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**CONTESTING RESTRUCTURING, TRANSFORMING REPRESENTATION:
AUTOWORKERS AND THE GENDERED STRUGGLE FOR COUNTER-HEGEMONY
IN MEXICO**

BY

TERESA R. HEALY
B.A. Hons., M.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
February 26, 1999
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**CONTESTING RESTRUCTURING, TRANSFORMING REPRESENTATION:
AUTOWORKERS AND THE GENDERED STRUGGLE FOR COUNTER-HEGEMONY
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Teresa R. Healy, B.A (Hons.), M.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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Chair, Department of Political Science

Thesis Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines three examples of resistance within Mexican labour unions during a period of sustained crisis at the national level, as well as at the level of world order. I argue that crisis in Mexico cannot be understood without an examination of the social relations of both class and gender. I develop this argument through a neo-Gramscian analysis of crisis, hegemony and struggles for counter-hegemony, as these are conditioned by relations of class and gender.

I argue that gender, having played a central role in the construction of relatively stable historical structures in Mexico during the mid part of the century, continued to shape the struggles of radical labour movements throughout the period of deepening crisis. In mid-century Mexico, paternalism and authoritarianism were constructed together in a "hegemonic masculinity" rooted in the family. Under conditions of passive revolution, the productive mode given primacy by the state was state corporatism. This historical structure was engendered by: i) the highly internationalised and paternalistic ideology of the family written into the Constitution of 1917; ii) the institutionalisation of *caudillismo* as the hegemonic masculinity within the state expressed in the federal executive, trade union leadership, and the role of the father-worker; and iii) the masculinised character of international production relations expressed in the automotive industry.

Struggles within the unions at *Nissan Mexicana*, *Ford de México*, and *Volkswagen de México*, are set in a broader context in which the crisis is manifested at the level of restructuring, representation and resistance. In the first moment of crisis the crisis in intersubjective meanings becomes evident. The struggle of the oppositional movement in the Nissan union was defeated, in part, by a paternalistic and economistic form of trade unionism. In the second moment corresponds to the crisis in production. The Ford Workers' democratic movement was defeated by the authoritarianism of the state and capital exhibited during the feminisation and restructuring of production. The third moment illuminates the institutional dimension of crisis. The oppositional movement in the Volkswagen union faced both authoritarianism and paternalism as participation and family values were forcibly institutionalised within its own organisation and in its collective agreement, under the direct authority of the presidency and within the parameters of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Although they begin in the workplace, labour struggles are seen to correspond to broader national struggles engaging questions of representation in a new form of state. They may become partially "globalised" in support of this goal. When these struggles are seen as gendered, the complex character of power relations becomes apparent and the struggle for counter-hegemony is strengthened.

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My brother Christopher, who is an autoworker, asked me how I could possibly remember what I wrote so long ago, given that I started writing this dissertation before his daughters were born. True enough. I began this project a long time ago, and in that time, both I and the dissertation have undergone a number of transformations. It is also true that what I started with became increasingly alive to me with time. To extend the birth reference in the words of Lillian Allen, Toronto's well known dub-poet and songwriter, and favourite of my housemates in Mexico, "This little child won't come out, a minute before she ready to be born. And me labour and me labour and me labour and me labour..."¹

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To all of these friends, colleagues, comrades, *compañeros y compañeras* and loved ones,

¡Hasta la Victoria, Siempre!
Until the Victory is Won!

1. Lillian Allen, Revolutionary Tea Party, audiocassette (Toronto: World Records, 1986).

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Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation will examine three key movements of resistance among trade unionists in the Mexican auto industry. These movements emerged during the period of crisis in Mexico spanning the years 1968-1994. Each movement represents an effort by trade unionists to transform the character of labour representation in Mexico. Each movement was defeated. Through each case, a significant moment in the deepening crisis in Mexico is illuminated. This dissertation will explore how oppositional labour movements became both protagonists and casualties of the transformation. By reflecting on these experiences of labour militancy it is hoped that we may come to a deeper understanding of the context of crisis and change in Mexico. At the same time, these particular cases will illuminate some of the more general questions concerning the struggle for counter-hegemony in the context of restructuring in North America at the end of the twentieth century.

