin; while he supported artisanal mutualism, he also promoted the notion of dismembering the State's economic function. However, for the young Mexican scholars whom Rhodakanaty worked with within these organizations, the Bakuninist emphasis of insurrection related more heavily to their own circumstances. While Rhodakanaty detested the notions of 'propaganda by the deed', such tactics resonated among students such as Francisco Zalacosta and Santiago Villanueva – both of whom would go on to lead agrarian and urban insurrections respectively. Unlike in Europe, the appeal of anarchism in Mexico relied less on ideological positions and more on resisting a growing capitalist industrialization. Such developments promoted foreign investment and the perpetuation of neocolonial conditions for much of the country's population, thus becoming a major point of contention.

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<sup>13</sup> John Mason Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1960-1931* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 19-20.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 25.

One of Rhodakanaty's students, Julio Chávez López, demonstrated the power of anarchist ideology among *campesinos* and peasants through a series of insurrections that erupted throughout the central Mexican countryside. Chávez López, a peasant from the small pueblo of Chalco on the outskirts of Mexico City, learned about anarchism through the teachings of Rhodakanaty at his rationalist school, *La Escuela del Rayo y del Socialismo*. Unlike his educator, Chávez López did not expect an anarchist revolution to develop through peaceful means. His theoretical leanings aligned more with those of Francisco Zalacosta, one of Rhodakanaty's students from whom he would acquire the leadership of *La Escuela del Rayo del Socialismo* in 1867. Rhodakanaty soon realized that the circumstances formulating his students' theoretical stances had taken on a more confrontational form in contrast to his own pacifist leanings. Rhodakanaty wrote to Zalacosta expressing this epiphany, "...the school is no longer a school, but now is a club *por y para la libertad*."<sup>15</sup> Rather than mere thoughts on a page, anarchism had taken on a larger precedence in Mexican society as a unifying notion that formulated the country's forthcoming revolutionary fervor.

Chávez López's perception of anarchism merged various currents of the ideology into a single struggle towards collective liberation. He declared, "I am a socialist, because I am an enemy of all governments and I am a communist, because my brothers want to work the lands communally."<sup>16</sup> Throughout 1868 and 1869, Chávez López espoused his ideals among the *campesinos* of neighboring pueblos in the states of México and Morelos, which had a considerable impact on the foundations of Emiliano Zapata's

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<sup>15</sup> Letter to Rhodakanaty to Zalacosta, Mexico City, November 1868, Archivo Judicial del Estado de Querétaro, as cited in John Mason Hart's *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931*, 33.

<sup>16</sup> Jose C. Valades, *El Socialismo Libertario Mexicano (Siglo XIX)*, translated by author, (Culiacán: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 1984), 37-38.



ideologies that culminated in *El Plan de Ayala* during the Mexican Revolution.<sup>17</sup> As noted by John Mason Hart, the most significant aspect of Chávez López's rebellions was that it marked the first time an ideological praxis had been utilized to rally *campesinos* towards revolutionary change. As the rebellions raged through Chalco, Texcoco, Coatepec, Chicoloapan, and Acuantla, the mobilizations aimed to regain control of the pueblos lost during the conquest and to the hacienda system.<sup>18</sup> The demands of the *campesinos* were expressed through a manifesto written by Chávez López in April of 1869. The manifesto argued that *hacendados* and regional authorities that suppressed the population perpetuated neocolonial conditions. While he ardently critiqued the Catholic Church's participation in this subversion, he did not oppose spirituality as a whole:

And who is it that has cooperated to keep us muted, in humiliation, in ignorance, and in slavery? The Church, especially the Church...It's hypocritical missionaries...The Friars who say everything is in vain...The priests who have deceived us...*Let religion reign, but never the Church and even less the priests* (emphasis mine)...If the priests are evil, so are all those men who give orders. What can we say about that which has been given us and called government and which in reality is tyranny? Where is the good government?<sup>19</sup>

The distinction between anticlericalism and atheism demonstrates the particularity of anarchist thought to the society in which it was being formed within. Chávez López's movement may have not received as much support with an openly anti-religious message, though the community and his own perspectives of their circumstances displayed a strong comprehension of the roots of abuse within their society.

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<sup>17</sup> Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 72.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>19</sup> Julio Chávez López, "Manifiesto a todos los oprimidos y pobres de México y del universo," Chalco, April 20, 1869; text from Juan Hernández Luna, "Movimiento anarco-fourierista entre el imperio y la reforma," Cuadernos de Orientación Política, no. 4 (April 1956), pp. 36-37, as translated by Hart in *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 39.

Similarly, the manifesto also challenged the legitimacy of any form of authoritarian governance against *campesino* communities. While the Church's abuses towards the pueblos instilled the movement's anticlerical fervor, it was the lack of accountability within the State that drew the strongest fury:

Fellow Mexicans! This is the simple truth with which we will win one way or another in order to bring the triumph of liberty. We are going to be persecuted, maybe shot full of holes, but this is not important because we carry our dreams with us. What choice do we have with our lives? Death is better than the perpetuation of oppression and misery. As liberals we reject the oppression. As socialists it wounds us. As men we condemn it. Abolition of the government, abolition of exploitation! We want land, we want order, we want liberty. We must emancipate ourselves from our miseries; we need peace and stability. Finally, what we need is the establishment of a social contract among men based upon mutual respect. Long live socialism! Love live liberty!<sup>20</sup>

Chávez López aggressively acknowledged the reality that such a mobilization would almost certainly lead to State suppression. However, he rallied the local regions to challenge the role of the State and to struggle for collective governance. Through the consciousness attributed to anarchism, Chávez López's rebellions demonstrated a larger call for a national liberation struggle that defied the constructs of the nation-state. United through its shared history of colonialism and authoritarianism, the Mexican anarchist movement promoted wide-scale insurrection with the objective of self-governance and mutual aid.

While Benito Juárez's Constitution of 1857 symbolized a shift towards an inclusive democratic process, Chávez López's movement demonstrated that poor and peasant communities saw little of its benefits. His manifesto even argued that anarchist insurrection was not just a socialist praxis, but a liberal detestation of the nation's

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

conditions. This issue became even more prevalent with the rise of the dictator Porfirio Díaz, who offered concessions to European and U.S. investors during his thirty-three year reign. Individuals such as Harrison Gray Otis – owner of the Los Angeles *Times* - and Colonel William Cornell Greene – owner of the Greene Consolidated Copper Company – owned massive stretches of land throughout various Mexican states, thus utilizing cheap labor and land as well as their proximity to the United States border to produce the most profits. On the Yucatán peninsula, former confederate soldiers moved to run haciendas filled with deported Yaqui Indians forced to work away from their homes in Sonora due to Porfirio Díaz's push for production and industry. All the while, Mexico City began to experience a surge of newly immigrated *campesinos* that were forced out of the countryside by starvation that ran rampant during the transition to wage labor. These spaces became breeding grounds for autonomous non-ideological resistance that would become future markers of anarchist organizing.

Historian Paul Vanderwood's invigorating portrayals of the northern frontier during the turn of the century offer key insights into the volatility of the period. Primarily, the emphasis on banditry and lawlessness is pivotal to understanding future anarchist developments. Throughout the northern state of Chihuahua, state representation relied heavily on the *rurales*, or rural police force, whose primary purpose was to exert the illusion of state control in the countryside. Moreover, they depended on the local populations for everything from food to shelter, which in turn led to the harassment of

local indigenous communities.<sup>21</sup> But as mining development became more predominant in the region, so did government oversight.

As the Porfiriato attempted to spread its influence into regions in which government remained limited, local customs came under attack. Vanderwood uses the example of a religious figure named Teresa Urrea, also known as *La Santa de Cabora*, who proselytized self-governance, salvation, and autonomy as a response to the Porfiriato's modernization campaign in the rural pueblo of Tomóchic, Chihuahua. While not entirely congruent to the anarchism explained above, the inherent connectors of self-determination and anti-authoritarianism present more parallels than contrasts. The Porfiriato's focus on modernization fueled the conflict as mining developments forced residents of Tomóchic to transition towards wage labor. As land surveying increased throughout the region in the 1880s, residents of Tomóchic felt the pressure for centralization of state control and livelihood.<sup>22</sup> The followers of La Santa attempted to counter the push by emphasizing their traditional method of subsistence within their uprisings. In response to the modern industries of neighboring Papigochic society, Cruz Chávez, the leader of the uprisings, argued that Tomóchic culture emphasized an egalitarian and classless existence.<sup>23</sup> When rebellion struck the neighboring Temósachic in the spring of 1893, the rebels burnt municipal records to ensure that those indebted to the growing industries of the region could challenge later attempts of restoring societal

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development* (Wilmington: DR Books, 1992), 128.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 73.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

stratification.<sup>24</sup> Such hostilities towards industry and centralized power demonstrated the rebels' disapproval towards campaigns of modernization and in effect, countered the Porfiriato's attempts to impress liberal hegemony within the region. Furthermore, it demonstrated a larger anti-authoritarian fervor that began to spread throughout the country during the turn of the century.

Throughout rural peripheries of the Mexican State, resistance developed to Díaz's visions of modernity. In Morelos, peasant regionalism and autonomy became an intrinsic factor of daily life as the defense of *ejido* landholdings came under attack from foreign usurpation. The demand for the right to land echoes the demands of the European anarchists. Claudio Lomnitz details how the communalism of rural, and most often indigenous, life remains focused on the inherent rights of ownership rather than through forms of capitalist acquisition. Lomnitz explains,

The peasant has a right to a plot of land not only because he deserves to live, but also due to the unexploitative nature of peasant production (the peasant produces what he consumes). In this sense, there is a kind of natural righteousness in peasant localist ideology, for (ideally) there is no exploitation of individuals in peasant production. Peasants live "off the sweat of their brow," and so can look down upon forms of livelihood that appear to be exploitative and non-agricultural.<sup>25</sup>

While Lomnitz's assessment demonstrates an idealistic portrayal of peasant relations, anarchist movements in Mexico often adapted such assessments within a paradox of emphasizing traditional rural relations while looking towards the development of egalitarian modern societies. Similar arguments developed throughout rural regions of Mexico, specifically in response to the growing threat of foreign investment and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>25</sup> Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 145-146.

accumulation of property. In the instance of the Yucatán peninsula, the threat of not only losing one's land remained a primary focus to growing presence of foreigners, but a perpetuation of neocolonial subjugation became a threat which promoted wide scale resistance to both local and national state officials.

During the late nineteenth century, the Mexican government propagated the shift towards national governance of the Yucatán through its emphasis on modernizing the region. While the region's population remained largely indigenous, the few white Mexican enclaves who represented national rule compared the lack of commercial development to the rest of the nation. For the political and economic elites of Yucatán, the "inefficient corn farming in small communities" did not match the growing needs of the state nor its nation.<sup>26</sup> Indigenous Maya agricultural cultivation remained largely based on self-sufficiency rather than profit and contributed little to national development. For the Yucatecan elite, the Maya Indians' "poor land, little credit, and scant incentive" demonstrated an inferiority within the civilization to cultivate and profit through land production.<sup>27</sup> A similar devaluation of labor came with the arrival of Yaqui Indians who had been deported from their home state of Sonora to assist in regional development on the peninsula. However, with the arrival of the Yaquis came internalized hostilities due to their forced expulsion after periods of insurrection against state cooption.

From 1887 to 1900, Yaqui guerillas fought against Mexican and foreign colonization of their lands in Sonora. Facing similar circumstances seen by peasant groups in Chihuahua and Yucatán, the Yaquis struggled to resist the oncoming

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Sullivan, *Xuxub Must Die: The Lost Histories of a Murder on the Yucatan* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 77.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

industrialization linked to railroad construction. Evelyn Hu-Dehart argues that the Yaquis' guerilla warfare demonstrates a response to the transformation of previously undeveloped peripheries within the Mexican State.<sup>28</sup> The Yaqui response thus correlates with the other rural resistance formations as well as the anarchist resistance to industrialization. Raymond Craib describes similar findings in Veracruz, as land surveyors attempted to literally incorporate "fugitive landscapes" in order to develop a sense of national identity through cartography after the Mexican-American War. Craib argues that "the powerful sway of territoriality as the basis for modern identity and control ensured that geographic science and its primary medium, the map, occupied a place of preeminence in the nationalist repertoire."<sup>29</sup> These state formations led to both local populations and village authorities to resist cartographic assimilation by using the state's functions against itself (i.e. change locations, disrupt legal processes, etc.).<sup>30</sup> For people on the ground, as Craib notes, any symbol of the State, specifically place-names of locations "become weapons in the political wars" playing out on the local, regional, and national levels of authority.<sup>31</sup> The countryside remained a volatile place of physical and legal resistance; all of which attempted to alleviate the ramifications of state authority on the general population. The circumstances in the city, however, would differ significantly and thus provide insight into how various forms of anarchisms developed during the nation's revolutionary period.

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<sup>28</sup> Evelyn Hu-Dehart, *Yaqui Resistance and Survival: The Struggle for Land and Autonomy, 1821-1910* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 153.

<sup>29</sup> Raymond Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 24.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

The city landscape was also changing dramatically throughout the “Porfirian Peace,” which developed through Díaz’s authoritative rule among the population while promoting foreign investment in various aspects of everyday life. In particular, the advent of a railroad system structured to connect Mexico City and major work sites with the United States and sea ports led to the rise of job opportunities within the city. As John Lear notes, Mexico City’s population grew by half of its population between 1895 and 1910.<sup>32</sup> The growth in other places was even higher in industrial towns such as Cananea in the north, yet the workforce entering the cities demonstrated a different form of labor. The rise of factory work led to artisans “losing their individual identity” and becoming radicalized.<sup>33</sup> Cultural festivals began to display similar discontent when they became public spectacles criticizing the nation’s modernization. The ceremony of burning an effigy of Judas after lent, a practice carried on in Mexico since as early as 1538, began to take a political shift as the effigies began to resemble members of the Porfirian government and other social elites.<sup>34</sup> Outside of the city, xenophobic displays became common among the Judas burnings as effigies of Chinese workers demonstrated the newly forming working-class’s hostility towards foreign labor and immigration.<sup>35</sup> Such cultural detestations became both symbols of backwardness in the eyes of the State, as well as proletarian resistance among radicals. The Díaz regime and the Catholic Church

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<sup>32</sup> John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 52.

<sup>33</sup> John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California, 1987), 56.

<sup>34</sup> William Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 93, 97.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.



despised the popularity of the events that demonstrated labor contempt for authority.<sup>36</sup> However, radical elements supported the activities, most specifically the satirical newspaper, *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, which was run by the Flores Magón brothers. At the time, Ricardo, Enrique, and Jesus Flores Magón were students engaging in a larger student revolt against Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship. The newspaper ran mocking cartoon columns with statements such as, "I serve my master – The Bully," targeting Porfirio Díaz.<sup>37</sup> Despite the newspaper's tongue-and-cheek approach, a growing official hostility emerged toward it and helped develop the first proclaimed anarchist movements in Mexico.

### **Exile & Praxis: The *Partido Liberal Mexicano* and the Development of a Rural Anarchist Movement:**

On the morning of February 3, 1903, Ricardo Flores Magón and the editors of *El Hijo de Ahuizote* unrolled a banner from their Mexico City office announcing, "*La Constitución ha muerto.*"<sup>38</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón had been exposed to anarchism as early as 1900, but only discreetly displayed its influence in the early articles of his newspaper, *Regeneración*. The early years of the newspaper emphasized social justice and a return to the values of liberal reformer Benito Juárez. Throughout Ricardo Flores Magón's life, he linked his own mobilization of urban and rural laborers to earlier national struggles. As time progressed, however, Flores Magón's ideology continued to gravitate towards an anarchism adjusted for Mexico's social and cultural conditions. One

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>38</sup> Ward Albro, *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1992), 19.

year after the unveiling of the banner, Flores Magón would flee into the United States to escape political suppression. Early dissenters to Díaz's abuse of power were arrested, their printing presses destroyed, and their works banned throughout the country. It was within this climate that the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM) formed and a new form of Mexican anarchism developed.

Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón's ideology evolved primarily from their experiences with indigenous communalism and autonomous governorship. Enrique Flores Magón described how his political consciousness emerged during his childhood upbringing in Teotitlán, Oaxaca:

How different is life in Teotitlán and its region to life in large part to this poor México! In Teotitlán everything is possessed communally, minus women. All of the land around each of our towns belongs to the whole community. Every morning we leave to work the land. Everyone, except for the sick, invalids, the elderly, women and children. And everyone does it with joy, because it gives strength to know that the work that he and his companions made is for the common good.<sup>39</sup>

The Flores Magón brothers' regional identity developed within a region known for its negotiations of regional autonomy with Liberal leaders such as Benito Juárez and even Porfirio Díaz. However, by the end of the Porfiriato, such agreements had been broken by Díaz's authoritarianism. For Enrique and his brother Ricardo, the primary objective of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* was to develop a revolutionary movement that all of Mexico's impoverished masses recognized as relative to their own traditions and practices. A large portion of the PLM's following would not come from the cities, but rather rural enclaves of indigenous communities such as the Tarahumara, Yaquis, Téenek, and the Cucapah,

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<sup>39</sup> Enrique Flores Magón, *Pelemos contra la Justicia: Enrique Flores Magón: Precursor de la Revolución Mexicana, Cuenta su Historia a Samuel Kaplan, Tomo I* (Mexico City: Libro Mex Editores, 1960), 13. All translations from Spanish unless otherwise noted were done by author.

and others throughout the country. While their cultural traditions contrasted sharply from one end of the country to the next, the indigenous members of the PLM shared the Flores Magón brothers' ideologies that called for the restitution, expropriation, and recuperation of their lands away from the growing influence of the Mexican nation state.<sup>40</sup> These notions would emerge as pivotal aspects of the Mexican Constitution of 1917, though with much of their initial radical inclinations subdued through State capitulation.

The PLM emerged in 1905 as a junta with the objective of overthrowing the Porfirian dictatorship. The Flores Magón brothers along with four of their closest allies created the clandestine organization much in the vein of the Bakuninist secret cells; one of the first resolutions of the PLM Junta aimed to ensure the secrecy of its members so that each of its cells remained entirely autonomous of one another.<sup>41</sup> Though the junta members all collaborated in various functions of the organization, Ricardo Flores Magón remained the ideological architect of the PLM's political ideals and tactics. The group emphasized political reforms such as presidential term limits, no re-elections, and freedom of the press. It also focused on socialist economic policies that promoted self-determination through worker controlled factories, mines, and fields.<sup>42</sup> Among the proposals, the PLM's Program also called for the complete and unquestioned sovereignty of indigenous lands including the restoration of Yucatán and Quintana Roo territories.<sup>43</sup> Other liberal reformers such as Camilo Arriaga and future Mexican President Francisco I.

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<sup>40</sup> Juan Carlos Beas, Manuel Ballesteros, and Benjamín Maldonado, *Magonismo y Movimiento Indígena en México* (Mexico City: Offset Universal, S.A., 2003), 41.

<sup>41</sup> *Regeneración*, "Resoluciones: Tomadas por la 'Junta Organizadora del Partido Liberal Mexicano.'" (St. Louis, June 1, 1906), 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Regeneración*, "La Programa del Partido Liberal y Manifiesto a la Nación," July 1, 1906 (Mexico City: Archivo Magón), 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Madero initially supported the PLM's political policies, but disagreed with its positions on revolutionary socialist economics. Whereas Arriaga and Madero supported a transition in society through the leadership of intellectual liberals, Flores Magón envisioned the mobilization of *campesinos* and workers towards social revolution.<sup>44</sup> The divide proved irreconcilable and eventually proved devastating to the PLM's cause.

Though earlier historiographies on the Mexican Liberal Party stressed the group's appeal to middle class intellectuals in Mexico City and liberal exiles in the Southwest, there is little evidence to suggest such a claim. The PLM's following relied heavily on peasants and workers in Mexico's peripheral regions, not intellectuals from the capital. Considering the PLM formed and functioned in the United States throughout its existence, the PLM's ideologies and tactics remained distinctly separate from those coming out of Mexico City. While the Flores Magón brothers were in Mexico City during the early 1890s, their organizing emphasis focused on students and labor unions; however, this shifted as they faced continuous imprisonments and threats to their lives. The developing middle-class identities of the greater liberal movement either shifted away from the PLM before the dawn of the Mexican Revolution or adamantly opposed it early on due to its revolutionary rhetoric. Nonetheless, the PLM made clear that its insurrection was not one of reform, but of revolution. While previous liberal reformers emphasized the need to redeem the presidency, by 1905 the PLM had shifted away from this notion as they faced the ramifications of resisting the Porfirian regime.

The focus of the PLM revolved around regions that historically resisted Mexican national assimilation. Throughout the country, the PLM's followers appropriated the

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<sup>44</sup> Albro, 30.

theoretical perspectives espoused in the junta's newspaper, *Regeneración*, to their community's sociopolitical circumstances. Similar to the secret societies of the Bakunin-era, the PLM relied largely on autonomous cells found throughout Mexico – mostly in rural regions that had a history of heavy state resistance along the border such as Baja California, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Tamaulipas. By 1906, the PLM had over forty-four secret clubs in every Mexican state as well as throughout the U.S. Southwest.<sup>45</sup> The purpose of these groups was to instigate insurrection throughout the country during key strategic periods. Ricardo Flores Magón later wrote about these groups,

The sowers of ideals must struggle against the masses, who are conservative, against institutions, which are likewise conservative; and alone, surrounded by the comings and goings of a herd that does not understand him, he walks through the world not hoping for any reward more than fools slapping him in the face, tyrants throwing him in jail and, at any moment, the scaffold. Yet nevertheless, as long as he can sow, sow, sow, the sower of seeds will continue sowing, sowing, sowing...<sup>46</sup>

*Regeneración* gave readers insight as to the junta's political theories, their critiques of the Díaz government, and tactics on how to rebel. While liberal reformists offered lip service on issues such as land redistribution and ousting foreign capitalists, the readers of *Regeneración* acted on their ideals. The junta's relationship with these rank-and-file followers complimented rather than dictated the direction of the organization. From the earliest years of the Mexican Liberal Party's existence, the anarchist notions of autonomy, solidarity, and mutual aid encompassed the organization's praxis.

While the PLM mobilized workers and peasants alike, the Díaz regime continued its attack on the movement's leadership. As the junta prepared to launch a campaign

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<sup>45</sup>Bufe and Verter, *Dreams of Freedom*, 50.

<sup>46</sup>*Regeneración*, "Sowing," (Los Angeles: November 5, 1910), translated in *Dreams of Freedom*, 245.

against Porfirio Díaz in 1905, Díaz hired private detectives and his own servicemen to attack, imprison, and silence the PLM junta. While hiding out in Saint Louis, Missouri, Furlong Detective Agents paid for by the Mexican government arrested the Flores Magón brothers along with PLM co-founder Juan Sarabia and destroyed the presses for their reinvigorated newspaper, *Regeneración*. With the junta members imprisoned, U.S. anarchist groups and activists such as Emma Goldman came to their support by raising legal funds for their release and court defenses. These acts of solidarity from U.S. and European anarchists helped support the PLM junta to declare itself as anarchist. Yet it would be from within Mexico that the most dramatic move towards an anarchist insurrection developed.

In 1906, the border town of Cananea, Chihuahua offered one of the junta's earliest models of regional conflict correlating with anarchist practices. The mine's owner, William C. Green – as mentioned earlier - was one of the world's wealthiest businessmen and no stranger to local insurrections at his mines. In 1892, one of his mines was the target of the Tomóchic uprising which sparked a continuous struggle against foreign mine owners throughout the region. When the PLM junta first heard of the unrest in Cananea, they sent organizers down to mobilize the mine workers. Much to their surprise, they found that workers had already organized themselves under a union based on the principles of *Regeneración*, which had spread throughout the town.<sup>47</sup> Esteban Calderón, a local *magonista* leader, called for the formation of a Mexican miners union “to show the capitalists that we are not merely beasts of burden,” and particularly

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<sup>47</sup> W. Dirk Raat, *Revoltosos: Mexico's Rebels in the United States* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), 75.

interestingly, to dissent against “white men with blue eyes.”<sup>48</sup> For the Cananea miners, the critique of capitalism was not based solely on class warfare, but also on a decolonization of their region from neocolonial models supported by the Porfiriato. Calderón’s critique of racial discrimination in the mines revolved around the occupation’s distribution of power. When Mexican miners contested deplorable conditions and wages compared to white miners, they connected their strife not just with class but racial inequalities that existed throughout foreign owned mines, factories, and haciendas. The focus of the Mexican Liberal Party soon complimented the actions of the Cananea strikers both in theory and tactics.

For the next four years, the PLM’s ideologies became even more radicalized as relationships between the junta and organizers continued to fuel radical alternatives to state suppression both in Mexico and the United States. After the junta was arrested again in 1907, Flores Magón wrote to his jailed comrades calling for a full transition to anarchist tactics. The PLM’s identification with anarchism did not emerge from a theoretical epiphany, but practical realizations about the successes and failures of their organization in and outside of Mexico. The revolutionary movement they created did not demand reform, but a complete upheaval of Mexican social and cultural structures. PLM rebellions continued to emerge throughout Oaxaca, Yucatán, and the northern states, all without the guidance of the junta. The revolution was no longer an idea, but an action shaped by *magonismo*. The autonomous uprisings demonstrated an evolution away from a formal political organization towards a full-on revolutionary movement. In an attempt to resolve the contradictions of a national liberation movement with anarchism’s anti-

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

statist philosophy, the PLM engaged notions of national liberation as a dialectical transition towards anarchism fueled by the exploitation of Mexicans.

The notion of national liberation within a social revolution demonstrated a transition in consciousness not only for the PLM, but also for anarchism as an ideological theory. A unified Mexican identity did not emerge among the greater population until after the Mexican Revolution. During the Porfiriato, the Mexican elite, working as *compradores* within a neocolonial state structure had created a national image vis a vis foreign capital. For Flores Magón, all liberal reformist efforts only perpetuated elite institutions. The prosperity of Mexico as a neocolonial state for the capitalist market relied heavily on the compliance of those who controlled its institutions. The PLM's demand for a political and economic revolution challenged preconceived notions on the national narrative developed by the Porfirian regime. In the *Regeneración* article entitled "The Revolution," Flores Magón echoed the sentiments of Bakunin and argued against reform and for a widespread anarchist revolution:

...We ought to keep in mind that no government, no matter how good its intents, can declare the abolition of misery. It's the people itself, the hungry, the dispossessed who must abolish misery, taking, in the first place, possession of the earth which, by *natural right* [emphasis mine], cannot be monopolized by a few, but is the property of every human being.<sup>49</sup>

Within the context of a neocolonial state, Flores Magón argued that all the working people of Mexico needed emancipation due to their collective suffering. Similar to Lomnitz's description of localist movements in Morelos, the PLM's ideologies related to indigenous traditions of inheritance and autonomy. These values would later be taken up

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<sup>49</sup> *Regeneración*, "The Revolution," found in *Dreams of Freedom*, 155.



in the Mexican state's future land reforms, with little mention of its radical origins. Through social revolution, Flores Magón, the PLM junta, and *magonistas* envisioned a Mexican society through the primary tenets of anarchism – autonomy, direct democracy, and self-determination.

Similar acts of solidarity followed the junta to their new headquarters in Los Angeles beginning in 1908. There the group mobilized the city's incoming Mexican migrants towards a revolutionary movement in their home country. With the help of groups such as the Industrial Workers of the World and the Los Angeles's Italian anarchist community, a new internationalist revolutionary front developed against the Díaz regime. Mexicans who had moved to Los Angeles due to political suppression or as consequences of the industrialization of rural regions found the PLM's ideological framework in the pages of *Regeneración*. By the eve of the Mexican Revolution, *Regeneración's* circulation reached thousands of readers with Spanish, English, and Italian translations. Whether it was through reading the periodical, hearing it recited in the Placita Olvera or the Italian Hall on Olvera Street, the barrios and neighborhoods of Mexican and European immigrants became integrated networks of revolutionary fervor.

On January 29, 1911, two dozen *magonistas* consisting of Mexicans, indigenous groups, and Anglo-European radicals took control of the border town of Mexicali, Baja California. They quickly captured other major towns such as Tecate, and most significantly, Tijuana. As the group gained participants and moved into other regions of Baja California, American businessmen and liberal reformers feared the consequences of the insurrection. Harrison Gray Otis, the owner of the *LA Times*, owned over 850,000 acres of land in Baja California, which included the largest cotton production industry in

the world.<sup>50</sup> On the eastern front of the borderlands, liberal reformer Francisco Madero began attacking *magonistas* who took the call of Baja California as the time to rebel. The collaboration of Madero and Otis against the *magonistas* would ultimately suppress the movement, concluding with arrests of the PLM junta members in Los Angeles in June 1911 on accusations of neutrality violations. As *maderista* troops moved into Baja California and assassinated *magonistas*, the uprising concluded with the liberal opponent of Díaz reapplying the dictator's process of thwarting political dissent – and so proving Bakunin right. Though the PLM never regained the momentum it achieved during the Baja uprising, it continued to organize Mexican peasants and workers against the capitulation of the decade-long revolution.

The *Partido Liberal Mexicano*, weakened but not destroyed, continued to demand a social revolution rather than legal reform. For the PLM, the objective of revolution was to stop “modernizing” attacks on peasant and indigenous traditions in order to sustain regional identities and practices, as well as to dramatically improve urban laboring conditions by seizing the means of production. While the PLM has been remembered as the primary anarchist movement, its members were not the only ones during the Mexican Revolution. In Mexico City and other industrial centers, anarchists remained focused not on the urgency of social revolution, but of combating the daily pressures of modern life. The primary organization in this fight, *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*, proposed alternative and often conflicting notions of anarchist organizing to those of the PLM. Nonetheless,

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<sup>50</sup> Ricardo Romo, “Mexican Workers in the City: Los Angeles, 1915-1930,” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1975), 98.

*La Casa*'s role in the Mexican Revolution remained pivotal in the development of the expectations of revolution both within and outside of the anarchist spectrum.

### **La Casa del Obrero Mundial & the Revolutionary City:**

*La Casa del Obrero Mundial*, The House of the World Worker, rose from the mobilization of the anarcho-syndicalist group *Luz*, which formed meeting in the summer of 1912. One of *Luz*'s leaders, a Colombian anarchist exiled from Cuba named Juan Francisco Moncaleano, came to Mexico hearing of Madero's revolutionary reforms, agrarian revolts, and the mobilization of artisanal unions during the early throes of the Mexican Revolution. As John Mason Hart details in his book, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, *Luz*'s ten-point program set the standard of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*'s function as an anarchist organization through its tactics of mobilizing and moralizing the growing working class in Mexico's major industrial centers, particularly Mexico City. *Luz*'s program declared the following objectives:

1. To enlighten an enslaved and ignorant people.
2. To overthrow the tormentors of mankind: clergy, government, and capital.
3. To not serve the ambitions of any political charlatan, because no man has the right to govern another.
4. To make known that all men are equal because they are all ruled by the same natural laws and not by arbitrary ones.
5. To demand explanations from the opulent rich regarding their wealth, from the government regarding its lying authority, and from the representatives of the bandit god of the bible for his celestial powers.
6. To devastate the social institutions generated by torturers and loafers.
7. To gain freedom for the enslaved worker.
8. To use truth as the ultimate weapon against inequity.
9. To struggle against fear, the terrible tyrant of the people.

10. To march forward toward redemption, toward the universal nation where all can live with mutual respect, in absolute freedom, without national political father figures, without gods in the sky or the insolent rich.<sup>51</sup>

As *La Casa del Obrero Mundial's* following grew, the initial program of Luz was engraved as institutional practices for the unions that emerged from the larger anarchist labor front. While many of the objectives of *La Casa* paralleled those of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano*, there were significant differences in its organizing capacities. Both organizations called for the end of wealth inequality through the implementation of class war, but they differed in who was to maintain the insurrection. While Flores Magón openly declared that the masses needed to be led towards liberation, *La Casa's* interaction had elements more in line with European modernist ideals than the PLM's emphasis on self-determination. The first center for *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* set out to create *escuelas racionalistas* in the vein of Catalan anarchist, Francesc Ferrer Guardia, who emphasized the enlightenment of workers through radical pedagogy. Indeed, the mobilization of workers towards education proved one of the most successful attributes of *La Casa* as chapters opened up in various industrial hubs with an emphasis of educating industrial and artisanal workers. *La Casa's* primary leadership emerged out of the unions, most specifically Mexico City's *Confederación Tipográfica de México*, which brought in José López Dóñez, Rafael Quintero, Federico de la Colina, and Enrique H. Arce, after they were recruited by *Casa* member Amadeo Ferrés, a Catalan anarchist.<sup>52</sup> Despite *La Casa's* initial allure to the Mexican working class, its direction and objectives become obscured as the Revolution travelled further into the labyrinth of division.

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<sup>51</sup> John Mason Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 113.

<sup>52</sup> John Mason Hart, "The Urban Working Class and the Mexican Revolution: The Case of the Casa del Obrero Mundial," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* Vol. 58 No. 1 (February, 1978), 3-4.

With the fall of Francisco Madero, *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* was suppressed by the Huerta government and its Mexico City office was shuttered. However, by October of 1914, *La Casa* was resurrected through the support of the Carranza government; particularly through Álvaro Obregón's negotiations with the group. In the pact between the Constitutionalists and *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*, the obligations of both parties were stated as a mutual partnership. In exchange for the radical labor movement's support against the rural insurrections led by Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, the government allowed *Casa* branches to form throughout the country's industrial hubs, financial compensation, and labor concessions.<sup>53</sup> A portion of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* remained indebted to Carranza and the Constitutionalists for its revitalization after Huerta's suppression of the group. *La Casa* argued its shift towards collaborating with the Constitutionalists as a logistical necessity if the group was to remain relevant to the Mexican working class. Historian Alfredo Gómez condemned *La Casa's* concessions as one of false pretense and allure:

The "realism" seems to grab the majority of the syndicalists: it declares the death of the era of rebellion, seeks State protection, [and] they affect all of the politicians – *carrancistas*, Marxists – preachers of the revolution installing and needing a tutor – caudillo, party, or State. The kingdom of fear is established, the moment of liberty and autonomy are considered dangerous utopias, if not provocations... The State becomes the ultimate arbiter, it decides if a strike is legal or illegal.<sup>54</sup>

*La Casa's* negotiations with the Constitutionalists eventually led to one of the most damning and contradictive aspects of the group's anarchist foundations. A part of the

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<sup>53</sup> "Pacto Celebrado Entre la Revolución Constitucionalista y la Casa del Obrero Mundial," Apéndice B in Barry Carr, *El Movimiento Obrero la Política en México, 1910-1929* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1976), 268-269.

<sup>54</sup> Alfredo Gómez, *Anarquismo y Anarcosindicalismo en América Latina* (Barcelona: Ibérica de Ediciones y Publicaciones, 1980), 197.

*Casa*'s members known as the Red Battalions soon joined the Constitutionalist government's military campaigns against Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa. In exchange, the Constitutionalist government offered the establishment of minimum wages, debt forgiveness, regulated production, and even some forms of land confiscation.<sup>55</sup> While this decision seems largely motivated by *La Casa*'s opportunistic concessions to Carranza, it also demonstrates the lack of solidarity between urban anarchist movements and rural agrarian revolutionary movements.

As John Lear describes, the lack of solidarity between the two groups ranged from issues regarding labor skills to religion. Whereas *La Casa* organized among skilled work forces, the *zapatistas* remained largely subsistence peasants; while Zapata's forces remained loyal to the Catholic Church, the anticlerical rhetoric of *La Casa* critiqued such allegiances.<sup>56</sup> By assessing *La Casa*'s stances on enlightening "slaves and ignorant people," we see an underlying urban/rural divide based on the acceptance of modernization. While still falling within the ideological circles of anarcho-syndicalism, the distrust and hostilities towards rural peasantry offered an unusual rationalization to its objectives of widespread insurrection. Such hostilities did not exist among the *magonistas* and the *zapatistas*; quite the contrary, Emiliano Zapata began receiving copies of *Regeneración* as early as 1905 and eventually took on the motto first utilized by Flores Magón – *Tierra y Libertad*. Whereas *La Casa* accepted relationships with the State, the PLM adamantly opposed them. Flores Magón chastised the *Casa*'s alliances with the Constitutionalist and evoked the words of Peter Kropotkin to counter

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<sup>55</sup> Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens*, 248.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 260-261.

capitulation for reform, “There must be EXPROPRIATION. The well-being of all - the end; expropriation - the means.”<sup>57</sup> While the PLM’s anarcho-communist leanings towards collective liberation remained at the forefront of its praxis, the anarcho-syndicalist ideas of *La Casa* became blurred by its need for political support and the opportunism of some of its leaders.

*La Casa*’s mobilizing practices relied heavily on the notion that rural revolutions were in contradiction to their own ethos. In the eyes of the *Casa* members, Zapata’s troops begged for food rather than expropriating it (a function which they didn’t perform themselves, ironically) and wore armbands emblazoned with the image of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* – thus demonstrating the *zapatistas* affiliations with the Catholic Church – a symbol of authoritarian tyranny for *La Casa*.<sup>58</sup> However, such contradictions within anarchist ideals remained consistent since its inception. In 1847, Proudhon stated, “The Jew is the enemy of humankind. They must be sent back to Asia or be exterminated. By steel or fire or by expulsion, the Jew must disappear.”<sup>59</sup> He rationalized his anti-Semitism as not just a rational act but a tenet of anarchism in itself. He argued, “Land belongs to the race of people born on it, since no other is able to develop it according to its needs.”<sup>60</sup> Mikhail Bakunin critiqued Karl Marx due to his Jewishness, claiming that he was “extremely vain and glory-seeking, quarrelsome, intolerant, and as absolute as Jehovah, the God of his ancestors, and like him, vengeful to the point of madness.”<sup>61</sup> Both Bakunin and Proudhon’s espousals correlated with the popular sentiments of anti-Semitism that

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<sup>57</sup> James Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego, 1904-1923* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 58.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>59</sup> Proudhon, “On the Jews,” *Carnets de Proudhon* (Paris, 1847).

<sup>60</sup> Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2010), 257.

<sup>61</sup> Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, 204-205.

were widespread throughout Europe and existed in Mexico. Such xenophobic responses found their place in Mexican anarchisms, as well. The *Partido Liberal Mexicano*'s 1906 Program included a prohibition of Chinese immigration, which claimed that the Chinese were part of an elite strategy to undercut wages and small businesses. These views were especially popular in northern Mexico where much of the PLM's cells were located.<sup>62</sup> Hostilities towards other ethnicities remained a prominent aspect of all anarchist formations, largely due to the ideology's emphasis on preventing class divisions. However, it is safe to say that these hostilities came out of a general hostility towards foreigners frequently seen in regionalism. While offered as a solution to nationalism's hegemonic goals, regionalism performed more personalized and specific attacks on those who did not fit within the ideals of those struggling for self-determination of local spaces.

*La Casa del Obrero Mundial*'s intolerance towards the *zapatistas* perpetuated the growing hostility towards the agrarian movement in the *Casa* printing press. On February 14, 1915, newspaper reports from various *Casa* branches around the country stated that *zapatistas* killed more than thirty members of the *Sindicato de Obreros Tejedores* in Tizapán, including attacks on "defenseless women."<sup>63</sup> The *Casa* members of the Red Battalions rallied together against the *zapatistas* under a black and red flag emblazoned with the motto "*Solidaridad Humana*" – "Human Solidarity".<sup>64</sup> Though the attack remained unverified, it nonetheless perpetuated divisions between *La Casa* and the agrarian revolutionaries. To further complicate matters, the anarchist federation's friendly relationship with the Carranza government would prove short-lived. On January 13,

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<sup>62</sup> *Regeneración*, "Revised Program of 1906," September 3, 1910.

<sup>63</sup> Linda B. Hall, *Álvaro Obregón: Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), 112.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.



1916, Carranza ordered the closing of *La Casa*'s Mexico City headquarters, the House of Tiles, along with all of its regional branches. Álvaro Obregón attempted to rescue numerous members of *La Casa*'s strike committee from imprisonment and execution, though the power of the Carranza government thoroughly dismantled much of what remained of *La Casa*'s influence in the capital city.<sup>65</sup> With the urban-based anarchist mobilizations either suppressed or coopted, the working class no longer had a powerful, organizational base.

The hostilities against rural populations in *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*'s branches were prominent, but not universal. Under certain circumstances, such hostilities remained unsubstantiated due to the region's relationship to both rural and industrial life. Rather than abide by the rhetoric and acts of the *Casa* headquarters in Mexico City, members of the organization's peripheral branches focused more on regionally-specific responses to conditions within their local communities. Many of the urban-based ideological pretenses became intensified or dulled due to conditions on the ground. Such was the case in Tampico, Tamaulipas – a growing industrial port city located within the greater Huasteca region. The situation in Tampico demonstrated how anarchist organizing revolved largely around historical and geographical conditions rather than ideological purity.

### **Tampico & the Amalgamation of Urban/Rural Anarchist Consciousness:**

Throughout its history, the city of Tampico embodied an anomaly of conflicting spaces. During the turn of the century, the city was one of the hubs of oil extraction, yet

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 161-162.

surrounded by the rural haciendas and villages located throughout the states of Veracruz, San Luis Potosi, and Tamaulipas. Tampico's significance transcended just that of Mexico as a center of wealth, but was part of the larger neocolonial extraction policies of European and U.S. oil companies. As seen throughout the country, rural migrants moved into the city for better wages than those offered in the countryside. With socio-economic conditions in place as well as the region's history of foreign invasions fused a combination of trajectories that inspired the later development of anarchist resistance.

The Tampico branch of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* formed in October of 1915, and its newspaper, *Tribuna Roja*, promoted anarchist principles amongst the city's emerging working-class. While the PLM and *La Casa* debated vigorously in regards to the development of urban and rural organizing, the Tampico branch transcended this barrier and shared much of the PLM's revolutionary objectives. Many branches of *La Casa* held a strict tendency towards anarcho-syndicalism, which favored the development of urban revolution in contrast to what they perceived as reactionary elements amongst rural, predominantly Catholic, *campesinos* and peasants. Tampico's branch, however, did not hold such positions. Quite the contrary, they openly espoused the ideals of anarcho-communism. Particularly, the branch's emphasis on land redistribution as well as better working conditions merged the perspectives of *magonismo* and revolutionary syndicalism within Tampico's revolutionary movements. This can be largely attributed to one of the *Casa*'s primary organizers, Ricardo Treviño, an anarchist originally from Nuevo Leon who participated in a *magonista* cell in San Antonio, Texas.<sup>66</sup> Despite Treviño's

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<sup>66</sup> Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Cowen Verter (eds.), *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 13.

contributions to the theoretical and organizational foundation of the anarchist movement in Tampico, he would later prove to be one its most profound critics.