In this dissertation, I work from the assumption that we may only understand moments of crisis in their historical context. Not only do crises emerge out of contradictions rooted in history, but so too are the contestations of social forces based in past experiences, constrained by pre-existing institutional arrangements, bound by material conditions and given vitality by options considered to be within the realm of possibility.¹ Under conditions of crisis, the struggle for

counter-hegemony takes place on a terrain in which certain continuities present themselves at the level of social structure.

Beginning with this assumption, I argue that crisis in Mexico cannot be understood without an examination of the transformations in the social relations of class together with changes in the social relations of gender. Because these three cases are fairly widely known among observers of Mexican labour movements both within and without Mexico, the originality of this dissertation does not depend upon a rescue of stories previously hidden from view. Indeed, Mexican labour history in general and the auto sector in particular has been well studied.² The originality of this dissertation lies in the presentation of a neo-Gramscian analysis of crisis, hegemony and struggles for counter-hegemony as these are take shape within relations of class and gender.

While political economists have done much to illuminate the way in which a particular pattern of class relations came to be temporarily institutionalised, the gendered dimension of stability and crisis in Mexico is usually ignored. I will make the case that the unproblematised social relations of gender have undermined the labour movement's ability to contest the terms of crisis in Mexico after 1968. More generally, I will argue that the struggle for counter-hegemony is weakened considerably if gender is not made visible in the

contestations by oppositional social forces during periods of crisis and restructuring.

Consistent with the historical emphasis of this dissertation, an investigation into the struggles of oppositional labour movements in the Mexican auto industry will be accompanied by a brief examination of the gendered dimensions of Revolutionary ideology, state institutions and the internationalised productive mode developed in mid-century Mexico. I will show how paternalism and authoritarianism were constructed together in a "hegemonic masculinity"³ rooted in the family, and will demonstrate its significance for power relations in Mexico.

Since the intertwining of particular gender and class relations may be shown to play such an important role during the period of relative stability in mid-century Mexico, and the period of crisis and restructuring that followed from it, the struggle of subordinated social forces for counter-hegemony must be seen to involve both class and gender. Gendered social relations continue to be bound up with labour's sense of collectivity, the organisation of its institutions and its relationship to the state. A particular pattern of gendered social relations was at the heart of the Mexican Revolution and this has continued to be important in the period of crisis and restructuring of recent years.

In this chapter, I will introduce the thesis by commenting on some of the current dilemmas that have arisen

for social movement activists and political economists in light of the ideological, economic and institutional restructuring of North America. In doing so I hope to establish the significance of this historical and theoretical exploration. I will then move to a discussion of my methodology and research experience in Mexico. Following from that I will set my approach in terms of a discussion of the work of three prominent analysts of Mexico to show what I draw from their contributions, and how my approach differs from theirs. I will end with an outline of each remaining chapter of the dissertation.

The changing continental context

This discussion of counter-hegemony arises now - at the end of the twentieth century, and from a particular place - Canada, because of the ascendance of "globalisation" in the present historical conjuncture. In both dominant and critical discussions, globalisation is often defined in material terms as the liberalisation of international trade, the deregulation of international finance and the internationalisation of production.⁴ It may also be defined in ideological terms as the dominant discourse which limits the range of legitimate political activities by strengthening the general sense that "there is no alternative" to neoliberal restructuring.⁵ Finally, globalisation may be defined in institutional terms as the consolidation of neoliberal restructuring within

agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).⁶ Over the past decade, "globalisation" has conditioned the activities of those states that have been restructured along neoliberal lines in the wake of struggles between social forces at the domestic level and at the level of world order.