Nonetheless, Ricardo Flores Magón and the junta of *Regeneración* viewed Treviño and the Tampico branch in high esteem. When *Tribuna Roja* was under threat of being shut down by the *carrancistas* in 1917, the PLM wrote an article calling its readers to support the newspaper by sending donations to Ricardo Treviño. The article argued that out of all the publications in Mexico, it was the only one that remained “pure” in its convictions to anarchism. It went on to claim that its purity came from its distance from Carranza, the “scoundrel who perverts and corrupts everything.”<sup>67</sup> While *Casa* branches in other regions openly supported the confederation’s affiliation with the Constitutionals, the Tampico branch’s hostilities towards Carranza enhanced its relationship with various revolutionary movements that emphasized rural and urban solidarity movements.

Some of the major ideological differences between *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* in Tampico and the Mexico City branch developed largely due to their differing assessments of the populations in which they intended to organize. A stark contrast emerged within the parameters of formulating anarchist sentiments among both urban and rural-based workers. As noted above, the Mexico City branch of *La Casa* focused almost entirely on urban-based artisans and industrial workers as the hub of its revolutionary movement. The *campesinos* and peasants of the countryside were viewed as reactionary to the anarchist objectives of organization’s base. While some of the language seen in *La Casa*’s Mexico City foundational platform coincided with the

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<sup>67</sup> *Regeneración*, “Tribuna Roja” (Los Angeles, March 24, 1917).

objectives of the Tampico branch, the latter attempted to resolve the contested space of transitional workers moving into the growing industrial city's population.

In the Tampico branch of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial's* newspaper, *Tribuna Roja*, the organization developed a collective response to the tribulations of capitalism. As explained in an article from September 1915, *La Casa's* objective was to “unify the workers, taking them along the path of progress towards social emancipation, understood as the material, moral, and cultural improvement of all workers in a well-understood class equality.”<sup>68</sup> Both the Tampico and Mexico City *Casas* emphasized a unique “moral improvement.” For *La Casa* branch in Mexico City, the program of *Luz* described politically unaware workers as “enslaved” and “ignorant”. Contrastingly, the Tampico branch focused its “moralistic campaigns” primarily focused on workers’ weaning themselves from activities that emphasized personal desires rather than collective growth, and focused on social issues such as alcoholism, bullfights, cockfights, and gambling.<sup>69</sup> While the group’s objectives may be viewed as “civilizing” the newly migrated *campesinos*, an alternative reading relates more to the overall ambitions of the anarchist group.

Unlike social clubs or even the vast majority of political parties during the Mexican Revolution, *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* and other anarchist groups focused heavily on the social emancipation of workers. The primary transitional process to achieve such liberation involved the implementation of a social revolution; which

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<sup>68</sup> *Tribuna Roja*, “No hay que desmayar,” (Tampico, September 25, 1915), translated by author, as quoted in Aurora Mónica Alcayaga Sasso, “Librado Rivera y los Hermanos Rojos en el Movimiento Social y Cultural Anarquista en Villa Cecilia y Tampico, Tamaulipas, 1915-1931,” (PhD diss., Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City, 2006), 52.

<sup>69</sup> Alcayaga Sasso, “Librado Rivera y los Hermanos Rojos,” 52.

emphasized the destabilization of authoritarian hegemonic influences, but also the invigoration of their own social and cultural standings. The Tampico branch developed a critique of many Mexican traditions promoted by the Church, the State, and the landowner. As argued within many revolutionary movements, a working class culture of complacency and obedience perpetuated the influence of the nation's hegemonic powers. In other writings from Tampico's *Casa* members, counter-hegemonic sentiments permeated throughout the group's existence. The Spanish anarchist José Prat, editor of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial's* Tampico periodical *Germinal*, argued that the entire structure of Mexican society was founded on the bourgeoisie's control of social and cultural institutions that sedated a collective working class consciousness:

The privileged classes have dominated the disinherited multitudes, because they knew how to organize for the defense of their class institutions, while the proletariat was scattered, disjointed, and worse, without class consciousness. The poor and ignorant have failed against their adversaries, who have appropriated wealth and culture. The bourgeoisie has always maintained that it is stronger than the proletariat for its culture and its admirable organization in the service of self-interest and preservation of their privileges that exclude the proletariat. The bourgeoisie have also organized a strong material force to legally and financially protect their property as sacred and inviolable and to keep the working class bowed.<sup>70</sup>

Prat's assessment of the social and cultural circumstances of the disinherited and dispossessed contrasted other *Casa* writings. He argued that the institutionalization of power through wealth and cultural appropriation limited the *campesino*, peasant, and worker's capacity to resist. Therefore, it was solely through class consciousness that Prat found a solution to the destitution of Tampico's workers. This assessment paralleled

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<sup>70</sup> José Prat, "Luchas y cuestiones sociales," *Germinal* (Tampico, June 28, 1917), translated by author, as quoted in Aurora Mónica Alcayaga Sasso, "Librado Rivera y los Hermanos Rojos en el Movimiento Social y Cultural Anarquista en Villa Cecilia y Tampico, Tamaulipas, 1915-1931," (PhD diss., Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City, 2006), 87.

Enrique Flores Magón's argument for traditional collectivist practices found in rural indigenous and peasant communities. The acknowledgement of multiple paths towards a tangible anarchist revolution further enhanced the Tampico branch's relations to the city's working class communities, though elements of the state-consolidation impacted the branch's organizing capacities.



Figure 1: *Germinal: Periódico Libertario* (July 1917, Tampico, Tamaulipas)<sup>71</sup>

During the Tampico general strike of July 1917, the writers of *Germinal* placed the root of the struggle on the disparity created by the American war economy during World War I. In their strike manifesto, editors argued that the war effort only benefited Wall Street capitalists as the American economy shifted towards the production of war

<sup>71</sup> *Germinal: Periódico Libertario* (July 1917, Tampico, Tamulipas). IISH, Amsterdam.

materials. They called for Mexican workers to defend their region's resources and prepare for a "war of all the wretched of the earth in open revolt against the murderers of humanity."<sup>72</sup> The threat was all too apparent for the city's inhabitants. U.S. warships had patrolled the nearby Pánuco River and Gulf Coast from March 1916 and throughout the general strike.<sup>73</sup> Frequent military surveillance of the port as well as the continuous devaluation of Mexican-based oil companies in the international market only perpetuated the anarchists' perceptions that Mexico was being exploited for imperialist ambitions and purposely secluded from regional development.<sup>74</sup> Much of Tampico's land was invested in foreign-owned oil companies rather than the pockets of a local land owner. Due to the city's massive accumulation of wealth from the oil industry, the security and preservation of the region's chief commodity remained a primary concern for both the Constitutionalist government as well as deeply-invested countries such as the United States. Rather than promote an economic program of internal development based on nationalist tendencies, the Tampico anarchists extended their solidarity towards other regional anarchist movements as well as to the international solidarity networks in the United States and Latin America.

In regards to regional solidarity, the Tampico branch of *La Casa* established various ties to anarchist cells throughout the Huasteca and beyond. The newspaper *Germinal* was a collaborative production between the *Hermanos Rojos* of Doña Cecilia, various labor unions in Veracruz, Monterrey, and Oaxaca, as well as the Guadalajara

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<sup>72</sup> *Germinal*, "Manifiesto al Pueblo" (Tampico, July 2, 1917)

<sup>73</sup> Santiago, 210.

<sup>74</sup> Johnathon C. Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico*, 149.

branch of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*.<sup>75</sup> Beyond Mexico, the periodical received monetary support from anarchist groups in Cuba and the United States, and frequently reported on the anarchist movements in Chile, Uruguay, and Spain. In regards to collaborative objectives with other revolutionary syndicalist movements, the Industrial Workers of the World maintained the strongest ties to the Tampico anarchists. During the 1917 general strike, the Los Angeles branch of the IWW focused its commentary and solidarity towards the *Casa* branch and the Maritime Transport Workers Union Local 100, which included anarchists from the United States, Spain, Cuba, and various Southern Cone nations. The collaborative strike organized 15,000 workers to shut down the refineries of the Mexican owned “El Aguila,” the English-owned “Pierce” Company, and the American-owned “Huasteca” company.<sup>76</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón lambasted Carranza in an article of *Regeneración*, arguing that those that harmed production were not the workers, but the various foreign companies that extracted Mexico’s resources.<sup>77</sup> As has been noted by numerous historians, the likelihood of any form of collaborative interest between the Mexican government and foreign capitalists was highly unlikely. However, anarchist critiques of Carranza emphasized his willingness to participate in the international market despite the political realities. While this could be interpreted as a shift towards a national populist rhetoric, both the PLM and the Tampico branch of *La Casa*’s strict adherence to anti-capitalism were contrary to such ambitions.

The living conditions for workers in the city remained a central point of contention for anarchist organizers. While wages for oil workers were reasonably higher

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<sup>75</sup> Alcayaga Sasso, 59.

<sup>76</sup> *El Rebelde*, “Paro General de Tampico” (August 11, 1917).

<sup>77</sup> *Regeneración*, “La huelga en Tampico” (Los Angeles, September 1, 1917), translated by author.



than other regions, workers faced disease, fires, and oil gushes while on the job and at home. Myrna Santiago argues that the consequences of disease and hazard “were born of the same economic process subsumed in the ecology of oil, the development of twentieth-century industrial capitalism.”<sup>78</sup> The anarchists denounced the plight of Tampico’s workers in *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*’s affiliated newspaper *Luz*. In 1918, Andrés Araujo wrote for the following testimony of conditions for Tampico’s working class:

The conditions that Tampico workers are subjected to [are] terrible...entire families don’t eat every day... Conditions... created by the unmeasured ambition of the oil barons; what do they care about the needs and the sufferings of an entire people? What do they care about the life of the poor, if in the end the slaves are in the millions and it doesn’t matter if they kill them through starvation to increase profits or make political gains, or they kill them in war or conquer new markets or protect their interests?<sup>79</sup>

The masses that contested such mistreatment ranged from industrial workers to *enganchados* from the nearby countryside. Santiago’s proclamation that Tampico’s oil workers were “born political” stemmed from their interest in anti-Díaz mobilizing and anti-imperialist sentiments formulated in response to the city’s growing class stratification. By 1907, the *Partido Liberal Mexicano*’s *Regeneración* influenced “a new vocabulary and set of ideas” among Tampico’s residents.<sup>80</sup> It helped that groups like *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* used their pedagogy to help mobilize a literacy campaign among oil workers and their families, as well. By 1912, the radical mobilization of Tampico’s workers had reached astonishing levels. Santiago details,

The carpenters, many working for the oil companies then, formed a craft union, following the lead of the mechanics and the longshoremen. At the same time, the same labor groups opened schools for workers and their

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<sup>78</sup> Santiago, 201.

<sup>79</sup> *Luz*, October 23, 1918, cited in Santiago’s *Ecology of Oil*, 205.

<sup>80</sup> Santiago, 208.

children. Boys and girls attended during the day, and illiterate adults, despite twelve-hour workdays, learned to read and write at night. Their literacy kit included the political literature in circulation, particular anarchist and socialist propaganda.<sup>81</sup>

The impact of such a mobilization was essential to the city's anarchist mobilizations throughout the Mexican Revolution. With a population of approximately eighty-six thousand during the Revolution, 11.5% consisting of oil workers and up to 25% of the population somehow related to the oil industry, *La Casa's* ability to mobilize proved fruitful; by November of 1915, the local branch had a federation of fourteen craft unions under their authority.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the presence of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Tampico's port perpetuated the city's radical fervor as the revolutionary syndicalist union promoted internationalist solidarity and direct action. The radicalization of the region even shifted the city's colloquialisms. Santiago notes that after European immigrants, specifically Russian, came to find work in Tampico, the term "*compañero*" was exchanged for "*camarada*".<sup>83</sup> International influences among Tampico's working class communities provided unique cultural elements unseen in other parts of the country. The widespread influence of anarchism as well as the city's metropolitan influences led to organizing practices that differed dramatically from those affiliated with *La Casa del Obrero Mundial's* Mexico City counterparts.

Contrasting ideologies were seen within the Tampico branch in regards to the question of political alliances with the government. While *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* of Mexico City and other major cities backed the Constitutionalists in their fight against Zapata and Villa, Tampico's branch refused to fight against groups they ideologically

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<sup>81</sup> Santiago, 209-210.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

supported. In August 1916, with PLM influences remaining strong among Tampico's workers, none of *La Casa*'s members were among the volunteers that joined the Constitutionalist forces.<sup>84</sup> When assessing Tampico's population during the Revolution from a regional perspective, such actions can be seen as logical and tactical decisions of a newly formed working class community still connected to its agrarian identity. As mentioned earlier, many of the oil workers came from similar social and economic conditions as the *villistas* and *zapatistas*. Norman Caulfield argues that Tampico's working class joined the ranks of the IWW and *La Casa* to confront the consequences of urban living conditions. Caulfield notes, "The young, single men who migrated to Tampico arrived without customary kinship support structures and confronted problems with housing, sanitation, working conditions, and a high cost of living."<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the lack of amenities for the growing urban population only further accentuated the emerging working class population's consciousness. Furthermore, with the assistance and support of anarchist organizers in both social and cultural life, Tampico's position among the Huasteca's anarchist movements demonstrated a unique peculiarity with an autonomous militancy in contrast to other *Casa* strongholds.

Much of Tampico's labor militancy emerged from the city's unusual social hierarchy. Unlike Mexico City, Tampico lacked some of the most fundamental influences to social stratification – a traditional elite structure and the influence of the Catholic Church. Much of Tampico's wealth was invested in foreign-owned oil companies rather than the pockets of a local land owner. Due to the city's massive accumulation of wealth

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<sup>84</sup> Donald C. Hodges, *Anarchism after the Mexican Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 20-21.

<sup>85</sup> Norman Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State: From the Porfiriato to NAFTA* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1998), 24.

from the oil industry, the security and preservation of the region's chief commodity remained a primary concern for both the Constitutionalist government as well as the deeply-invested countries of Great Britain and the United States. For nine years, American destroyers remained off the coast of Tampico, remaining visual reminders of the imperialist nature of their region's class struggle.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, despite the city's growing population, only one parish priest was designated for a population of 100,000, with daily church attendance averaging between 50 and 100 persons.<sup>87</sup> With anticlericalism a major component of the Tampico anarchist movement, much of the hostilities of the city's workers focused on the region's long history of imperialist violence and neocolonial foreign investment. Newcomers to the city could not depend on the State, the Church, or any other institutional authority to defend them from abuse. Rather, as Norman Caulfield describes, "the majority of the workers used a reference point from the past – collective resistance and action – to confront the problems in their new industrial environment."<sup>88</sup> Unlike in other regions of the country where Catholic unions mobilized working class communities, the lack of Church influence in Tampico thwarted such developments. Thus, the anarchist organizations of Tampico offered support and community to the city's transitional workers.

Even so, *La Casa*'s overall purpose remained a contested issue within the local Tampico branch. Ricardo Treviño, one of the writers for *La Casa's Tribuna Roja* as well as a former member of the IWW-affiliated Tampico Petroleum Workers, challenged the

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<sup>86</sup> Santiago, 210.

<sup>87</sup> S. Lief Adleson, "The Cultural Roots of the Oil Workers' Unions in Tampico", in *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Johnathan C. Brown and Alan Knight (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 43.

<sup>88</sup> Caulfield, 24.

entire premise of the group's significance, in particular its role after the group's collaboration with the Constitutionalists. In Treviño's memoirs, he argued against the Tampico membership's opposition to support the Constitutionalist government, in particular viewing it as a failed opportunity for the anarchists to capitalize as leaders in the growing labor movement. He argued,

...the anarchist radicalism and intransigency [within *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*] created the environment and feasible conditions for new struggles and sterile sacrifices, unnecessary and detrimental to the development of the country's Worker Organization.<sup>89</sup>

Treviño's critiques demonstrated divisions within the Tampico branch's ideological stances, though the actions of workers vindicated their own analysis as one against all forms of governance and state collaboration. For Treviño, the anarchist movement was an infringement on the development of a nationalized labor front. Its "sterile sacrifices" meant next to nothing as they did not provide the prospects needed to promote economic growth.

Despite Treviño's views, the organizers and workers of Tampico's anarchist groups demonstrated a continuous support for anti-authoritarianism and direct action. Textile workers from Tampico adamantly objected to *La Casa*'s inclusion in the Red Battalions; even Pedro Coria, a member of the closely affiliated Los Angeles Mexican IWW Local #602 argued that siding with any army was "criminal," an opinion shared by the PLM's Enrique Flores Magón who argued that Carranza exploited the working class following of *La Casa*.<sup>90</sup> The Tampico branch of the IWW led the city's first mass protest and strike in April 1916 which demanded the eight-hour workday and a minimum wage

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<sup>89</sup> Ricardo Treviño, *El Movimiento Obrero en México: Su Evolución Ideológica* (Mexico City, 1948), 53.

<sup>90</sup> Caulfield, 20.

for all workers; quite tellingly, Ricardo Treviño called off the strike after participating and conceding to local military commander General Emiliano P. Nafarette's demand that the IWW suspend the action. In July of that same year, the IWW led an industry-wide general strike throughout the city of Tampico's oil refineries, leading to over 15,000 workers halting production to battle for wage increases.<sup>91</sup> Similar strikes would continue throughout the decade and would be embraced with calls of solidarity from *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*. In the September 1, 1917 issue of *Regeneración*, Ricardo Flores Magón condemned the recent imprisonment of several anarchist comrades including the director of *Germinal*, Rosaura Galván, and three foreign comrades, who had participated in a strike in the Huasteca oil fields. Flores Magón lambasted Carranza's support of foreign investors, stating, "The harmful one is you, *señor* Carranza, the harmful ones are your ministers, deputies, and other public officials weighing on the people without producing anything useful, the harmful ones are the bourgeoisie, of any color, but not the workers."<sup>92</sup> Rather than affirm itself through petit-bourgeois illusions manifested through self-assuring desires, *La Casa del Obrero Mundial's* Tampico branch attempted to confront the destitution of the region's workers. With larger portions of the city's working class community unified with one voice and the ideals of anarchism upon its tongue, the combination of urban and rural influences merged to challenge both local and foreign abuses of authority.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 25-27.

<sup>92</sup> *Regeneración*, "La huelga en Tampico" (Los Angeles, September 1, 1917), translated by author.

## Conclusion

Though anarchism never became the primary ideology of the Mexican Revolution, its roots were deeply embedded within the event's origins and historical development. It offered regionally specific conclusions to larger critiques of the future of Mexico and its relationship to internal and foreign capitalist development. The Tampico formations of anarchism developed in large part due to its emphases on self-determination and autonomous mobilization. An analysis of varying anarchist movements within their regional contexts provides insight into the complex nature of community mobilizing as well the ideology's accessibility to Mexico's peasant and working class communities. As European anarchism changed with the conditions in which the masses faced, so too did the Mexican anarchist movements.

Unlike the national narratives of fallen heroes, the histories of these individuals and organizations remained largely unheard except for those whose lives coincided with an official narrative. As demonstrated in this chapter, the anarchist tendencies of Tampico's working class resonated because of the city's specificity, not its similarities to other parts of the country. The city's continuous flow of transitional workers from the Huasteca countryside provided a population already conscious of anti-authoritarian ideologies from 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the local branch of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* needed to shift its ideals and practices to the region's conditions. This contrasted sharply to the other *Casa* branches that commonly aligned itself with set perceptions in regards to its placement within industrial society. The development of Tampico as an industrial center as well as the city's physical and cultural disconnection from Mexico City's

hegemonic influences permitted a form of peripheral anarchism to develop among workers.

The task for the *Casa* organizers soon became the struggle to maintain legitimacy in defiance of the Mexican government's attempt to incorporate labor into its post-revolutionary institutions. By addressing issues most pertinent to the workers, a collective identity formed through a mixture of regionalism and anarchism that countered the Constitutionalist's attempts to sustain revolutionary sentiment into complacency with the task of nation-building. After the unceremonious conclusion of the Mexican Revolution, anarchist organizers continued to promote radical sentiments based on revolutionary syndicalism, internationalism, and direct action. As the next chapter will detail, the success of the Tampico anarchists in formulating a regional consciousness played out largely as a contestation between the labor movement and the post-revolutionary Mexican state.



## **Chapter 2: Anarchist Responses to Post-Revolutionary State Formations, 1918-1930**

As the Mexican Revolution waned in its intensity, conflict arose among radical labor leaders. On May 25, 1918, the Tampico newspaper *Vida Libre* described a report of the anarchist organizer Vicenta Cabrera's participation in the annual National Workers Congress in Saltillo, Coahuila. Cabrera addressed the congress as a representative of the women's groups of various Tampico anarchist organizations, which over the past three years developed one of the strongest sectors of the anarchist movement in the region. Two of the conference's organizers, Ricardo Treviño and Luis Morones, were themselves former members of *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*, one of the organizations Cabrera represented. However, this particular conference led to the two men's shift away from the anarcho-syndicalist sentiments of *La Casa* and towards a collaborative relationship with the Constitutionalist government led by Venustiano Carranza, the very person who suppressed *La Casa* after the Mexico City general strike of 1916. Treviño and Morones had established strong ties with the Constitutionalist leader and future president, Álvaro Obregon, who shared their objective to consolidate the radical labor movements into one national movement. The collaboration marked a transition away from the Mexican labor movement's anarchist roots and towards a developmentalist model that supported economic nationalism and integration into the global capitalist market. Participants such as Vicenta Cabrera openly detested such an allegiance. She began her speech of May 1918 by chastising the lack of women's representation at the conference as well as the development of a nationalist identity within the labor movement. As a representative of various anarchist groups in the port of Tampico, these critiques reaffirmed the Tampico anarchist movement's long-standing emphasis on

regional labor organizing and internationalist solidarity. She ended her speech by explicitly reiterating the blending of anarcho-communist and anarcho-syndicalist ideals prevalent in Tampico, declaring, “Not only do we need bread, comrades, we need the land!”<sup>1</sup> Her call for land expropriation contrasted the Constitutionalist government’s efforts to restore national order without disturbing the existing property arrangements after eight years of civil war. The stance she and others took laid the foundations for the popular dissent that countered the post-revolutionary government and its attempts to stifle radical elements within the labor movement.