At the same time, this process of globalisation has challenged commonly held assumptions about the significant relations and boundaries of North America. For Canadian political economists and social movement activists, the primary relation in the post-war period was with the United States.⁷ Seeing no immediate links with Mexican history, politics or economics, Mexico was seen as exceptional and was dismissed from the Canadian continental idea. Nor did Canada enter into political economy analyses of continental relations within the Mexican academic community.⁸

In many respects, both approaches were completely understandable. The differences in historical, economic or political terms made Canada and Mexico two very dissimilar cases. It was only after the struggle against Canada-US Free Trade was lost and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) became a probability that Canadian observers, both within and without the academe, began to take a serious look at Mexico's relationship to the continent. They began to find that each country faced similar political and economic

challenges, notwithstanding the asymmetries between them. Whether they were first identified as International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed structural adjustment plans (SAPs) or as part of the "Corporate Agenda" that informed the policies of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, George Bush and Brian Mulroney, economic restructuring was taken up by social movements as a neoliberal attack on acquired social rights. The same was true in Mexico. Facing a common struggle to interpret and contest the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement, national coalitions of social movements began to articulate common positions.⁹ Academics began to take a closer look at the implications of economic integration in the region.

This study of Mexico emerges out of ongoing critical concerns over the changing character of continental social relations. I aim to speak about the prolonged period of crisis and restructuring in Mexico primarily to a Canadian audience, versed in the questions of Canadian political economy, concerned with questions relating to the North American Free Trade Agreement and interested in the history of resistance among Mexican labour movements as they struggle with the latest round in the turbulent history North American relations; relations that now involve Canada as another partner.

I begin from the premise that an historical approach is necessary in order to develop a more full and long term

dialogue between North American political economists and oppositional social activists. The reader may be surprised by the lack of substantive analysis of the NAFTA itself. But I would argue it is by redirecting attention to the historical conditions within which Mexican social movements in general, and labour movements in particular, confront NAFTA and continue to contest the neoliberal terms of North American restructuring, that we may come to a deeper appreciation of the limits and possibilities of counter-hegemony in these times. I would contend that this historical view is a necessary prerequisite for effective and solidaristic work among social forces in our respective and collective struggles for counter-hegemony.

Methodology

This dissertation analyses the experience of militancy within the Nissan union in the early 1970s, the Ford Union in the 1980s and the Volkswagen union in the early 1990s. These movements are representative of the particular issues that Mexican autoworkers struggled with in three moments of crisis, but they are also of general importance because their struggles drew national, and sometimes international, attention to the central contradictions of the form of state and productive mode as they entered into crisis and faced neoliberal restructuring. Furthermore, these three movements did not contend with national dynamics only. They can be seen

to illustrate aspects of crisis and restructuring at the level of world order as well.

The cases I have chosen to examine cannot be described as completely typical of popular resistance movements in Mexico. These cases are drawn, after all, from the core industrial sector that was promoted by the state during the period of Revolutionary Nationalist social compromise and throughout the period of crisis and restructuring that followed its demise. They are not, however, exceptional cases. Through their militancy, and as a result of state sanction, auto workers and their unions attained a significant degree of protection after Lázaro Cárdenas institutionalised the Revolution along the lines of corporatism in mid-century. These are movements of auto workers who are, for the most part, male and mestizo. Their place in the social compromise was not shared by women workers, indigenous peoples or peasants, but their particular experience played a more general role of stabilising the Revolutionary Nationalist social compromise. Their position within Revolutionary Nationalism was constructed in universal terms, as part of the effort of dominant groups to consolidate capitalist hegemony in the country. Being neither "popular", nor "exceptional", male auto workers continue to be associated with the "norms" of Mexican labour relations. Their collective endeavours remain central indicators of the condition of hegemony during the period when the social compromise has been torn apart.

Each of the three cases under consideration here offers an insight into how oppositional movements within Mexican trade unions have attempted to contest the terms of crisis and restructuring by transforming the established basis of labour representation. In the present context, the auto industry remains at the top of state priorities within the context of North American restructuring, but the relative position of male auto workers and the privileged place of their traditional forms of representation has deteriorated dramatically. Since the auto industry has always been a highly internationalised site of production relations, contestation brings into focus overlapping relations of power in the context of deepening crisis. As we shall see, the state remains the crucial site of struggle for oppositional movements, although it may not be the first target of contestation. As production modes were restructured along continental lines in Mexico beginning in the 1960s, the state became increasingly authoritarian. The discourse of international competitiveness undermined the myth of the "gradually perfecting Revolution", while the highly feminised and coercive character of export-oriented production took hold.