This chapter addresses the role of the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* (CGT) in establishing a nation-wide anarchist movement amidst the post-revolutionary government’s attempts to institutionalize the labor movement during the 1920s. In the Eastern Gulf region of the country, anarchism remained a significant ideological current throughout the Mexican Revolution. Tampico and the Huasteca region held sociopolitical, economic, and cultural significance for the administrations of presidents Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles, as they moved toward *institutionalizing* the Mexican Revolution. Two significant manifestations included the formation of a state-supported labor federation - the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* (CROM), and political party - the *Partido Laborista Mexicano* (PLbM), in an effort to thwart regional anarchist influences.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, areas such as the port of Tampico as well the states of San Luis Potosí and Veracruz became key sites for anarchist labor organizers to develop their

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<sup>1</sup> *Vida Libre*, “Del Congreso Obrero Nacional: Impresiones” (Tampico, May 25, 1918). IISH.

<sup>2</sup> To avoid any confusion between the earlier PLM (*Partido Liberal Mexicano*), I will refer to the *Partido Laborista Mexicano* as the PLbM to differentiate between the two organizations.

social and cultural influence through the promotion of revolutionary syndicalism and internationalism. As organizations such as the Pan-American Federation of Labor and the *Partido Comunista Mexicano* reanalyzed the Revolution's purpose for the Mexican working class, groups such as the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* demonstrated staunch opposition to nationalist and authoritarian tendencies. For the anarchists of the Gulf region, the Revolution had not been consummated. Working conditions remained stagnant in the oil fields and refineries. Anarchists challenged the state-sponsored labor movement's promises of *evolución social* through reform by promoting "*revolución social*."

#### **"Como Roba Oro Morones": The Rise of the State-Sponsored Labor Movement**

Throughout the 1920s anarchist groups all over Mexico attempted to counter the influence of two state-supported labor movements – the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* and the *Partido Laborista Mexicano*. The CROM emerged as a direct response to the persistent presence of anarchist organizations in the Huasteca region despite the Carranza government's abandonment of its former collaboration with *La Casa del Obrero Mundial*. In the absence of institutional control and oversight of the labor movement, conflict arose over the relationship between workers and the State. As the Constitutionalist attempted to stabilize the political sphere and the market economy, the influence of regional popular movements created unwanted and uncontrollable pockets of hostility. The Tampico general strike of 1917 demonstrated the potential consequences of the anarchist movement's impact on the national economy. Moreover, regions such as Veracruz and San Luis Potosí generated both urban and agrarian rebellions that

emboldened critiques to sustain the labor movement in order to ensure a sound political climate.

Led by former *Casa* members Luis Morones and Ricardo Treviño, their collaboration within the CROM represented a peculiar relationship based on opportunism. During the 1917 labor congress in Tampico, Treviño and other local anarchists adamantly opposed the proposals made by Morones's minority contingent from central Mexico.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Treviño's anarchist sentiments dissipated and a long-standing collaboration with Morones shaped the formation of the nationalized labor movement. From the CROM's earliest moments, its emphasis on centralized control and reformist practices contrasted with the anarchists. Critics such as Vicenta Cabrera denounced the reformist labor movement's growing nationalism and faced vitriolic responses from the reformist movement.

Ricardo Treviño responded to the anarchist critiques in the 1918 National Labor Congress's newspaper, *Lucha Social*, by emphasizing the need to support a united labor movement that promoted the reconciliation of class differences rather than class struggle. In his assessment of anarchist critiques of the Congress, Treviño argued that two different paths existed within the labor movement. The path of the anarchists emphasized the Mexican proletariat as a "single organism" that promoted communalism and class solidarity. The other, the path of the *cromistas*, supported a nationalized labor movement that promoted individual consumerism, which Treviño asserted as "the only way to form highly conscious individuals."<sup>4</sup> Treviño's argument against anarchist mobilizations

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<sup>3</sup> Marjorie Clark, *Organized Labor in Mexico* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1934), 58.

<sup>4</sup> *Lucha Social*, "De Organización para el Congreso" (Saltillo, April 28, 1918), IISH, Amsterdam.

reflected similar positions made by other *Casa* members in its support of the Constitutionalist formations of the Red Battalions. Despite the obvious ramifications of Carranza's suppression of *Casa* branches throughout the country in 1916, unlike with the previous concessions to the national government, Treviño and other *cromistas* seemingly supported the suppression of radical elements if it produced national unity and resolution to the larger civil war.

In the October 1918 publication of *Ariete*, the CROM's newspaper, the development of a nationwide labor front took precedent in the group's update to its membership. The organization mouthed slogans of the anarchists and Marxists to entice radical readers. Editors emphasized the importance of the theoretical frameworks of Karl Marx and prominent anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon to further the "study of the social question."<sup>5</sup> While the CROM maintained some left-leaning leaders, all this hid a self-serving institutional agenda. Despite the varying degrees of support and hostility towards anarchism, the CROM leadership moved its focus away from the national labor congress and towards counteracting anarchist influences in the Gulf region.

The organization's focus on the Huasteca region was by and large a strategic decision. Ricardo Treviño organized in Tampico throughout the Mexican Revolution and despite his resignation from the IWW Maritime Workers Union in 1917 continued publishing works throughout 1918 with *Grupo Vida Libre*, the final newspaper of Tampico's *Casa* branch. The primary goal of the CROM's mobilizations along the Gulf coast, however, was to promote the formation of new labor unions that could displace the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ariete*, "Libre Curso al Pensamiento" (October 19, 1918), IISH, Amsterdam.

anarchist movements. Two notifications in the group's newspaper, *Ariete*, offered insight into the objectives of organizing developments near the Huasteca region. *Ariete* printed notes of encouragement to the formation of a graphic artists' union in San Luis Potosí and the creation of *La Casa del Trabajo Libre*, a propagandist group located in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas.<sup>6</sup> The *Casa del Trabajo Libre*'s claimed to be an affiliate of the *Casa* branch in Tampico, but it is unclear if this was a project of the *Grupo Vida Libre*, the only remnant of the *Casa* as an organization in Tampico. The group may have been referring to campaigns by Ricardo Treviño, the former head of the Tampico *Casa* branch. The financial records of *Ariete* indicated that Treviño was given not only a \$181.50-peso salary, but \$20.20 pesos to travel to Tampico during the summer of 1918.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, J.M. Tristan, the CROM's secretary of the exterior along with Treviño, travelled during this period to San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, and Puebla. Over an eighth of *Ariete*'s income went towards its secretaries' travels to the Huasteca region, although the outcomes from the CROM bore little fruit.

The CROM initially attempted to demonstrate a connection between its objectives and those of the anarchist movements throughout the country. However, the federation's focus on both a national labor allegiance and collaboration with international labor federations drew the ire of anarchist groups throughout the country. In November of 1918, the central committee of the CROM formed a long-standing collaboration with American Federation of Labor president Samuel Gompers through the formation of the Pan-American Labor Federation. In their attempts to demonstrate a transnational labor

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<sup>6</sup> *Ariete*, "Por San Luis" and "Por Ciudad Victoria, Tamps." (October 19, 1918), IISH, Amsterdam.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, "Ingresos" and "Egresos" (October 19, 1918).

alliance, the CROM leadership met with Gompers to lay out the framework of their collaborative effort.<sup>8</sup> While the initial discussions remained promising of greater collaboration, there remained disagreement between the CROM and AFL in regards to the latter's disapproval of radical labor organizers. Morones's demand that there be an "agreement to secure justice for workers imprisoned in the United States" was met with staunch refusal by Gompers.<sup>9</sup>

The stipulation was made in regards to the imprisonment of IWW organizers in the United States, which remained a heated issue with much of the radical labor movement in Mexico. For the anarchists, the IWW prisoners were comrades imprisoned in their attempts to develop a revolutionary society. Gompers argued that the organizers were not imprisoned for their radical ideologies, but for their anti-war activities during World War I. Morones later revealed that his objection was staged to quell dissent from "the people back home" that stood in solidarity with the radical unions affiliated with the IWW.<sup>10</sup> Morones's disregard for anarchist and leftist sentiments in Mexico had damning repercussions. Despite the CROM's large national membership, ranging at around thirty thousand in the spring of 1918, by the end of the year anarchist dissent against the federation caused its membership to drop to around seven thousand members.<sup>11</sup> Despite the CROM's crisis in membership, a shift towards governmental stability provided an invaluable compensation for its loss in popular support.

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<sup>8</sup> John W.F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico: A Chronicle of the Revolution, 1919-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), 275.

<sup>9</sup> Nick Buford, "A Biography of Luis N. Morones: Mexican Labor and Political Leader" (Unpublished Dissertation: Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, August 1971), 29.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 159.

The fall of the Carranza government in 1920 brought a myriad of opportunities for the CROM leadership. President Álvaro Obregón appointed the heads of the federation to his government cabinet. Secretary general Luis Morones received one of the highest governmental honors by being appointed the head of the Department of Military and Manufacturing Establishments, which enjoyed a thirty-million-peso budget.<sup>12</sup> The position granted Morones oversight over eighteen factories that produced a variety of weapons for the military.<sup>13</sup> The position did not come without controversy, however. According to Nick Buford,

In 1921, Vito Alessio Robles, director of *El Demócrata*, accused Morones of having stolen at least 700,000 pesos from the Military Factories. In August, 1924, General José María Sánchez denounced Morones in the Senate for “exploiting” the Department to help support the *Labor Partido* [PLbM]. For this purpose he had used deductions from salaries of employees of the Military Establishments and Mexico City municipal employees in 1922 and 1923.<sup>14</sup>

While Morones maintained his innocence even after his cabinet career ended, various other *cromistas* in government positions also lost credibility among the radical labor contingents. Ricardo Treviño and other members of the *Grupo Acción*, the internal leadership of the CROM, received high positions under Obregón in the Distrito Federal’s municipal and city councils. Such collaborations between Obregón and the CROM were formulated as early as August of 1919, nine months before Carranza was ousted from the presidency and killed. The pact between Obregón and the *cromistas* asserted that the *Grupo Acción* controlled the major ministries of labor and agriculture. It also affirmed that any and all labor resolutions proposed by the Mexican government be approved by

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<sup>12</sup> Buford, 40.

<sup>13</sup> Dulles, 276.

<sup>14</sup> Buford, 41.



the CROM. The resolution that carried the most national influence regarded the institutional role of the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* and its political wing, the *Partido Laborista Mexicano*, formed in 1919. The resolution affirmed that the “faculties for propaganda and labor organization throughout the country should be given to the Mexican Federation of Labor [CROM] and the Labor Party [PLbM].”<sup>15</sup> With the installment of Obregón as president, the concessions made in 1919 were finally brought to fruition. The opportunity to establish a fully state-supported labor movement and party provided influence through institutional clout and economic sustainability. Both elements were difficult processes for the regional anarchist groups to compete against, particularly since the CROM and the PLbM continued to affiliate with anti-capitalism sentiments and imagery its affiliation with a variety of state institutions.

While the labor federation offered an attempt to neutralize radical labor elements, the *Partido Laborista Mexicano* embodied the political sector of labor institutionalization. However, distinctions between the CROM and the PLbM remained minimal due to both group’s large overlap in resources and influence. Formed in 1919, the *Grupo Acción* remained the forerunners of the PLbM, with Ricardo Treviño and other *cromistas* as its candidates. Initially, they claimed the intention “to carry class war into the field of politics.”<sup>16</sup> Attempts were also made to differentiate the CROM and the PLbM as two separate organization entities, however, such distinctions proved futile due to the vast interrelation between the affiliates and ideologies of both groups. While the CROM attempted to appear apolitical within the sphere of national politics, its structure

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<sup>15</sup> Clark, 72-73.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, 70.

had been institutionalized by the Obregón administration and would be utilized during the presidencies of Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) as well as the *Maximato* heads of state (1928-1934). The income of the CROM between 1923 and 1925 illustrated that \$150,031.55 MXN of the group's \$214,247.63 MXN income (70%) went towards the *Grupo Acción*'s salaries.<sup>17</sup> In regards to collaboration between labor and politics, the financial success of one element was interrelated with the other. By 1930 the CROM openly declared affiliation with the PLbM by declaring support for non-Labor Party candidates as an equivalent to "treason."<sup>18</sup> For the *Grupo Acción*, the incorporation of the labor movement through federations and politics indicated a significant shift away from the concept of worker unification. The CROM leadership reaffirmed the need to incorporate their objectives within a growing state apparatus to affirm social, political, and cultural hegemony.

Institutionally, the CROM and PLbM demonstrated the dilution of radical dissent into the nationalized labor movement. With the policies and direction of labor lying heavily in the hands of Luis Morones, objection to the CROM's reforms remained unheard due to the organization's monopoly over governmental positions and arbitration of labor disputes. Notions of using governmental arbitration for conflicts contrasted the direct action objectives of the anarchist and leftist policies of earlier labor unions and organizations. The Labor Party only accentuated such accommodations in its 1920 convention platform, which called for the government to become paternalistic in labor

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<sup>17</sup> Jorge Basurto, *El Proletariado Industrial en México, 1850-1930* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1975), 207.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

conflicts. Rather than calling for “class war” based from below; the “class war” of the *Grupo Acción* would be carried on by agents of the state. The PLbM’s proposed,

...effective enforcement of labor laws, the establishment of experimental granges, irrigation projects, and mechanical and vocational schools; dissemination of primary education especially among adults, men and women alike; autonomy for state and municipal government; and regulation of the manufacture, sale and use of alcoholic beverages in order to curb drunkenness.<sup>19</sup>

While such objectives were certainly progressive in their efforts to resolve urban and agrarian conflicts, they maintained their support for increased government oversight within the functions of society. These objectives were largely successful under the Obregón and Calles presidencies, which distributed around 4.5 million acres of land to *campesinos* located where *agrarista* sentiments were the most volatile – San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, and Morelos.<sup>20</sup> The implementation of the Labor Party’s objectives thus benefited the post-revolutionary government twofold. It affirmed its ability to carry through on promises regarding labor reform and it consolidated its usefulness to the expanding CROM through undemocratic and statist practices.

Plutarco Elías Calles, Obregón’s successor, utilized his relationships with the PLbM and the *Partido Socialista del Sureste* to perpetuate a populist image that promoted socialist education policies, agrarian reform, and labor rights – all of which assisted in his ascension to the presidency.<sup>21</sup> Labor Party representatives took over positions in state and municipal governments, thus granting “state and municipal autonomy” through the imposition of *cromistas*. Therefore, the PLbM’s objectives did not push for democratic

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<sup>19</sup> Buford, 47.

<sup>20</sup> Jürgen Buchenau, *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), 123.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

policies in an attempt to voice workers' demands, but instead developed strongholds within the State to maintain political power. The relationship between the Mexican government, the CROM, and the PLbM maintained authoritarian practices to continue their influence among organized labor. Morones's relationship with Calles brought on significant labor reforms such as paid leave, worker's compensation, overtime pay, and the mandate of an eight-hour work day. However, the CROM's power came through the president's support of the group's bribing, extorting, and forcing hundreds of labor unions to become members of the CROM. These strong-arm tactics led to a surge in membership, with claims of nearly two million (more than 10% of Mexico's population) by 1926.<sup>22</sup>

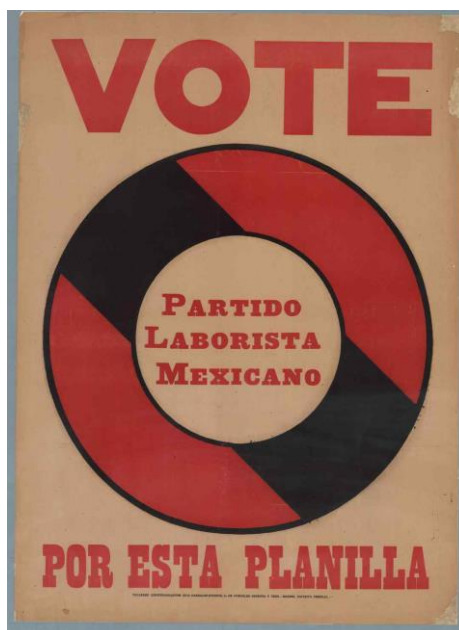


Figure 2: *Partido Laborista Mexicano* Elections Poster, 1924.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 115-116.

<sup>23</sup> Partido Laborista Mexicano. *Elections*. 1924. Original copy located at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, Netherlands.



Figure 3: Ricardo Treviño and Luciano Herrera Election Posters for deputy positions in Mexico City.<sup>24</sup>

Considering the anarchist movement's overwhelming influence within much of the labor movement during and after the Mexican Revolution, a key factor of the CROM and PLbM's hegemony relied on their ability to adopt the rhetoric and imagery of the anarchist movements. As explained above, the CROM and PLbM continued to utilize a form of radical rhetoric invoking notions of "class war" and proletarian sentiments to pull membership away from anarchist, communist, and other radical movements. This included the CROM's adoption of the popular *Casa del Obrero Mundial* slogan, "*Salud y Revolución Social*." The Labor Party consistently used red and black symbols in their imagery to evoked connections to anarcho-syndicalism, as well persistent references to their "revolutionary" outlook in political posters. It could be argued that the CROM and the PLbM were in fact attempting to assert a form of social revolution similar to that of

<sup>24</sup> Partido Laborista Mexicano. *Treviño, Ricardo*. Ricardo Treviño and Luciano Huerrera Elections Posters, 1924. Original copy located at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

anarchist groups. Anarchist organizations affiliated with the *Casa* in Tampico often critiqued the consumption of alcohol as well as the working-class's participation in "illicit" activities such as gambling and bullfights.<sup>25</sup> These were direct issues brought up by the *Partido Laborista Mexicano* in their attempts to mobilize popular political support, as well. Ricardo Treviño's ideological influence may have had a major influence in these positions both in Tampico and the PLbM, however, these were not new positions among anarchist groups, or revolutionaries, in general. The 1911 anarchist uprising in Baja California led by Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón's *Partido Liberal Mexicano* shut down saloons and destroyed all alcohol reserves within the liberated towns and cities; a similar practice was conducted by Plutarco Elías Calles during his control of Sonora.<sup>26</sup> The primary difference between such examples is the intention to foment "social revolution" or not.

The CROM and the PLbM's objectives remained in unison with the post-revolutionary government to promote themselves as the benefactors of the Revolution. Their systemic and institutional collaborations infused institutional reforms not only as standard practices of the post-revolutionary society, but also as a way to convince workers that the Revolution had been worth fighting for and that the government that emerged from the civil war was focused on their interests. To expand on Alan Knight's assessment, the Mexican Revolution did not have a set political ideology or suggested outcome, but many political ideologies and outcomes which benefited different parts of

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<sup>25</sup> Alcayaga Sasso, "Librado Rivera y los Hermanos Rojos," 52.

<sup>26</sup> Ethel Duffy Turner, *Revolution in Baja California: Ricardo Flores Magón's High Noon* (Detroit: Blaine Ethridge Books, 1981), 7-9. Buchenau, *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution*, 60.

Mexican society differently due to their relationship to the Mexican state.<sup>27</sup> Unlike the leaders of the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* and the *Partido Laborista Mexicano*, a large strain of anarchists rejected collaboration with these practices of state formation. For various regions of Mexico, both rural and urban, the Revolution had not fulfilled their ultimate objectives – a revolutionary society that deconstructed the institutions that oppressed the nation’s masses. Workers in the Mexican Gulf region sought to bring forth a revolutionary society not through an authoritarian state, but through the collective redistribution of land and power. However, the ramifications of an institutionalized labor movement required a national response, thus transforming Mexican anarchist movements towards a broad front to oppose labor’s collaboration with the State and provocation of its anti-capitalist revolutionary mobilizations.

### **The CGT & the Struggle against Authoritarianism:**

With the government’s support of the CROM and the PLbM, deeper divisions emerged between the reformists and anarchists as the former’s social structure supported class stratification. Anarchists proceeded in its continual detestation of the political alliances of the *Grupo Acción*. However, the radical movement had to deal with the growing power of the State within working class communities. Even from the earliest formations of anarchist movements in Mexico, the question of national identity remained largely placed within the context of national liberation and regional autonomy. The waning of revolutionary violence led to a media and State emphasis on national

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<sup>27</sup> Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 2: Counter-Revolution and Reconstruction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 232.

development. In 1921, the formation of the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* (CGT) countered the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* and the *Partido Laborista Mexicano*'s attempts to promote a nationalist discourse within the labor movement. In response to both the communist party's left-wing nationalism and the CROM's state-sponsored reformism, the CGT opposed all collaboration with the State outright as well as discouraged support of any state-sponsored labor organizations. In order to effectively challenge these institutions, anarchists from all over the country united around the platform of revolutionary syndicalism, anti-imperialism, and internationalism in opposition to all forms of reformism.

While the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* remained particularly influential in Central Mexico during the 1920s, its existence was largely formulated through an array of networks throughout the eastern Gulf region of the country. It was in fact the *Hermanos Rojos* of Villa Cecilia, Tamaulipas, along with their comrades from Aguascalientes, who initially proposed an anarchist alternative to the CROM in 1919. However, due to the strict suppression of radical labor organizations under Carranza, the group remained dormant for another two years. Similar to other anarchist groups in Tampico, the CGT's revolutionary diagnosis was based on internationalist solidarity, revolutionary syndicalism, and anti-imperialism. These ideals naturally distanced themselves the CROM and PLbM, as both groups promoted the developmentalist policies of nationalist economic policies under Obregón and Calles. However, with the emergence of the *Partido Comunista Mexicano* in 1919, the CGT made the specific point to reject to



any ties with the Third International, as well.<sup>28</sup> Thus, any notion that the anarchist federation was moving away from its initial anti-nationalist sentiments were largely dismissed by their distrust of any national or social imperialist allegiances, regardless of ideological leanings.

On the issue of internationalist solidarity, the *Confederación General de Trabajadores*'s very foundation was based on a network of anarchist union federations located throughout Europe and the Americas. The CGT was an affiliate of the *Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores*, which consisted of the largest revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist unions in Spain (*Confederación General del Trabajo - CNT*), Italy (*Unione Sindacale Italiana - USI*), Germany (*Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands - FAUD*), Argentina (*Federación Obrera Regional Argentina - FORA*), and the United States (*Industrial Workers of the World - IWW*). A continuous dialogue was shared between these unions through the CGT's periodicals such as *Nuestros Ideales* (Mexico City, 1922) and *Nuestra Palabra* (Mexico City, 1923-1924), as well as various smaller unions found throughout Europe and Latin America. Through these international networks and the wide distribution of the Mexico City-based newspapers to the various regions of the country, an anarchist cultural sphere developed as the news of dozens of revolutionary organizations and movements flowed fluidly throughout the country's *pueblos*, *escuelas racionalistas*, and workplaces. These networks provided Mexican workers and *campesinos* with not only a global perspective of their ideals, but also a community of organizers working together to develop a popular sentiment that encouraged the association of workers of all backgrounds. This contrasted sharply to the

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<sup>28</sup> Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 161.

stratified nationalist constructs of the Mexican government institutions that influenced the early cultural nationalist calls for unity.

Unlike the CROM, the anarchist federation maintained a strong anti-nationalist sentiment, despite being a national institution. Rather, it practiced a staunch dissension from nationalist sentiments through the practice of anarchist federalism. This practice, later to be known as platformism, emphasized collective action through objectives that were easily agreed upon by its participants.<sup>29</sup> In order to formulate an anarchist coalition, such respect to autonomous mobilizations remained essential considering the varying degrees of sociopolitical, cultural, and economic divisions found through Mexico's regions. In the case of the eastern Gulf coast, such autonomy was pivotal in developing connections with the wide variety of anarchist, communist, and radical movements. In San Luis Potosí, Veracruz, and Tampico, elements of federalism and regional autonomy had been persistent since the 1820s.<sup>30</sup> During the February 1921 convention, numerous members of the region's anarchist movement were present, including Juan Barrio, representing Veracruz workers, Benito Obregón for *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* of Tampico, Samuel Navarro from the *Hermanos Rojos* of Villa Cecilia, Herón Proal of Veracruz's *Antorcha Libertaria*, and the Spanish anarchists Rubio and San Vicente

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<sup>29</sup> While the term platformism was not used by the CGT itself, however was contemporary theme in international anarchist circles. In the Ukraine, the revolutionary movement led by Nestor Makhno espoused the first notions of platformism. It would be also taken up by the anarchist fighters of the *Confederación General de Trabajo* during the Spanish Civil War. While largely based on the voluntary agreement to mobilize militias, platformism also includes an emphasis on apolitical revolutionary associations which emphasized anti-authoritarian consciousness. It stood in sharp contrast to the central committees of the Soviet states, which groups such as the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine and the Spanish CNT opposed during their revolutionary movements. The CGT's use of platformist tactics was primarily used to allow anarchists and communists within the organization to work together, despite ideological differences in regards to revolutionary vanguardism or the creation of central committees.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Saad Saka, *For God and Revolution: Priest, Peasant, and Agrarian Socialism in the Mexican Huasteca* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013): 20.

representing communist locals from Veracruz and Tampico.<sup>31</sup> In order to consolidate these various organizations under one strain of thought, the representatives synthesized a shared objective of promoting the ideas of libertarian communism.

Unlike earlier divides between anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-communists based on urban/rural distinctions, the confederation attempted to resolve these contestations as demonstrated in their motto, “*Salud y Comunismo Libertario*.” The shift in focus in motto challenged the acquisition of the anarchist sentiment “*Salud y Revolución Social*” by the CROM towards a reconciliation of ideology and practice. Resolutions at the July 9, 1921 Mexico City Congress affirmed these sentiments by denouncing division between industrial and rural workers,

The CGT will intensify the revolutionary relations of social economic character between the laborer of the cities and the worker in the countryside so that there are more solid bonds and class solidarity between them.<sup>32</sup>

While the CGT headquarters was based out of Mexico City, the Tampico and the Huasteca unions maintained their autonomy while remaining pivotal sectors of its national confederation. The CGT’s collaboration with both rural and urban radical groups countered the objectives of the CROM and the *Partido Comunista Mexicano* (PCM). While the CROM attempted to merge rural and urban labor through their collective national identity, the CGT emphasized their positions within capitalist society as the opponents of the ruling classes, regardless of the form of labor. The PCM, however, faced a major setback in its organizing as the Comintern declared during its 1921

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<sup>31</sup> Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *Los Bolsheviki: Historia Narrativa de los Orígenes del Comunismo en México, 1919-1925* (México: Grupo Editorial Planeta, 1986), 113-114.

<sup>32</sup> Guillermina Baena Paz, *La Confederación General de Trabajadores: Antología* (México: Centro de Estudios Históricos del Movimiento Obrero Mexicano, 1982), 57.

Congress of Baku's that communist parties in the Global South should not attempt to develop class solidarity with agrarian and urban workers. Rather, the objective of groups such as the PCM was to focus on infiltrating developed political parties and organizations such as the CROM and the *Partido Laborista Mexicano* and to avert their attention from agrarian organizing due to the presumed reactionary sentiments of *campesinos*.<sup>33</sup> While the PCM's primary organizer M.N. Roy boycotted the Congress, the pressures from the Comintern were elevated to focus on internal development and the spreading of propaganda among workers.<sup>34</sup> This would ultimately damage the PCM's influence throughout the decade.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the CGT's organizing of rank-and-file members surpassed both the CROM and PCM. However, these numbers also demonstrate the growing influence of the Mexican government among workers and the continuous disintegration of revolutionary movements during the presidency of Plutarco Elias Calles and his influential period known as the *Maximato*. While Luis Morones claimed that the CROM had one million members in 1932, the analysis of Marjorie Clark placed their membership at approximately 13,000, while the CGT maintained around 20,000 members. The PCM, however, would not surpass 20,000 members until late 1938.<sup>35</sup> In regions such as the Mexican Gulf, the inclusiveness of the rural and urban workers, as well as the emphasis on regional autonomy, remained a tried and true process for anarchist organizers. Similar positions were taken by the Tampico branch of *La Casa del*

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<sup>33</sup> Daniela Spenser, *Stumbling its Way through Mexico: The Early Years of the Communist International* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 10.

*Obrero Mundial* as being openly anarcho-communist in contrast to other cities heavy emphasis on anarcho-syndicalism. However, the primary function of organizing emphasized the preservation of identity and revolutionary thought among workers, not membership numbers.

To develop class consciousness, the CGT developed worker-controlled social and cultural events for workers and their families. As Myrna Santiago describes in her research on the ecological effects on Tampico's oil workers, literacy kits and education programs were given to both workers and children to assist in their collective educations.<sup>36</sup> *Escuelas Racionalistas* were developed and maintained in various areas of the Huasteca region. In San Luis Potosí, the former PLM junta leader Librado Rivera assisted in the formation of cultural group, *Tierra y Libertad* and the CGT's newspaper, *Nuestra Palabra*, published lists of books on feminism and sexual education that were available for distribution.<sup>37</sup>

The transmission of knowledge took on a new precedent along the oil refineries as CGT organizers promoted education for workers and the families. Jose C. Valades, one of the major leaders of the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* often visited the refineries located along the Pánuco River to sell copies of Ricardo Flores Magón's literature that was edited by fellow CGT organizer and former *magonista* Nicolás T. Bernal.<sup>38</sup> Continuing the *Casa del Obrero Mundial*'s tradition of *escuelas racionalistas* in working class neighborhoods near the refineries, the anarchist confederation attempted to promote the radicalization of not only workers, but their families, as well. One of

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<sup>36</sup> Santiago, 209-210.

<sup>37</sup> *Nuestra Palabra*, "¡Libros!" (Mexico City: September 25, 1924). IISH.

<sup>38</sup> José Valades, *Memorias de un joven rebelde: 2a parte* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 1986), 142.

Valades's primary projects during his time spent in Tampico included the formation of the *Unión Infantil Anarquista* in Mata Redonda, Veracruz near the Huasteca Company oil field. The children of oil workers were incorporated into the collective consciousness of anarchist organizing as CGT organizers formed makeshift classrooms with materials provided by the petroleum workers. In his memoirs, Valades explained the purpose of the *Unión Infantil Anarquista* as the promotion of literacy through grammar lessons and learning songs, but also in the establishment of libertarian values in the children of the *petroleros*. The squalid conditions of the working class neighborhoods left few opportunities for the children's education or even much of a childhood. Valades described the conditions, "My small pupils came from the poorest levels. All the boys and girls walked barefoot, jumping about in the hot sand. Their languished faces, those little ones that circled me expected only warm words; they enthralled many, many days of my life." Rather than merely providing services to the worker's families, Valades wished to influence new ways of thinking among the children. He explained, "My purpose was to develop within the children the spirit of mutual aid so that the pupils did not merely do what they were told to do, but became teachers among themselves." The distinction in Valades's pedagogy came in his promotion of anarchist ideals for all members of the family. Promoting the collective consciousness of solidarity had the potential to dismantle internal forms of authority within the family unit. Valades argued, "Children should not correspond to the authority of their parents, but to the love of their parents."<sup>39</sup> With all members of the family included in the CGT's organizing practices,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.,148.

the perpetuation of an anarchist culture manifested itself through providing basic needs along with organizing the refineries and oil fields.

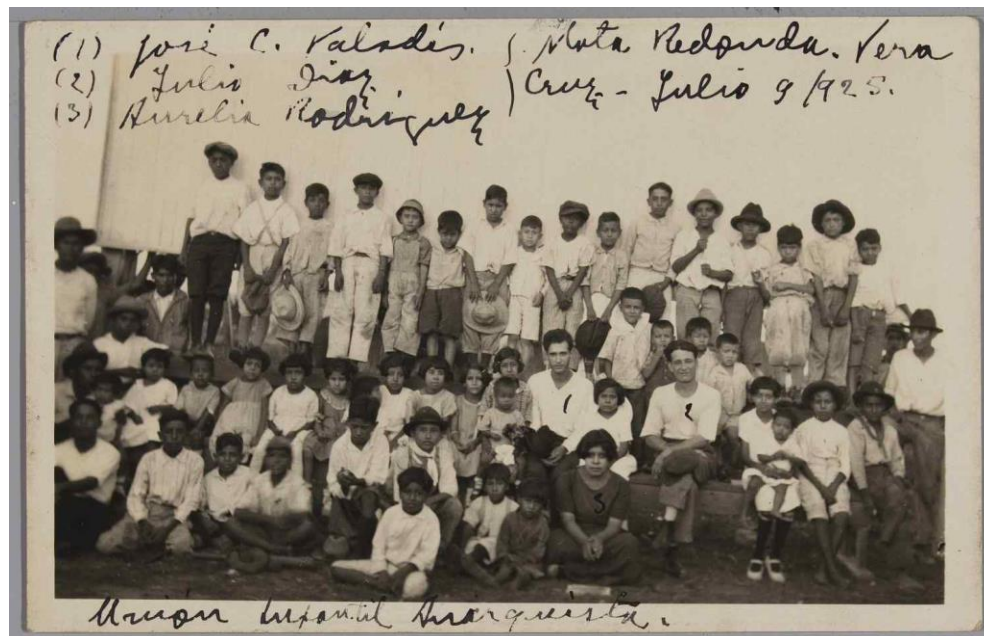


Figure 4: *Unión Infantil Anarquista* (July 9, 1925, Mata Redonda, Veracruz)<sup>40</sup>  
 José Valadés sitting in the center (1), along with Julio Díaz (2) and Aurelia Rodríguez (3), surrounded by the children of the *Unión Infantil Anarquista*.

<sup>40</sup> “*Unión Infantil Anarquista*” (July 9, 1925, Mata Redonda, Veracruz). Original copy located at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, Netherlands.



Figure 5: CGT Meeting in Mata Redonda, Veracruz (May 27, 1925)<sup>41</sup>

As the incorporation and development of a collective identity persisted throughout the Huasteca and Gulf region, the CGT maintained the militancy of its ideological perceptions through practices of self-policing. Even as the CGT attempted to mend the conflicts between Marxists and anarchists in Mexico through their joint hostilities towards the CROM, it also feared losing its hegemonic influence among the working class and agrarian movements. In one instance, the CGT sent out an alarming notification to its membership warning of the potential infiltration of an anarchist organization in San Luis Potosí. Tipped off by the group *Tierra y Libertad* in August of 1924, the article warned that the leader of the rationalist school *Grupo Francisco Ferrer Guardia*, Candelario Lucio, was a “fascist” promoting himself as the “sole director of the

<sup>41</sup> Abad de Santillán, D. (192527). *Meeting on Mata Redonda*. Original copy located at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, Netherlands.



revolutionary movement in San Luis.”<sup>42</sup> While the accusations of fascism remained largely a manifestation of a general hostility towards any form of authoritarianism, the group used the term to emphasize their extreme distrust of both Lucio as a person and his actions. Ultimately, it was determined that he had also infiltrated the *Sindicato de Campesinos “Praxedis Guerroo”* in an attempt to incorporate it within the *Comisión Nacional Agraria*, a government agency created by Carranza in 1915 in attempt to thwart radical rebellions. The message was signed by all thirty members of the *Grupo Tierra y Libertad*, including the well-respected Librado Rivera.

Lucio’s reaction only reaffirmed the suspicions of the anarchists of the region. In the *Grupo Francisco Ferrer Guardia’s* newspaper, *El Racionalista*, Lucio argued that the rationalist school’s interests were in the promotion of anarchist ideals and nothing further. However, the author included a list of supporters that seemed to ideologically contradict Lucio’s claims of promoting anarchism. The article asserted that not only the CROM and PLbM supported the rationalist schools, but the CGT and PCM, as well. Besides the obvious contradiction that the CGT instigated the public critique of the group, the ideological alliances of the CGT and PCM remained adamantly in rejection of any form of collaboration with the CROM or the Labor Party.<sup>43</sup> While the policing of fellow anarchist groups remained a controversial and volatile act throughout various anti-authoritarian circles in Mexico, the groups’ emphases in rejecting all forms of authoritarianism remained a consistent stream of thought.

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<sup>42</sup> *Nuestra Palabra*, “A Los Trabajadores: ¡¡¡Alerta!!!” (Mexico City, August 21, 1924), IISH, Amsterdam.

<sup>43</sup> *El Racionalista*, “Francisco Ferrer Guardia: Iniciador de la Escuela Racionalista, asesinado vilmente por los esbirros del Rey de España” (October 13, 1924). IISH, Amsterdam.

**“Frente Único, ¡Nunca!” - Anarchist Resistance to State & Imperial Hegemony in La Huasteca:**

A month before the incident in San Luis Potosí, the CGT declared a strong objection to the suppression of revolutionary anarchists in Italy under the fascist government of Benito Mussolini. The newspaper also printed a testimony of the suppression written by a representative of the Children of Political Prisoners Relief Committee, a subsidiary of the AIT’s Italian network, the *Unione Sindacale Italiana*. Members of the CGT were requested to support the children of political prisoners through adoption of the child, sending unperishable foods, or through financial donations. Furthermore, the CGT called for a collective boycott of Italian products as well as the landing of the boat “Italia” in the ports of Veracruz and Tampico.<sup>44</sup> Despite the geographical distances that separated the two organizations, the bonds formulated by the *Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores* further emphasized the collective identity shared by anarchists across the world at that moment. While the anarchist confederation maintained solidarity with fellow anarchists across the Atlantic, they maintained suspicions against groups they deemed authoritarian by design.

Throughout the years of 1923 and 1925, a series of strikes would ignite the Huasteca region, demonstrating the revolutionary consciousness in the area and the growing influence of authoritarian elements connected to both the nationalist labor movement and the influence of the Comintern. Three of the region’s most prominent oil fields, El Aguila (Doña Cecilia, Tamaulipas), Huasteca (Mata Redonda, Veracruz), and Mexican Gulf (Las Matillas, Veracruz), became centers of violent labor disputes. The fields were located

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<sup>44</sup> *Nuestra Palabra*, “Boycot el Barco “Italia”” (Mexico City, July 26, 1924). IISH, Amsterdam.

alongside the Pánuco River borderline between Tampico and Veracruz, thus leaving a great deal of overlap both in population and ideological sentiments. Between March 23 and July 28 of 1924, an independent labor union, the *Sindicato de Obreros de la Compañía Mexicana de Petróleo El Aguila*, successfully struggled for union recognition as well as a sustainable contract. While Myrna Santiago's excellent analysis of the labor conflict indicated a lack of anarchist sentiments, she goes on to describe how the strike was launched by a group of workers storming the refinery, holding a manager hostage by gunpoint, while a black-and-red flag draped across the closed gates.<sup>45</sup> Anarchists may not have been the primary organizers of the strike, but radical sentiments among workers remained significant in the actions of the workers. When CROM leaders Luis Morones and Ricardo Treviño attempted to develop a "sweetheart deal" with the *El Aguila* company, workers threatened violence against the *cromistas* and eventually ran them out of town.<sup>46</sup> Regardless of political positions, the new union's laborers maintained their objection to outside interference from the state-sponsored labor organization.

While the CROM stripped food and financial support from the striking workers, the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* openly supported the strike. Just days before the strike commenced, the Tampico CGT workers gleefully supported the disaffiliations of the *Sindicato de Agricultores Unidos del Bravo* and the *Group Femenil "Emancipación"* from the CROM.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, it supported the *El Aguila* strikers and called for internationalist solidarity with the workers. Three days after the strike had commenced, the CGT published an article requesting that the AIT disseminate propaganda in support

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<sup>45</sup> Santiago, 297.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 298-299.

<sup>47</sup> *Nuestra Palabra*, "De Tampico" (Mexico City: July 19, 1924). IISH, Amsterdam.

of the workers with revolutionary syndicalists in China and Japan, as well as IWW contingents across the world.<sup>48</sup> The CGT recognized the importance of solidarity with the independent workers union, despite their support of collective efforts.

While the workers at *El Aguila* were successful in obtaining an independent labor contract, the workers at Huasteca and Mexican Gulf faced greater opposition because of their anarchist positions. The Communist Party openly supported the various labor organizations through “moral and economic solidarity” and detested the use of the scabs.<sup>49</sup> However, the CGT remained steadfast in its critiques of collaboration with the PCM. In one article, “*El Frente ‘Unico’ Panacea*,” hostilities over the PCM’s growing influence in Tampico became increasingly apparent. In an attack against the communist party’s participation in the strike as well as mocking the Veracruz communist newspaper *El Frente Único*, the editors of the article lambasted the PCM as the “neo-marxists” protégés of José Vasconcelos, then Secretary of Public Education. CGT organizers claimed that the PCM viewed themselves as “the only salvation of the oppressed” despite their ideologies being developed in the “laboratory illuminated in Moscow.”<sup>50</sup>

Much of their detestations perpetuated the sectarian divisions that had existed between the PCM and anarchists since the party’s inception. However, the accusation that José Vasconcelos was blatantly false, though the accusation most likely referred to Vasconcelos’s institutional support of muralist painters such as Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros – both of whom were PCM members at the time. Nonetheless, the CGT’s consistent concern of Marxist-Leninist influences seemed to have also emerged

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., “Nuestra Posición Ante el Conflicto de “El Aguila”” (Mexico City: July 26, 1924). IISH, Amsterdam.

<sup>49</sup> *El Machete*, “El Conflicto de la “Huasteca” (Mexico City: September 11, 1924). CEMOS, Mexico City.

<sup>50</sup> *Nuestra Palabra*, “El Frente ‘Unico’ Panacea” (Mexico City, July 24, 1924). IISH, Amsterdam.

due to the growing presence of the PCM in the region. Herón Proal, the Veracruz communist leader that maintained elements of anarchist organizing, was mobilizing tenant strikes to develop the PCM in the state's port city and Adalberto Tejada, the governor of Veracruz at the time, supported the formation of *La Liga de Comunidades Agrarias y Sindicatos Campesinos de Veracruz* with the assistance of local communists Ursulo Galván and Juan Andreu Almanza.<sup>51</sup> By September 1924, the *Partido Comunista Mexicano* began reorganizing the communist local in Tampico in an attempt to mobilize “all groups in the port” around their form of communism.<sup>52</sup> With the PCM's regional influence becoming more prominent in contrast to the CROM, growing suspicion of losing influence among the region's radical labor movement.