As the crisis of state legitimacy deepened during the years 1968-1994, the ability of the official labour central, the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM), to represent its members effectively worsened apace. As we shall

see in the first instance, the CTM found itself displaced with the onset of crisis instead of playing an innovative role. Later, it attempted to reassert its presence as the legitimate interlocutor with the restructured state even though its traditional core supporters rejected its acquiescence in the face of attacks on their acquired rights. In response, the CTM resorted to violence to maintain union discipline. Finally, as the NAFTA negotiations were concluded, the CTM was virtually displaced from its central position by new institutions of labour.

Oppositional labour movements, acting collectively to transform the conditions of their subordination, must, and in fact do, engage political projects that problematise questions of representation in a new form of state. In Mexico, this has meant that trade unions have sought independence from corporatist institutions developed within the Revolutionary Nationalist project. When they were unsuccessful, they tried to democratise official labour institutions. When they were unsuccessful there, they fought their battles on legal grounds with the argument that it was the state itself that was the problem. They formed political organisations and they demanded both liberal and social democratic rights within the legal system. They sought to build alliances with other social movements at the local, national and international levels in order to press for demands for democratic representation in the workplace, within the official trade

union organisations, and within the state more generally. They participated in national movements that challenged the lack of democracy at the federal level. These movements included, but were not confined to, demands for electoral transparency. Their struggles had, and continue to have, a material dimension to them, but their struggles are also about their rights to be represented and to represent themselves in the life of their society.

Just as gendered social relations played an important role in stabilising the Revolutionary Nationalist social compromise, gendered social relations are bound up in the long crisis that followed from it. In the first moment of crisis, the struggle of the oppositional movement in the Nissan union was defeated, in part, by a paternalistic ideology that shored up a narrow economistic form of trade unionism against a more broadly constructed social unionism. In the second moment of crisis, the struggle of the Ford Workers' democratic movement was defeated, again in part, by transformations in production that brought feminised labour relations into the heart of the auto industry. In the third moment of crisis, the struggle of the oppositional movement in the Volkswagen union was defeated by the institutionalisation of putatively cooperative, family-values in labour institutions, as well as in their collective agreement. This was accomplished under the direct authority of the presidency.

As E.P. Thompson reminds us in his analysis of the English working class, it is erroneous to dismiss those who struggled but failed. Thompson takes the view that with their self-conscious activities, working people contributed to the making of history. Further:

(T)hey lived through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in terms of their own experience; and if they were casualties of history, they remain, condemned in their own lives, as casualties. Our only criterion of judgement should not be whether or not a man's actions are justified in the light of subsequent evolution. After all, we are not at the end of social evolution ourselves. In some of the lost causes of the people of the Industrial Revolution we may discover insights into social evils which we have yet to cure.¹⁰

As we shall see in the following chapters, the history of resistance in the Mexican labour movement is filled with the tragedies of possibilities. This does not mean that we look at those moments with a pessimistic eye. Thompson was right: the dialectics of struggle are ongoing. We are not yet at the end of history ourselves.

Research Experience

The research for this dissertation began with an interest in changes in the internationalisation of production as demonstrated in the auto sector. At first, I was concerned with the gendered dimensions of the international division of labour as demonstrated in the export-processing plants in Mexico's northern border region. As I became more familiar with the questions asked by Mexican political economists, I

turned my attention to crisis and the restructuring of production at the centre of the country. In the auto assembly sector, the gendered dynamics of the internationalisation of production were present, but it was the highly masculinised struggles of working class men that required some explanation.

I was associated with the *Facultad de Economía, Posgrado, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* in the Federal District where I held the position of Visiting Researcher. Upon my arrival in 1992, I had three broad areas of concern that were encompassed in the following questions:

i) How have auto unions responded to the restructuring process underway in Mexico including plant closures, new plant openings, technological change and work reorganisation? How are new forms of labour regulation reflected in collective agreements?

ii) How have corporatist state-society relations, as seen in the relationship between the governing party (PRI) and trade union centrals (CTM, UOI, FAT, Ford-national union) been altered during the recent period of national crisis and restructuring?

iii) What has been the historical relationship that auto unions have developed with other unions and social movements? How has this changed as restructuring has been experienced in their regions and local communities? Have auto unions responded to international restructuring by taking up new strategies at the international level?