The CGT opposed both state collaboration and PCM support of the strike, ending their critique of nationalist and presumed imperialist mobilizations with the defiant, “*EL FRENTE UNICO, ¡NUNCA!*”<sup>53</sup> As the anarchist movement became strained in its ideological contests between state-backed labor groups and the communist party, a growing sense of suspicion arose in the CGT press unseen beforehand. While the PCM and CGT remained adamantly opposed to each other since the latter's inception, their mobilizing capacities maintained reasonable distances prior to the Tampico strikes. However, the anarchist confederation's correlation between the PCM and Vasconcelos demonstrates a greater concern of the loss in hegemonic influence rather than numbers. In

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<sup>51</sup> Karl B. Roth, *Waking the Dictator: Veracruz, the Struggle for Federalism, and the Mexican Revolution, 1870-1927* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002), 234.

<sup>52</sup> *El Machete*, “Reorganización Comunista de Tampico” (Mexico City: September 11, 1924). CEMOS, Mexico City.

<sup>53</sup> *Nuestra Palabra*, “*El Frente 'Unico' Panacea*” (Mexico City, July 24, 1924). IISH, Amsterdam.

1925, the PCM would not have more than 200 members in the entire country.<sup>54</sup> However, as Barry Carr notes in his study on the *Partido Comunista Mexicano*, these numbers do not account for its general influence among agrarian or urban labor movements. Thus, the fear of a state-sponsored popular left movement seemed to be the root of the hostility rather than rank-and-file mobilizations.

Such hostile sentiments from the anarchists, while maintaining ideological purity, did little to change the shifting influences in the Huasteca oil fields. Despite attempts to maintain dissent against the state-backed CROM and the Comintern-backed PCM, the ramifications of a growing state apparatus eventually disintegrated the remaining fragments of popular resistance. In the case of the Mexican Gulf strike, the CGT called for a protest in Las Matillas due to President Obregón sending troops to assist scabs to cross the picket lines. It ended in bloodshed as troops fired on the strikers, killing the federation's secretary general Anastasio Carrillo.<sup>55</sup> In the Huasteca strike, the CROM attempted to implement a "white union" at the refinery, only building hostilities between the CGT and the government-backed federation. While the strikes eventually failed due to the CGT's lack of funds to support them, further resolution in conflict came from members of the State itself. General Lazaro Cárdenas, the future president of Mexico, maintained the government's support of the company throughout the strikes, but also made it a point to attend the union's meetings and attempted to quell violence against strikers. His empathy for the strikers brought some elements of resolve for the time being,

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<sup>54</sup> Carr, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Santiago, 303.

but future authoritarian practices only exacerbated relations between radical labor and the State.

The Tampico strikes of 1924 and 1925 highlighted the Mexican government's method of labor consolidation through jurisprudence. While petroleum worker strived to maintain their autonomy both from the state-backed *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* and the *Partido Comunista Mexicano*, the legal standing and cultural perception on the preservation of the nation's resources crippled the anarchist movement's attempts at remaining a viable threat within the larger labor movement. The Mexican Revolution's Constitution of 1917, permitted the national government to determine and maintain the legality of all labor actions. In particular, Article 123 detailed the Mexican government's responsibilities as arbiter between employers and workers. While the document remained a central element for the constitution's ratification for labor advocates, it in turn centralized the authority of labor action towards a centralized governing committee. In regards to strikes, the article affirmed that they "shall be legal when they have as their purpose the attaining of equilibrium among the various factors of production, by harmonizing the rights of labor with those of capital."<sup>56</sup> While revolutionary in the legal context of formulating state oversight on issues pertaining to labor strife, the article became a tool against self-organized workers outside of the legal parameters of the stipulation.

Beginning in 1919, Álvaro Obregon implemented the policy by making the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* as the primary labor entity to interact with the

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<sup>56</sup> Mexican Constitution of 1917, Article 12. Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Trigésima Quinta Edición, 1967, Editorial Porrúa, S. A., México, D. F. Originally published by the Pan American Union, General Secretariat, Organization of American States, Washington, D.C., 1968

Department of Labor.<sup>57</sup> This in turn permitted the CROM to maintain governmental influence during labor disputes. Organizations such as the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* were then faced with the predicament of either capitulating to the CROM's frameworks or attempting to maintain legitimacy by directly engaging with the president. Incidents such as the 1924 and 1925 Tampico strikes demonstrated not only the hostilities between the CROM and the CGT as labor organizations, but also the conflicting objectives between the state's intentions and those of the oil workers. While the national government attempted to "harmonize" the relationship between laborers and employers, the laborers organized by the CGT aimed to dissolve this relationship entirely. However, the development of institutional and legal apparatuses made such objectives increasingly difficult towards the end of the 1920s.

With the presidential ascension of Plutarco Elias Calles in 1924, state intervention in labor disputes became more frequent and effective. Jürgen Buchenau notes that the number of strikes in Mexico under the Calles government went from one hundred and thirty-six in 1924 to seven in 1928.<sup>58</sup> Such a dramatic shift in labor conflict remained largely a consequence of the state's relationship with organized labor. Calles appointed CROM leader Luis Morones as Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labor and the thirty-two appointees who served as the government's arbitrators were mostly members of CROM, thus solidifying the confederation's control over the Council of Conciliation and Arbitration. In turn, the CGT refused to recognize the Council and reaffirmed hostilities to the state's arbitration system as an attempt to delegitimize the demands of

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<sup>57</sup> Basurto, 210.

<sup>58</sup> Buchenau, 116.



radical unions.<sup>59</sup> For Morones and his appointees, the position granted the confederation direct relations to the institutionalization of a state-supported labor movement and developed what Morones called “the ideal government for workers.”<sup>60</sup>

Throughout the *Maximato* period, arbitration frequently resulted in victories for CROM-affiliated labor grievances. As Jeffrey Bortz’s work on textile industries in Veracruz and Mexico City describes, the growing influence of the CROM manifested itself with continuous success through the grievance processes. These victories were then affirmed through “*contrato-leyes*,” labor contracts that applied to the entire industry through federal governance and oversight.<sup>61</sup> However, unlike the textile industry, the petroleum fields and refineries of Tampico remained largely in the hands of foreigners unwilling to grant such government surveillance. Prior to the Cárdenas administration’s nationalization of the petroleum industry, conflicts between the *petroleros* and foreign management often led to the use of state governors as intermediaries.<sup>62</sup> While most relations between the oil companies and the Mexican government maintained a “spirit of cooperation,” the state attempted to quell labor dissent through unionism while simultaneously monitoring the finances of the foreign owners.<sup>63</sup> State governors provided the necessary leverage to navigate the disputes between management and labor.

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<sup>59</sup> Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 172-173.

<sup>60</sup> Basurto, 247.

<sup>61</sup> Bortz, “The Genesis of the Mexican Labor Relations System,” 44.

<sup>62</sup> Michael A. Ervin, “Marte R. Gómez of Tamaulipas: Governing Agrarian Revolution,” in *State Governors in the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1952: Portraits of Conflict, Courage, and Corruption*, edited by Jürgen Buchenau and William H. Beezley (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 123-134.

<sup>63</sup> Rob Van Vuurde, *Los Países Bajos, el petróleo y la Revolución Mexicana, 1900-1950* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1997), 84.

## Conclusion

Throughout the 1920s, the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* maintained influence in the Huasteca and Gulf lowlands by emphasizing the significance of regional autonomy and hostility against both national and foreign state influence. Contrary to the growing sentiment of anti-communism and cultural nationalism during the post-revolutionary period, the CGT promoted internationalist solidarity which connected everyday workers to a community of radicals located beyond their cities and *pueblos*. It also provided an alternative to the developmentalist model proposed by the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* and the *Partido Laborista Mexicano*. As anarchists attempted to shift away from the emphasis in economic nationalism and emphasize revolutionary syndicalism, the CGT formulated their own methods of providing for the needs of oil workers. Nonetheless, their model challenged a growing state apparatus which attempted to sustain a social, political, and cultural presence that excluded radical sentiments. As a response, anarchists formulated nation-wide networks of resistance, with the Huasteca region sustaining particularly violent spaces of contention due to their geographic proximity to the port, as well as their historical dissent from centralization. As the post-revolutionary state stabilized its institutions and power, these geographies of refusal would face new obstacles in their attempts towards a continuous revolution.

By the end of the decade, Tampico's anarchist labor movement's influence decreased due to growing state suppression of radical labor movements as well as the State's support of the CROM's influence in state arbitration. However, by the end of the 1920s, Morones's confederation saw a sharp decline in governmental influence. Four

days after the assassination of the recently re-elected Álvaro Obregon, Morones and two other *cromista* officials stepped down from their positions in the Secretary of Industry, Commerce, and Labor due to a disagreement with Plutarco Elías Calles's appointment of Tamaulipas governor Emilio Portes Gil as the Labor Party's new presidential candidate.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, Morones's assistance in the institutionalization of the labor movement provided the *Maximato* its strongest ally in contrast to the anarchist confederation. As the suppression of the radical labor movement increased, publications in the regions became scarce, oftentimes non-existent. However, the 1930s saw a steady stream of intellectual and cultural materials for the country's growing working class and agrarian movements helped maintain an anti-authoritarian current within Tampico, despite the loss of organizational influence due to growing state influence.

With the centralization of a national identity emerging through a variety of state-supported projects, new methods of influencing workers and peasants became essential to the preservation of a shared anarchist ideology and culture. As the country's populations moved out of the countryside and into the cities, the promotion of consumerist practices took precedent in the reformist labor movement's influence over the working class. While anarchists maintained a presence throughout the 1930s, their influence shifted away from the labor movement and towards the promotion of internationalist movements that struggled against the growing influence of authoritarian regimes throughout the world.

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<sup>64</sup> Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 174.

### **Chapter 3 – Crisis & the Networks of Revolution: Regional Shifts towards International Solidarity Movements, 1931-1945**

While the post-revolutionary administrations of Álvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles and the subsequent *Maximato* period (1920- 1934) culminated in the decline of the radical labor movement, anarchists continued to influence working class communities outside of the useful track of labor associations. As political influence transitioned towards the nation's capital, a centralized base of anarchist organizers emerged to distribute news, literature, and analysis regarding anti-authoritarian thought in the age of a growing state apparatus. Consequently, regional anarchist movements in Tampico and the Huasteca region steadily declined in numbers. While the age of the organizers, their shift in political views, as well as a general migration of organizers to Mexico City all attributed to this shift. However, the impact of state-run labor arbitration as described in the Constitution of 1917 severely impacted the influence of anarchist labor unions. As the government arbitration board continued its consolidation of the labor movement as an institutional body within its structure, the radical labor movement had less resonance in contrast to the period of the Mexican Revolution. Despite this, anarchist ideological and cultural manifestations maintained their influence within smaller organizations emphasizing internationalism and through the everyday forms of resistance conducted by petroleum workers.

#### **The CGT, Librado Rivera, & Anarchist Critiques of State Arbitration**

The most controversial development in the 1930s anarchist community came by way of the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* and its participation in the state-

governed labor arbitration process. As seen with *La Casa del Obrero Mundial* supporting the Constitutionalist and radical organizers shifting toward the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana*, anarchists' collaboration before. However, unlike the earlier circumstances, the previous alliances maintained some elements of autonomy in regards to their relationship to the State. For members of *La Casa* in the Tampico branch, opposition to the Constitutionalist forces maintained a strong sense of localized decision-making without central oversight. The early separation between *Casa* members and the CROM remained – where should the labor movement go? The ambiguity of the question remained fluid amongst both the CROM and the CGT permitting some initial leniency in ideology that continued well throughout the group's existence. Yet the CGT's decision to collaborate within the government's constitutional structure met fierce opposition from various organizing fronts, including former allies.

One fellow traveler who took particular offense to the CGT's decision was Librado Rivera. Imprisoned in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas until 1923 alongside Enrique and Ricardo Flores Magón, Rivera maintained connections with Tampico and Huasteca anarchist networks while imprisoned in the U.S. penitentiary. He remained particularly close to the prisoner support committee developed by the CGT's Tampico contingent, which was comprised of members affiliated with the Tampico branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the *Hermanos Rojos* of Villa Cecilia.<sup>1</sup> Upon his release, Rivera returned to the Huasteca region to continue his revolutionary activities. He began publishing two Tampico-based newspapers, *Sagitario* and *Avante*; the former newspaper focused primarily on the historical memory of Ricardo Flores Magón and

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<sup>1</sup> Alcayaga Sasso, "Librado Rivera y los Hermanos Rojos," 154.

critiqued the Calles administration and the cooption of the labor movement through the use of the Constitution of 1917. Rivera emphasized these two elements until his death on March 1, 1932, as he deemed two issues – the memory of anarchist movements in Mexico and their suppression through the Constitution of 1917 – as the primary foundations on which the post-revolutionary anarchist movements needed to build upon.

As cited in Aurora Mónica Alcayaga Sasso’s work, the Tampico and Huasteca anarchist organizers emphasized the need to dismantle the idea of nationalism and its consequential expectations of citizens. Rivera exclaimed,

... In the official schools, we are taught to love the *patria* because it is the place where we were born. [These are] empty words and meaningless because the *patria* does not belong to the poor. It defends interests that are not ours, but those of a privileged few. It is a lie that the *patria* belongs to all who were born in it. It belongs to the landowners and businessmen that enjoy the land and wealth of the bourgeois *patria*. They have sung hymns and they have recited beautiful poems around the country. But neither in the hymns, nor in the most beautiful literature dedicated to patriotic symbols do they explain to us the meaning of home.<sup>2</sup>

Rivera’s analysis of nationalism can be assessed in a myriad of different ways. Most clearly, the critique of nationalism as an inherent factor of one’s identity remained one developed by class constructs within Mexican society. While the Mexican state claimed to represent all individuals born within the boundaries of the nation, it did not represent the interests of the vast majority of Mexican citizens. Moreover, the critique emphasized an important element of various Mexican anarchist ideologies in the twentieth century – the role of land and property as the basis of societal power. This counters potential claims of these theories as inherently nationalistic as they suggest that the state’s interpretation

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 185, excerpt translated by the author from its original text found in *Avante!*, “Discurso,” I epoca no. 1.

of the nation remained largely constructed through its material worth, not its “meaning of home,” or rather, the significance of space to the poor. Rivera’s statement accentuated this distinction by noting that the poor were incapable of knowing or understanding the meaning of “the bourgeois *patria*,” as the notion was intentionally inaccessible to the working class. It in turn dismantles any consideration of collaboration with institutions that preserve class stratification. For Rivera, the Mexican government maintained this stratification through its imposition of legal oversight with the use of the Constitution of 1917.

The overwhelming critique of the CGT’s support of state arbitration became a vitriolic topic in the anarchist press. With much of the regional anarchist press largely dormant or suppressed by the *Maximato*’s successful mix of violence and labor, the 1930s saw a shift away from regional news periodicals and the rise of centralized publications printed in Mexico City. Considering the development of transportation infrastructure during the 1920s and 1930s, the shift away from small presses demonstrated logistical and strategic significance. Logistically, the widespread distribution of a single newspaper which included the writings of various regional organizers financially improved the productions as funds were allocated from across various regions. As was common prior to the centralization of the anarchist press, newspapers were often free and accessible to anyone willing to investigate it.

Beginning in May of 1931, Librado Rivera’s publication *¡Paso!* published the growing discontent within anarchist circles against the CGT’s new strategy. The editors of the periodical lambasted the CGT in nearly every copy of its publication. In the first issue of the periodical, Rivera assessed the contemporary conditions of the working class,

“Under the present social system, the worker is free to what they want according to the law; i.e. they are free to move in the circle that marks the length of the string.”<sup>3</sup> The statement’s animosity embodied the hostility developing within the Tampico anarchist movement. The city’s delegates to the 1931 CGT convention flatly opposed any affiliation with the State’s arbitration board, despite the proposal’s overwhelming support among the mostly Mexico City-based unions.<sup>4</sup> From its inception, *Paso* frequently published notifications and critiques written by Tampico workers who opposed their CGT’s disregard for their needs and its collaboration with the national government. Santiago Cabrera, a member of the *Sindicato de El Aguila*, wrote a scathing letter against the union’s leaders, in particular, Serapio Venegas. During the governorship of then president Emilio Portes Gil, Venegas served as the port’s labor inspector and initially supported the CGT. He had even supported the Tampico delegation’s solidarity protests for the imprisoned Italian anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti who had been executed in the United States a year earlier. However, Santiago claims that such solidarity had vanished as the union leaders drove by in their cars with “damned prostitutes” while the workers toiled.<sup>5</sup> Tampico oil workers resented the union leaders’ disregard for the pragmatic solidarity which once exemplified anarchist union structures. Rather than relating to their membership through mutual aid and interests, the stratification within the union’s internal dynamics created a new division previously unseen in the CGT.

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpt written by Librado Rivera, *¡Paso!*, (Mexico City: July 1, 1931). IISH, Amsterdam.

<sup>4</sup> Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 175.

<sup>5</sup> *Paso*, “Se traiciona a los obreros de Tampico”, (Mexico City: August 1931). IISH, Amsterdam.



Not only were relations within the oil unions becoming strained, but the city's fierce support of radical laborers appeared to be changing as well. In an editorial entitled "Justice in the Hands of the Merchants," Simón Guerrero detailed an incident that occurred on May 24<sup>th</sup> in the working class neighborhood of Tampico-Miramar. Guerrero had crossed a street to assist his mother in buying water at a local store, when he was run over by a correspondent of the local newspaper *La Prensa*. The journalist, José J. Villaseñor, accused Guerrero of being drunk, despite local bystanders' opposition to the accusation. After being sent to the hospital, a traffic officer who witnessed the incident attacked Guerrero's uncle while he remained unconscious. The officer pulled his pistol on the uncle demanding that Guerrero drop the accusations that Villaseñor had run him over. Despite this threat, Guerrero's uncle notified him after his release from the hospital that the press already announced that the case was arranged outside of "justice," thus leaving Guerrero bring Villaseñor's to account. Guerrero, unable to walk due to severe infections in his legs was warned by his uncle, "everything's against you."<sup>6</sup> Unable to demand justice from his assaulters, Guerrero voiced his discontent to the editors of *Paso*, who had been sending him packages of the newspaper for local workers. His pessimism to the situation was a stark contrast to the earlier period of organizing in the city, which frequently saw individual conflicts turn into justifications for mass protests and strikes. Without the solidarity of union leadership, the workers remained incapable of defending themselves from the growing corruption in the city.

For the editors of *Paso*, such testimonies were not only significant enough to publish, but were rooted in their disdain for the CGT's dependence on the state for

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., "La justicia en manos de mercaderes," (Mexico City: July 1 1931). IISH, Amsterdam..

conflict resolution. In contrast to the union federation's earlier work in Tampico, the organization's leaders lost their essential capacity to resolve conflict not only in the workplace, but also in the lives of their workers. Anarchist organizer José Garcia detailed the CGT's shift and its significance to future anarchist organizing tactics. He explained,

This organization [the CGT] was revolutionary until it supported the politics of our masters in the country, who now usurp the “product” and life of the workers and *campesinos*. It is not to deny its [the CGT's] beautiful past, but now it is at its most reactionary point by publically supporting the government supposedly [in order to] vigorously maintain good laws.<sup>7</sup>

Garcia's critique highlighted the growing hostility between rank-and-file anarchist organizers and the CGT, while recognizing that the group's politics were once a leading sentiment. However, as John Mason Hart explains, the period between 1929 and 1931 led to an “identity crisis” for the CGT as many of its most prominent organizers such as Jose C. Valades were no longer participating in the organization.<sup>8</sup> The shift contrasted its ideological positions when Valades coordinated the 1926 annual congress. Then, the labor federation openly declared its commitment to “anarchist communism” while still recognizing its recent alliance with the anarcho-syndicalist *Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores* (AIT) beginning in 1924.<sup>9</sup> A key difference between the CGT of 1926 and that of the CGT in 1931 was the membership shift away from the Tampico oil workers and towards the Mexico City contingents. As the petroleum unions shifted further under the control of the CROM in the Huasteca region, the 80,000 person membership of the CGT became largely based in the nation's capital. Despite the Tampico labor

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., “La CGT traiciona al proletariado,” (Mexico City: July 1931). IISH, Amsterdam.

<sup>8</sup> Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 175.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 173.

movement's decreasing anarchist influence, the earlier works of organizers remained a foundation for new methods of outreach and participation in radical thought.

The rise of reactionary political decisions was common among dissident labor and agrarian movements throughout this time. For anarchist organizers, it represented the complete disintegration of the revolutionary fervor that developed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In the *Paso* article “*El ocaso del sindicalismo*,” José Garcia provided insight into the issues holding back a widespread revolution. He recognized the noble attempts of syndicalist groups in Europe, the Industrial Workers of the World in the United States, and the thirty year struggle of the *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina*. However, del Río contended that the root of the pitfalls to anarchist organizing was the national government's consolidation of the labor movement. He exclaimed the urgency of mobilizing workers outside of the traditional union structure:

It is necessary to agree that the soul of the people is not syndicalism and therefore syndicalism is not the matrix of social revolution... The reality is already becoming distant: and we, anarchists cannot linger. We need to accelerate our steps beyond unionism... For the [Mexican] workers, [syndicalism] is an economic and legal noose, subject to the politics of the state, in so far as the bourgeoisie can exploit their employees through collective contracts. Given this enslavement, we can barely preserve the memory of revolutionary syndicalism... When there was industrial prosperity and little strength in the Government, trade unions were incomparably more revolutionary. The CGT (*Confederación General de Trabajadores*), gathering and encouraging workers constituted a serious obstacle to the final victory of the bourgeoisie and the state.

While del Río argued in support of the CGT's initial mobilization of workers, he conceded that the growth of the CROM's influence among workers and the anarchist confederation led to the labor movement's capitulation. Unlike in other periods of the anarchist movements in Mexico, the revolutionary confederation's move away from

direct action and class struggle paralyzed radical organizing. Contrasting to the years of hostility towards government collaboration and any written agreements with employers, the CGT's shift towards legal conflict resolution tamed much of the fervor within its rhetoric. Similar to the early objections to the CROM's collaboration with the Constitutionalist forces, large portions of the regional anarchist movements remained unconvinced that resolution was possible despite the government's calls for collaboration. Such crises did not only affect the anarchist movement, but labor as a whole. By the early 1930s, the CROM lost much of its former credibility with the Mexican state and also questioned its own intentions within Mexican society. More than anything, the 1930s were a time of conflict for all labor movements as the growth of the post-revolutionary state apparatus took precedent over concessions to radical elements in the labor movement.

### **Ideological Crises & the Labor Movement in the 1930s:**

With the CGT's shift away from radical labor organizing in the early 1930s, Tampico's anarchists took up José Garcia's advice and developed different tactics to preserve and circulate the city's anarchist culture. As the Mexican state apparatus developed throughout the post-revolutionary era, anarchist movements steadily declined in the production of periodicals and literature. While this could be interpreted as the decline in anarchism's appeal to the working class, the political climate should be analyzed as the greater determining factor. What developed in the labor movement's decline was the mobilization of interregional and international networks promoting an analysis of anarchism through a local and global context. These tactics related to a greater

comprehension of anarchism's relationship to the labor movement due to the consequences of modernization and industrialization in Mexico and abroad.

Anarchist networks of solidarity contrasted previous activities as they faced the consequences of a nationalized labor movement supported by the Mexican state through the 1920s. However, as critiques of the CGT remained at the forefront of much of the discussion within anarchist circles throughout the 1930s, no aspect of the labor movement had come to the realization that the Mexican government successfully fulfilled much of its ambitions through its relationship with the CROM and the agrarian leagues. The CROM fulfilled its functions as a labor movement that largely supported the Mexican government, both at the polls and in labor conflict. Shortly after Morones's department from the government, the CROM had to compete with the CGT in its struggle to maintain patronage from the government.

As a response to their declining influence within the *Maximato* governments, the CROM attempted to build relationships with radical contingents to maintain their legitimacy as a viable organization. As Morones continued to lose internal power within the CROM, calls for a "common front" developed within the organization's radical contingent led by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a long-time member of the *Partido Laborista Mexicano* and ardent Marxist.<sup>10</sup> The merger of the labor movement's first public event was the 1932 May Day rallies in Mexico City, which brought members of the *Partido Comunista Mexicano*, various independent unions, and the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* marching together under CROM banners. Interestingly, despite the growing divide between the Mexican government and the CROM, the state-sponsored

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<sup>10</sup> Clark, *Organized Labor in Mexico*, 262-263.

newspaper *El Nacional* paid for the processions.<sup>11</sup> Though the *Maximato* may have shifted its positions of having labor leaders directly influencing government positions, it still maintained cordial relations to ensure political stability. Similarly to the CGT, the CROM faced an identity crisis in regards to its own relationship with the State. Rather than pushing itself closer to governmental policies, it fought a conflicting battle of maintaining a revolutionary rhetoric while hoping to reconnect with the State.

The CROM's ideological crisis continued well into the 1930s. In the 1936 editions of its newspaper, *CROM*, the labor confederation developed a schizophrenic identity in regards to its relationship with workers. Contrary to the anarchist press, the CROM's periodicals focused less on critiquing notions of upholding patriotism and more on developing a synthesis between radical Marxism and economic nationalism. The covers of their periodicals exemplified such contradictions. In the September 13, 1936 issue of *CROM*, the issue's cover is adorned with portraits of various Mexican and Marxist historical figures. Depictions of Benito Juárez, José María Morelos, and Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla hovered over the portraits of Karl Marx and Vladimir I. Lenin with "CROM" emblazed below. However, on the back page, the revolutionary fervor clashes with a nationalist advertisement for the beer, *Dos Equis*. Filled by the image of what appears to be Teotihuacan's Pyramid of the Moon, a moving stream of beer bottles moves along its foundation towards the reader as a *Dos Equis* beer bottle stands towering at the forefront with the tagline, "Everything comes! Everything passes! *Dos Equis* Remains!" emblazoned within clouds hovering over the ancient monument.<sup>12</sup> Beyond the

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>12</sup> *CROM* (Mexico City: September 13, 1936). IISH, Amsterdam.

obvious capitalist and nationalist sentiments that seemed to be virulently at odds with each other, they also demonstrate a clear ideological synthesis of the CROM's positions within the labor movement.



Figure 6: CROM periodical (September 13, 1936)<sup>13</sup>

Since its inception, the CROM maintained its ardent support for capitalist development and economic nationalism. If assessed through the confederation's relationship with the various post-revolutionary governments, the organization's primary purpose was to promote not only the organization on industrial laborers, but also to promote the modernization of a "revolutionary" society. The organization's shift from the phrase "*Salud y Revolución Social*" to "*Salud y Evolución Social*" had greater implications than merely organizing the growing working class. Rather, it indicated the objection to shift Mexico's masses towards an ideological understanding of their society that blended cultural and economic nationalism with the aspirations of promoting a

<sup>13</sup> CROM (Mexico City: September 13, 1936.). IISH, Amsterdam.

modern Mexican society. *Cromista* workers recognized this contradiction as they claimed the reason for the *Maximato*'s shift away from supporting organized labor was the fear of losing the United States' political and economic support.<sup>14</sup> While the Mexican government supported a decentralized labor movement, the labor movement it utilized to subdue radical elements remained conflicted in its relationship between revolution and the state.

Despite Luis Morones's attempts to sustain relations between the United States and Mexican labor, the workers themselves challenged such constructions by supporting Vicente Lombardo Toledano's radical sentiments. However, Toledano's departure from the CROM and the PLbM in 1932 led to an ideological crisis with little leadership to lead it. What surfaced was a labor press rife with contradictions, from anti-imperialist stances and countless advertisements for films, shoes, alcohol, and other common commodities. Alan Knight's analysis of developmentalism within the Mexican working class seems more appropriate to utilize during this period of the CROM's existence. Nearly all aspects of his term existed within the CROM, however, it must be noted that various other elements of the labor movement continued to oppose key pretexts of developmentalism. Moreover, with recognition to the CROM's radical shift during the 1930s up until its leftist contingent split to form the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* in 1936, the CROM's relationship to developmentalism remained fluid and not fixed. The reformist labor movement's periodical exemplified its struggle with promoting nationalist and radical tendencies simultaneously to a population which remained largely isolated from accessing the benefits of capitalist development in Mexico.

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<sup>14</sup> Clark, *Organized Labor in Mexico*, 263.



**Anarchist Networks & the Preservation of Regional Identities within the Global Revolutionary Movement:**

For the anarchist press, a similar ideological conflict emerged in regards to the CGT's relationship to the State. However, despite organizational conflict, the movement maintained much of its radical elements through its support for long-standing regional anarchist traditions. Unlike the nationalist discussions led by the CROM and the communist press of PCM, periodicals such as *Paso* assessed the interregional networks between Mexican anarchist groups, both inside and outside of the CGT, as well as detailed assessments of the global anarchist movements. The periodical was distributed for free through the various radical networks in the country, unlike the CROM newspaper which despite having state funding cost twenty-one centavos. Contrary to the national government's support of muralists and the 1920s education policies of José Vasconcelos, anarchist groups in the Huasteca region continued to recruit support through the *Paso* distribution networks of their organizational developments. Moreover, these networks also permitted access to collections of anarchist literature and historical texts to continue a collective identity based on the developments of European and Mexican anarchist groups. In turn, tactics and ideologies continued to prosper without the CGT's structure and soon created new nuclei in other regions. Rather than being consumed by the internal divisions within the CGT, the anarchist movement focused on preserving a collective identity and culture that transcended the national boundaries transfixed by the borders of the Mexican state.

While petroleum workers in Tampico battled internal divisions caused by contrasting interests in the interests of state-supporter labor organizers and workers,

projects to preserve and maintain anarchist consciousness remained a priority for the anarchist movement locally and internationally. On August 31, 1931, anarchist and feminist organizer Evarista Hernández along with women from Ciudad Madero (formerly known as Villa Cecilia) formed the *Grupo Ácrata Femenino* “Rosaura Gortari”. The group took its name after the daughter of *magonista* revolutionary fighter, Margarita Ortega; the two travelled throughout Baja California during the *Partido Liberal Mexicano*’s 1911 uprising, where Ortega led contingents in rebellion against the Madero government. Gortari died of illness after she and her mother were expelled from Baja California in 1913. While the young woman had no direct relation to the Tampico anarchist movement, the organization provided homage to her memory as a heroine and martyr for the anarchist cause. The small group intended to both continue the ongoing libertarian struggle, but specifically intended to distribute anarchist literature and books. Their objective was to provide historical and ideological contexts for women who may wish to participate in the group. Hernández emphasized the need to educate women on the values of anarchism, “which was founded with the noble aspirations of struggle to create a more humane and fairer present society.”<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Hernández specifically addressed her correspondence to “all the groups of libertarian ideas,” rather than solely the editors of *Paso*. This was not in error; rather, it indicated a much larger audience that existed through *Paso*’s various interregional and international networks consisting of tens of thousands of anarchists worldwide.

An impressive international network permitted the editors of *Paso* to provide distribution of the texts needed to fulfill the ambitions of the *Grupo Ácrata Femenino*.

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<sup>15</sup> *Paso*, “Grupo Ácrata Femenino “Rosaura Gortari” (Mexico City: November 1931). IISH, Amsterdam.

From as early as 1924, correspondence between German anarchist and historian Max Nettlau and Mexican anarchists such as José C. Valades and former *magonista* Nicolás T. Bernal led to the preservation of thousands of documents pertaining to the history of anarchism in Mexico.<sup>16</sup> Nettlau, along with the Spanish anarchist Diego Abad de Santillán who presided in Argentina at the time, assisted in the editing and publication of various texts that were then distributed and reproduced for the various anarchist organizations in Mexico. As indicated in *Paso*, Nicolás T. Bernal distributed the works from Mexico City to then be sent out to the various anarchist networks around the country, including the Tampico organizations. Works such as Max Nettlau's biography of Mikhail Bakunin became widely available to the Mexican anarchist networks, as well as historical works written by Diego Abad de Santillán on Ricardo Flores Magón and *magonista* martyr Práxedes G. Guerrero.<sup>17</sup> Most of the texts remained largely affordable for organizational and individual purchase; a majority of the publications cost between five and thirty centavos, with larger volumes costing no more than sixty centavos. With international relationships developed in the Americas and Europe, Mexico's anarchist networks maintained deep connections with organizations and organizers for decades to come. In Nicolás T. Bernal's memoir, he notes that his editorial collaborations with Diego Abad de Santillán continued for over fifty years before the two met in person.<sup>18</sup> Such connections provided the readers of the anarchist press with both literature of the nation's various anarchist histories as well as detailed analyses of contemporary anarchist movements throughout the world.

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<sup>16</sup> Max Nettlau Papers, Folder 1203 (IISH, Amsterdam).

<sup>17</sup> The list of distributed anarchist texts were found in all editions of *Paso* from May 1931-January 1932.

<sup>18</sup> Nicolás T. Bernal, *Memorias* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Históricos del Movimiento Obrero Mexicano, 1982), 131.

While international networks of archivists remained a pivotal aspect of the preservation of Mexican anarchist histories, these communications also precipitated the awareness of the various revolutionary movements throughout the world. From as early as the *magonista* newspaper *Regeneración* to the pages of *Paso*, discussions of international proletariat uprisings provided thousands with insight into a world which remained largely unknown by most of the general public. While national newspapers focused on the issues of interest to the Mexican government, the anarchist press detailed the memories of revolutionary martyrs and the continuing class war unfolding on both sides of the Atlantic. Reference to the Haymarket martyrs remained a nearly permanent fixture in all Mexican left-wing newspapers. Perhaps the only other topic that rivaled the Haymarket affair in publication was the execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in 1927. Public demonstrations against the two Italian anarchists' imprisonment occurred during the trial and after their subsequent executions. Most specifically, the Tampico branch of the CGT chastised the CROM for its lack of solidarity when the confederation hosted one of the last recorded public anarchist protests. These attempts to maintain a collective memory of the tragedies of anarchists outside Mexico provided an alternative to the growing nationalist sentiments perpetuated by the national government's education institutions. Moreover, the authorship of the international articles remained as fluid as their scope. Various contributors throughout the regional anarchist networks provided detailed analyses of revolutionary movements not only in the United States, but throughout Latin America, Europe, Africa, and East Asia. Contrary to the various state projects, the anarchist press encouraged its readership to become global

citizens with an awareness of events that affected individuals of similar class backgrounds in different regional circumstances.

Tampico organizers often contributed to these analytical texts of contemporary revolutionary struggles. Manuel del Río, the anarchist organizer located in Ciudad Madero, was a regular contributor to the Tampico periodicals *Sagitorrio* and *Avante* as well as the Mexico City-based *Paso*. In article entitled “*La tragedia del pueblo Argentino*,” del Río described the coup of Argentine President Hipólito Yrigoyen by right-wing Lieutenant General José Félix Uriburu in September of 1930. An earlier article demanded the release of all political prisoners captured during the coup as well as a reprint of demands to end the dictatorship by the Argentine anarchist organization the *Asociación Continental Americana de los Trabajadores*.<sup>19</sup> Overwhelmed by the growing authoritarian practices of the Uriburu dictatorship, del Río described the power shift as a determinant to the Argentine working class, which he urged readers to support through any means of solidarity. He decried to his readership:

The time has come for all of those who feel love for our fellowmen to go forth in defense of our fraternal brothers, who today hold the burden on their skinny backs, consumed by iniquitous exploitation, the most obnoxious of tyrannies. Let us do everything in our part to make sure these crimes are known to the universal proletariat so that we may build energetic protests everywhere. These will detain the homicidal hands stained by mass executions, executions without cause, or applying *la ley fuga*. They are the shame of our century, and curse the tyrannical detainers of human rights.<sup>20</sup>

Despite being thousands of miles away, the emotional connection between the *Tampiqueño* and his Argentine comrades permeated throughout the article. The

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<sup>19</sup> *Paso*, “La Dictadura Argentina” (Mexico City: October 1, 1931). IISH, Amsterdam.

<sup>20</sup> *Paso*, “La tragedia del pueblo Argentino” (Mexico City: October 1, 1931). IISH, Amsterdam.

interconnections between the dictatorship and the *Maximato*'s attempts to thwart the radicalism of the labor movement relied heavily on both groups' calls for universal rights and democratic structures, whether as a State or in the preferred syndicalist strain. Manuel del Río's lamentations reflected a common stream of millennial retribution often found in anarchist literature. A sense of urgency emerged among anarchists as a global insurgence of far-right influences began to take form. For the next decade, opposition to the rise of fascism took precedent in anarchist circles more so than regional insurrections. As the anarchist press shifted its gaze to Europe, the regional developments of Tampico's anarchist movement disappeared within the shadows of a rising right-wing shift in the international working class.

### **Spanish Exiles & the Decline of Regional Anarchist Movements:**

Throughout the history of anarchist movements in Mexico, Spanish immigrants remained an integral factor both ideologically and practically. During the 1917 Labor Congress, a year before the CROM officially formed, the Spanish anarchist Jorge D. Borrán adamantly protested the federation's future leaders Luis Morones and Ricardo Treviño in their attempts to promote reformist policies within the labor movement. Borrán emphasized the need for "revolutionary syndicalism, rationalist education, popular libraries, and common ownership of private property." Shortly after the convention, the Mexican government deported Borrán back to Spain.<sup>21</sup> Although no direct connections were made to Morones in regards to Borrán's deportation, the coincidence remained a persistent reminder of the consequences of dissent against the

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<sup>21</sup> Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 157-158.

emerging authoritarian state, regardless of nationality. For the anarchist movements, particularly for the cells that developed in the port of Tampico, Spanish radicals were one of many foreign revolutionary communities that contributed to various organizing campaigns.

On February 1, 1923, one of the main streets of Mexico City, la Calle Montevideo, was blocked off by barricades with black and red flags draped over them. The street had been a major center of anarchist activity for the past twenty years and was the location of headquarters of the *Confederación General de Trabajadores*. After word got out that *cromistas* were on their way to confront the anarchist workers via trolley, they took to the streets and built up roadblocks and waited in anticipation. The climax led to an armed street battle between the anarchists, the labor reformists, and the police they brought along with them. By the end of the clash, five police, two soldiers, and one CGT member were dead. Two days later, the Mexican government deported four of the CGT's leadership, Sebastián San Vicente, Alejandro Montoya, J. Pérez Gil and Urbano Legaspi – all of whom were Spaniards.<sup>22</sup>

The influence and leadership of Spanish anarchists within the CGT was not a new phenomenon for the Mexican anarchist movements. From the first wave of organizers, Spanish anarchism became a focal point of the theoretical and practical development of various Mexican radical movements. Before, during, and after Mexico's ten year revolution, Spanish anarchist influence shifted away from being merely a theoretical manifestation, and by the time of the Spanish Civil War, became a mutual solidarity movement. With over eighty years of interconnection, the Mexican anarchist movements

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 164-165.

infused their efforts with that of the Spanish anarchists in an effort to develop a unified internationalist cultural manifestation.

The most infamous collaboration between Spanish and Mexican anarchists came with the visit of anarcho-syndicalist leader Buenaventura Durruti as he made his way to Argentina. In March of 1925, Durruti and his comrade Francisco Ascaso Abadía found a safe haven among CGT organizers Tampico and specifically looked to meet with José Valades as well as other CGT members in Mexico City to address the organization's financial plight.<sup>23</sup> The 1924 and 1925 Tampico strikes had exhausted much of the union's funds and left the confederation with little funds for future campaigns. Weeks after the initial meeting, Durruti met with the workers and handed them stolen funds from *La Carolina* factory to assist in the distribution of anarchist materials and with the formation of rationalist schools.<sup>24</sup> Unlike the CROM, the anarchists in both Mexico and Spain emphasized the need for internationalist solidarity, by a variety of means.

Nonetheless, as nationalist sentiments arose among the Mexican citizenry, as did the age old hostilities to the region's former colonizers. Such was the case in Veracruz, which had no shortage of European immigrants arriving in its port. Hispanophobia emerged in the nationalist rhetoric of local unions and within the daily sentiments of *veracruzanos*. Even among anarchist sympathizers such as the Veracruz tenant strikers, accusations emerged against the high concentration of Spanish "bourgeoisie," who were chastised as a "ruthless oligarchy [who] never think twice about improving their own

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<sup>23</sup> José Valades, *Memorias*, 177.

<sup>24</sup> Abel Paz, *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution* (Oakland: AK Press, 2007), 75.



fortunes at the expense of the people of Veracruz.”<sup>25</sup> Andrew Grant Wood roots these hostilities to the fact that while Mexicans owned the majority of tenants, a larger portion of Spaniards fulfilled the roles of administrators in the crowded *patios de vencidos*, small rooms which shared a common courtyard.<sup>26</sup> Within the heated moments of contestation during the tenant strikes, hostilities towards Spanish intermediaries took precedent largely as the form of class stratification; various anarchist groups throughout Mexico continued to work diligently with Spanish immigrants.

By the 1930s, the anarchist press supported solidarity with Spanish immigrants as the Spanish Civil War seemed imminent. The political and cultural climate in Spain reflected many of the elements found in post-revolutionary Mexico. Beginning in 1930 with the overthrow of dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera and culminating to the formation of the Second Republic, Spanish society radically transformed as King Alfonso XIII fled into exile days after the installation of the new government. A new constitution guaranteed various new civil liberties and absolved numerous laws maintained by the crown’s relationship with the Catholic Church such as women’s suffrage and the right to divorce. Comparisons to the overthrow of Porfirio Díaz and the installation of the post-revolutionary government held many similarities within the state structures of both countries, yet the perpetuation of authoritarianism remained the pivotal factor to anarchist resistance on both sides of the Atlantic. For Spain, the suppression of labor movements throughout the years preceding the civil war resonated deeply with the anarchist organizers in Mexico. Both struggles became intertwined throughout the duration of the

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew Grant Wood, *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870-1927* (Wilmington: SR Books, 2001), 39.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

Second Spanish Republic and well into the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. For the regional anarchist movements of Mexico, however, the precedent to support the radical fronts in Europe outweighed the continuing development of revolutionary syndicalism.

Shortly after the death of Librado Rivera in 1932, the editors of *Paso* regrouped in January of 1933 to form a new organization and newspaper, *Ideas y Acción*. Unlike *Paso*, the periodical *Ideas y Acción* and the organization of the same name vastly emphasized the growing significance of authoritarianism and fascism in Spain. While references to local and Latin American conflicts remained present in its editorials, the analysis of its editors focused on the rightward shift of Western Europe. Much of the works emphasized the similarities between the struggles of Mexican and Spanish anarchists, as well as their shared experiences throughout the Mexican Revolution. More than ever, the anarchist press became a direct link to international revolutionary movements that struggled for the betterment of the masses. Quite contrary to the blanket support of all Spanish exiles that became a central point in the administration of President Lazaro Cardenas, the members of *Ideas y Acción* emphasized the differences within Spanish political society and ardently opposed republicanism. Prior to the Spanish Civil War, deep hostilities commonly arose between the new republican government and the anarchist contingents located throughout the country. The readership of *Ideas y Acción* received detailed evaluations of these intrinsic differences and followed the new organization's assessment on the developments throughout the Iberian Peninsula.

In one letter to the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), Spain's anarcho-syndicalist confederation of labor unions, the writers of *Ideas y Acción* lambasted the

republican government and their suppression of anarchist movements. While the civil war remained three years away, the periodical discussed the CNT's hostilities to the new government and supported the revolts against "republican fascism." The editors' hostile responses to the republican government stemmed from anarchist protests in Catalonia over the recent suppression of the Casas Viejas uprising. Local anarchists barricaded themselves within a cottage, which the civil guard and police torched, leaving the dissidents and their families to be burnt alive. All villagers found with weapons were subsequently executed in the ruins of the burnt cottage. The shock of the incident became a rally cry for anarchists in Spain and abroad for years to come. An editor of *Ideas y Acción* wrote an ardent message to the group's CNT comrades, declaring allegiance with their struggle against the Spanish republic.

Today you fight against the republic – that confesses, takes communion and sees the same [as the monarchy] – with equal fortitude to maintain our ideal that you fought for against the monarchy.... These lines grant an affectionate greeting to all who make up the Confederation and although your temperate will does not need encouraging phrases, it is the desire of a group of dreamers in Mexico that fought in the same columns as you, follows your battles, and longs for your triumph in the hopes to see a Western European lighthouse illuminate the definitive triumph of the re-vindicated workers of the world. *Salud, camaradas!*<sup>27</sup>

The passage reaffirmed the emphasis and ambition for worldwide revolution to set an example for the people of Mexico. Moreover, it proposed that through internationalist solidarity, the anarchist movement offered alternative societies that maintained its pertinence while Mexico's regional projects continued to diminish under the weight of state arbitration. While the potential for social revolution in Spain seemed imminent to

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<sup>27</sup> *Ideas y Accion*, "Contra el fascismo republicano: la rebellion de los que trabajan" (Mexico City, February 1933). IISH, Amsterdam.

the editors of *Ideas y Acción*, such aspirations waned from the interests of the anarchist press.

From 1934 through 1936, Tampico's petroleum industry reignited as a center of anti-authoritarian labor organizing. This time, revolt came from within the confines of the reformist labor unions. Workers affiliated with the *Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de la Republica Mexicana* (STPRM) became aware of the earlier radical manifestations in their working-class neighborhood of Poza Rica. Historian Olvera Rivera's collection of oral testimonies provides insight into the redevelopment of a collective identity among the *petroleros*. One worker, Herminio Govea, explained the group's introduction to radical ideologies, "Most of us didn't know about socialism and class struggle... We learned about it little by little and not always all that well, after listening in the meetings to the old timers or those who were better informed."<sup>28</sup> As time moved on the workers became more enthralled with revolutionary ideas. Even after President Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized the petroleum industry in March of 1938, the Poza Rica workers demanded that they determined the hierarchies within the workplace through local worker councils.<sup>29</sup>

While demonstrating one of the most significant developments within the labor movement in the Huasteca region, the previous coverage of Tampico's activities in the anarchist press had largely vanished. By the end of the decade, the workers were condemned by government supporters as well as leftist organizations such as the *Partido*

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<sup>28</sup> Alberto J. Olvera, "The Rise and Fall of Union Democracy at Poza Rica, 1932-1940" in *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Johnathan C. Brown and Alan Knight (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 67. Testimony from Olvera interview with Herminio Govea (Poza Rica, Veracruz, 15 June 1987).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

*Comunista Mexicano* for being imperialists supporting the return of European and American oil company owners.<sup>30</sup> Once a frequent subject matter in CGT periodicals and Librado Rivera's *Paso*, the Tampico workers were overshadowed by news of fascism's rise in Spain. With little support outside of their local community, the workers of the Tampico oil fields fell to the bureaucratic purges of the state-backed STPRM union. With the demise of regional campaigns for local workers, the anarchist movement in Mexico shifted its focus from the peripheral industrial hubs towards the continual support of revolutionary struggles abroad.

Shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, a new newspaper entitled *Regeneración* emerged in Mexico City. Unlike the earlier publication led by Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, the *Regeneración* that emerged in 1937 was run by Spanish anarchists detailing their perspectives of the ongoing turmoil in the Iberian Peninsula. The editors formed their first press in October of 1933 as *Voluntad* and focused on the promotion of the rationalist center, "*Tierra y Libertad*." Their first edition emphasized the significance of Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia, whom they commemorated in honor of the twenty-fourth anniversary of his execution.<sup>31</sup> *Regeneración*, on the other hand, attempted to blend the struggles of Spaniards and Mexicans into a united front based on mutual ideological principles. The editors described their objectives:

With the title *Regeneración*, we want to remember a tradition of struggle and revamp the name and champion the revolutionary platform that feeds the spirit, the unwavering faith, the libertarian soil of Ricardo Flores Magón, while confirming its expressive significance: Regeneration!<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>31</sup> *Voluntad*, "13 de Octubre de 1909" (Mexico City, October 20, 1933). IISH, Amsterdam.

<sup>32</sup> *Regeneración*, "Regeneración" (Mexico City, April 1937). IISH, Amsterdam.

Not only were the editors of *Regeneración* promoting the continuing identity of Mexican revolutionaries, but taking clear stances on internal conflicts within the Mexican anarchist movements. Despite the distance from the battlefields of Spain, the ideological struggle of maintaining and preserving the ideals fought for by anarchist contingents found its way into the debates of the Mexican anarchist press.

# Regeneración

Periódico Libertario

México, D. F., 1o. de mayo de 1937

Presentado a la Oficina de Correos para su registro como artículo de segunda clase.

**Año I**  
Administrador: E. Castrojón.  
Agrupado Postal 9090

**Número 2**  
Oficina Provisional:  
Lerdo 127

**Periódico Libertario**

**México, D. F., 1o. de mayo de 1937**  
Presentado a la Oficina de Correos para su registro como artículo de segunda clase.

## El Deber de la Hora

La guerra en España ha venido a deslindar posiciones, clasificando de un modo extraordinario el ambiente de la lucha social y obligando a cada uno y a todos. En este gran drama todos debemos ser actores, cada quien en su papel; y los que no podemos intervenir directamente, rifle en mano, junto a nuestros camaradas rojos de la España nueva, debemos secundar su obra heroica en todas las formas posibles, donde quiera que nos hayan sorprendido los acontecimientos. Es lo mejor que podamos hacer. Propaganda activa, ayuda en todo momento, a fin de scallar, aunque sea a tiros, a la hidra revolucionaria que trata de empobrecer o de aplastar con servidumbres de curules calumnias la estrepandosa acción de los camaradas libertarios de allá.

Contra la casi unanimidad de los gobiernos burgueses, que se han hecho cómplices y solidarios del asesinato de España, debe alzarse vibrante y decisiva la unanimidad de los pueblos, para salvar los destinos de una humanidad mejor; la que está forjando en el fuego y la sangre los admirables camaradas de la península. Pasividad y filandía de nuestra parte equivaldrían a crímenes en estos momentos definitivos; primer por el que nos demandarían las generaciones que veigan, por venir y por vengar.

Un gran drama de pueblos, que la misma imaginación española no alcanza a marginar debidamente, siquiera fuese en alguno de sus episodios máximos; tal es su magnitud que desborda de las mismas posibilidades del genio.

Actores, pues, más o menos activos. Los espectadores están de sobra. Todas las puertas de salida están ganadas por el Destino. No hay más salida que echarse al ruedo, de espontáneos; y a ver, que pasa.



A. I. T. - F. A. I. - C. N. T. Tres postulados, tres banderas del proletariado español con repercusiones universales. - Proletariados de todo el mundo. - La revolución social de España es vuestra revolución.

## 1886 Primero de Mayo 1937

Por José M. CAMPISTRO DE CACERES.

El Primero de Mayo, como valor simbólico, ha tenido un evolución natural. Su germen está en el sentido ideal de la Primavera como resurrección. Es una forma nueva y popular de los viejos mitos y fiestas religiosas que significaban la vuelta a la vida, el triunfo sobre la muerte, la afirmación de la eternidad, la transmutación de la vida por el renacimiento de la juventud, y representaban, en cuanto al año, lo que la aurea respecto a la sucesión de los días y hechos, como resurrección del día, solar vencido cotidianamente por el día nocturno.

Pero toda Resurrección implica una previa Pasión. Ahí está todo el sentido de la tragedia. Resucita Cristo, en la farsa religiosa, como las antiguas tragedias resolvían en una terminación trágica el dolor y la lucha del protagonista.

Y también en la tragedia social, cuyo protagonista es el Pueblo, nuestra fiesta del Primero de Mayo significa la afirmación de la fe en la victoria de mañana; la sencilla optimista que de nuevas fuerzas a los "braves" extenuados y llenos de visión alentadora los ojos ensombrecidos.

Esta fiesta ha tenido dos valores sucesivos: fue, en sus orígenes, algo como un recuerdo anual de fuerza, al desfile de las masas proletarias en amenaza sorda, todavía no muy concreta, con una magnitud incertidumbre, por no saber si aquel río llamado era hostil al cauce que lo contenía o si era la fuerza fecundadora de las orillas que bebía.

Pero sucedieron los años. La Fiesta del Trabajo adquirió fisonomía, trascendencia clara, valor espiritual definido. Entonces la multitud proletaria fue mostrándose como el gran operario colectivo de las nuevas integraciones: como la casta precaria que erigía su incorporación a la ciudad para rehacer sobre su tipo de selección total y justa la vieja norma de las selecciones artificiales y parciales. Fue el momento en que el antiguo sentido puramente libertario o de clase de las reivindicaciones obreras se elevó a sentido social, revisión completa de la convivencia social.

El tiempo ha aportado a la fiesta de hoy y a su significación nueva virtudes y los atropellos de los regímenes imperialistas, nazi-fascistas han prestado nuevos bríos a los operarios. La evolución humana habitualmente lenta y trabajosa, dificultada por el egoísmo de los sistemas que embrutecían al pueblo para que crezca, para que no sea en su originaria soberanía, se aceleró. La voluntad marcha frenética en los momentos de pasión. Y ese impulso de pasión ha dado: la guerra civil española; la primera libertaria; la primera socialista; la segunda socialista; las expansiones primarias y secundarias adormecidas por la razón de Estado.

Hoy, una vez más, la manifestación simbólica desfilará por nuestras calles vibrantes de luz primaveral y energía resurrección. ¿Qué esperanza podemos poner en ese desfile, Fiesta Fiscal de nuestra sociedad y rejección rebelde?

Trabajadores mexicanos: cuando vuestras columnas generosas circulen en vuestras calles como una promesa, no olvidéis que, a la misma hora, otras columnas hermanas, en España, con las armas en la mano, llevarán de esperanza las calles que los traidores han profanado con el cortejo de los asesinos que las llenan de sangre como muestra palpable de perniciosa ejemplaridad. Por encima de la servidumbre recibida por los malos españoles enriquecidos, que aquí, como allá, especulan con la miseria de los proletarios; por encima del hombre provocado por ellos; por encima de cuando a ellos pueda oponerse, tend un recuerdo, en esos momentos, para los proletarios de allá, que luchan por un ideal y por una redención común. Rehacer el vínculo humano, que eleva el hombre a la conciencia y le da el sentido del amor inmaterial, del amor que une a los hombres más allá de los venenosos límites de especie, como el

## La Crisis Catalana

A pesar de la constitución de un gobierno restringido, la crisis del gobierno catalán no está aún en vías de solución en Barcelona. En el momento actual, el SINDICILISMO PROLETARIO GUERTE CONTRA SINDICILISMO PROLETARIO.

Figure 7: *Regeneración: Periódico Libertario* (May 1, 1937, Mexico City)<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Regeneración: Periódico Libertario* (May 1, 1937, Mexico City). IISH, Amsterdam.

In the vein of Librado Rivera and the writers of *Paso*, the editors of *Regeneración* adamantly opposed the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* and its attempts to relate itself to Spanish anarchist fronts. While the CGT initially contested affiliations with the *Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores*, the editors maintained that such affiliations no longer applied. They explained, “The CGT cannot claim to belong to the AIT while they are the front of official politicians that are not workers, and therefore, do not belong to any union.” While deeply hostile to collaboration, the writers noted that there were some members of the CGT that remained loyal to the ideals originally set forth by its anarchist founders. However, the confederation’s support of the Cárdenas and Calles administrations put them in collaboration with the Marxist strain of the CROM known as the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Mexico* (CTM).<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, it was the CTM’s leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano who pushed the Mexican government to develop a worker’s militia to support the Spanish Republicans. John Lear explains their ambitions to develop popular support,

A transnational culture that developed from engagement in Popular Front anti-fascism and the Spanish Civil War promoted an outburst of creative graphic expression, supporting an imperative to working-class unity that marked the rise of radicalism in the 1930s.<sup>35</sup>

Although the editors of *Regeneración* proposed similar sentiments, they wished to promote a strictly anti-authoritarian *ethos* among its readership. The periodical consisted of various propaganda posters from the AIT, CNT, and FAI, and followed such stories as “*La Crisis Catalana*,” urging Mexican workers to support comrades in Spain in their

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., “La CGT no es filial a la AIT” (Mexico City, April 1937).

<sup>35</sup> John Lear, “Imagining the Spanish Civil War: Anti-Fascism among Mexican Artists and Workers” (paper presented at the annual American Historical Association conference, Washington D.C., January 2014).

defenses against General Francisco Franco's forces.<sup>36</sup> However, as the war progressed and Franco's forces bombarded all fronts, Mexico's role in the preservation of the Spanish Republic propelled into the realm of high politics.

While workers supported the Spanish Republicans, a sizeable portion of the Mexican population did not take up the calls of the popular classes and continued to view the Republican struggle with suspicion. As Spanish refugees began their descent into Mexico with the support of the Mexican government, the Mexican right, who remained loyal to their perception that Franco represented the preservation of the Catholic Church, remained critical of the government's support. President Lázaro Cárdenas promoted the Republican cause by sending thousands of military weapons to the Republican front and besides the Soviet Union, was the only nation to openly support the anti-fascist forces.<sup>37</sup> Despite criticism from the far right in the country, Cárdenas emphasized the Republicans' "right of political protection and diplomatic and material support."<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the right-wing press critiqued the Mexican government representatives welcoming of the first sixteen hundred refugees as they raised their fists in solidarity to the new arrivals in June of 1939.<sup>39</sup> The debate in regards to the feared communist takeover quickly subsided among the Right as the Spanish exiles integrated themselves into everyday life in Mexico, while the dissidents among them continued their struggle in the marginalized radical presses.

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<sup>36</sup> *Regeneración*, "La Crisis Catalana" (Mexico City, May 1, 1937).

<sup>37</sup> Fernando Schwartz, *La Internacionalización de la Guerra Civil Española* (Barcelona: La España Plural, 1999), 67-68.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 165-166.

<sup>39</sup> John W. Sherman, *The Mexican Right: The End of Revolutionary Reform, 1929-1940* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 97.



By 1942, the national discussion over the Spanish exiles focused on their contributions to Mexican society. Of the twenty thousand exiles that would arrive at the end of the civil war, ninety professors and 150 associate professors would begin developing the infrastructure of a new era in Mexico's intelligentsia.<sup>40</sup> This eventually took on a physical manifestation through one of Mexico's most revered public institutions, *El Colegio de México*, established in 1940 with the assistance of Spanish exile intellectuals. On the popular front, both the CNT and PSOE would develop exiled presses in Mexico City in 1942 and by 1945, the newsletter *Cuadernos Socialistas* detailed the attempts of the exiled republican government and the CNT to develop diplomatic fronts both in the Americas as well as in Northern Africa.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, while the Spanish revolutionaries attempted to rekindle the fires of the Spanish Republic, they too disappeared alongside the anarchist histories that sank under the weight of a growing historical narrative glorifying the Mexican state's triumphant Revolution.

### **Consequences in the Tampico Periphery**

The gradual shift away from regional anarchist organizing developed for a variety of reasons. With the overall success of capitulating grievance processes within organized labor, the Mexican government faced few threats in contrast to the early years of the post-revolutionary period. Secondly, the sheer magnitude of various cultural nationalist projects dwarfed the personal networks developed by anarchist organizers throughout the country. Lastly, the nation's ultimate industrialization and modernization throughout the

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<sup>40</sup> Raymond Carr, *The Spanish Tragedy: The Civil War in Perspective* (London: Weinfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 249.

<sup>41</sup> *Cuadernos Socialistas*, "La conferencia internacional de San Francisco" and "El Congreso del Partido Socialista Español en Africa del Norte" (Mexico City: April 4, 1945), IISH, Amsterdam.

1920s and 1930s produced the foundations of a truly developmentalist working class. To counter Knight's assessment, developmentalist sentiments took decades to develop as regions such as the Huasteca remained focused on the development of a social revolution antithetical to the one proposed by the national government. While the State attempted to centralize authority and to promote a collective national identity, the Tampico and Huasteca anarchist movements strove to redefine their space as controlled by those who lived and worked within it.

Nonetheless, the anarchist movement faced the growing pressures of the post-revolutionary state apparatus and became largely displaced from the narratives produced by the Mexican state and reproduced by the nation's historians. As revolutionary sentiments flowed between local and national trajectories, resistance in the peripheries developed outside of the institutional confines of the Mexican state. Rather than being dependent on the economics of the nation, workers such as those found in Tampico and the Huasteca oil fields attempted to reexamine their surroundings and the world beyond them. As seen with the support of Spanish anarchists, international developments within the global anarchist movement remained a pivotal aspect of the collective identity. Whether or not the emphasis on internationalist solidarity led to the anarchist movement's fall from influence among the working class cannot be determined. However, such perspectives certainly influenced thousands of workers as they recognized their struggles in people throughout the world. While regional developments of anarchism emphasized the significance of local communities, the commentary and solidarity towards groups in regions such as Argentina and Spain provided working class communities alternative global relationships outside of the constructs of the State.

## Conclusion

The period between 1910 and 1945 has largely been assessed as a major turning point in the Mexican state's formulation of a collective nationalist identity. This assessment has been determined due to the magnitude of modernization that occurred in the country. However, such contributions go deeper than institutional development. A much larger feat for the post-revolutionary governments was the struggle of developing and maintaining power over a shared common identity among its citizenry. Prior to the Mexican Revolution, regions remained isolated politically, economically, and culturally. While these changes emerged prior to the overthrow of Porfirio Díaz due to the construction of a vast railway system, collective identity remained based primarily on the communities within specific regions.

As the Revolution forced a series of internal conflicts to the surface, a wide array of grievances from every social facet of the country sprouted in its wake. It has been generally agreed upon by historians that these conflicts were largely centered on agrarian conflicts, yet the narrative tends to abruptly shift towards a generalized history of a variety of *caudillos* that attempt to usurp power from one another. What is lost in such narratives are the complexities and realities within local contexts that produced the foundations of regional defiance. Moreover, a greater loss is the notion that regardless of one's own position in Mexican society, inevitably, succumbed to the support of one leader or another, ending with the capitulation of dissent. While such narratives provide relatively clear and concise rationalizations to the consequences of the Mexican Revolution, they ignore intricacies that complicate such narratives.

In the cases of Tampico and the Huasteca region, such a complication has existed for decades prior to the Mexican Revolution. The historiography of the national insurrection provides fragments of analysis on specific regions, yet remains largely a collage of scenes being assorted by what seems to fit in between the gaps. Some of these gaps include the role of the region's working class and in turn their relationship to the Mexican state. In this thesis, I have argued that this gap remained unfilled due to the prolonged hostilities among Tampico's workers and their affiliation with government oversight. Such strong currents did not evolve from nothing; therefore, I examined the diagnoses of the people who lived and struggled in these spaces. Within these diagnoses there existed a narrative formulated from the bottom of the region's social strata and maintained by a collective cultural identity interconnected through radical ideologies that complemented pre-existing discontent.

Tampico's anarchist movement formed on the foundations of regional anti-authoritarian sentiments that predated the Mexican Revolution. Throughout the Huasteca region's history as a peripheral space related to the Mexican nation-state, a variety of elements perpetuated social, cultural, political, and economic isolation among its inhabitants. As the Revolution asserted itself onto the region's inhabitants, the strains of anarchist tendencies that came along with it provided a resolution for a large part of Huastecan society. With the arrival of transitional workers from the countryside, anarchist organizers provided a political context for the growing population that related to their new circumstances. What's more, they ignited tendencies that existed and correlated with the region's historical tendencies towards autonomy and self-rule.

The unique aspect of Tampico's anarchist movements was their ability to maintain significance among workers despite the increasing pull towards nationalization through the State's consolidation of the labor movement during the 1920s and 1930s. By adapting to conditions on the ground, anarchists maintained their significance by providing services, which the State continued to neglect. Moreover, the development of an internationalist culture that supported global interconnections assisted in the maintenance of interest among the radical labor community. As global events affected the international anarchist movement, Tampico's labor movement remained connected and contributing to its struggle through solidarity campaigns. The question that remains is whether such circumstances affected other parts of Mexico as much as they did the Huasteca region.

In order to fully grasp the magnitude of such histories, further research must be done to investigate the local circumstances that culminated into radical transformations within Mexican society. For Tampico, the post-revolutionary period had a greater impact on the city's population than the revolutionary period between 1910 and 1920. Much of this contrast spawned from the growing conflicts between workers and the State. As the sources used in this thesis indicate, a wide range of interregional and international networks existed among anarchist communities in Tampico. It is therefore necessary for historians to dissect such organizational networks to determine the significance of anarchist regional movements. To move beyond the nation-state as a model of historical interpretation, the conclusions of those who inhabit these various regions can provide access to narratives that move beyond borders and seas.

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