To answer these questions, I actively engaged in a wide variety of research activities from February to May 1992 and February to August 1993. While in Mexico, I studied the relationship between state, industry and unions. I reviewed the literature on auto unions in Mexico and their historical relationship to the labour movement. I sought out access to trade union documents from that time, gathered statistical information on the economic importance of the industry and reviewed journal issues for information about trade union activities during from the 1960s onwards. I studied the political system, the Constitution, industrial structure and gathered literature on labour law and the restructuring of labour relations. I attended labour events and I participated in a number of academic conferences, both international and national, at times giving seminars on Canadian political economy.

I held extended conversations with trade unionists and transcribed taped interviews. I conducted interviews with state officials (*Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial, SECOFI*), union leaders (*Unidad Obrera Independiente (UOI), Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT), Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Ford Motor Company, Sindicato Independiente de los Trabajadores de Nissan Mexicana, Sindicato de Obreros y Empleados de la Planta de Montage de la General Motors de México*), social scientists at Mexican universities, and leaders from North American social movements working on NAFTA

issues (Development Gap, *Solidarité Populaire Québec*; Citizen's Trade Campaign). I interviewed representatives from the *Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio* (RMALC), *Mujer a Mujer* (MAM), and *Mujeres en Acción Sindical* (MAS).

I travelled to auto plants in Cuernavaca, Puebla and Cuautitlán, where the Volkswagen, Nissan and Ford plants are located respectively. I also left the Valle de México to travel north to the border region where the newer assembly plants and *maquiladoras* are installed. On these trips I spoke with union leaders, plant managers, community organizers and academics.

I gathered statistical information on the changing economic situation from the *Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Automotriz* (AMIA), *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática* (INEGI) and clipped a number of daily newspapers. I collected documentation on national productivity accords during the Salinas presidency, information on state institutions, and gathered copies of the Presidential State of the Union Addresses 1968-1992. I also collected copies of collective agreements. I researched the debate over the Side Agreements on NAFTA, using the library and internet resources at the offices of *Mujer a Mujer* (MAM) and the *Mexican Action Network on Free Trade* (RMALC).

Listing the activities I completed during my research in Mexico in this way indicates that I was looking for a good deal of empirical information about Mexico. My research was

not, however, an attempt to engage with positivist epistemology. I had already set myself within the framework of the critical theory and was trying to respond to Robert Cox's warning to his readers: "Above all, do not base theory on theory but rather on changing practice and empirical-historical study, which are a proving ground for concepts and hypotheses."¹¹ This was a difficult enterprise but one that I felt had to be taken seriously if I was to understand and then communicate aspects of Mexico's experience of North American integration to Canadians.

Upon my arrival at the UNAM, it became immediately apparent that I had an enormous amount of work to do in order to begin to comprehend Mexican society. During my field research, I came to understand some of the subtleties of Mexican political economy not only because I was successful in gathering information, but because the research process itself instructed me. I had a set of questions to answer but the fact that I was asking them in Mexico meant that I was immediately engaged in that society. I understood that I would need to complete my research in a way that was very different from that I was accustomed to. When I first went about looking for introductory material on state institutions, for example, I could not locate any general text. It is far easier to find introductory texts describing Mexican social security provisions in Canada, written in English by American sociologists, than to find equivalent sources in Mexico. The

academic tradition does not focus on the general textbook because it does not appear to meet the needs of publishers or students. This is partly because there has been no market created amongst low-income undergraduate students who study under difficult material circumstances and often work full-time as well.

Instead of seeking out information in libraries, I went to the many excellent bookstores where I perused the bookshelves divided according to publisher and learnt to distinguish the focus of each press. The academic presses bring out annual lists of edited collections and works by individual authors. Rather than having to rely on UNAM's libraries with insufficient resources for the 300,000 students that attend, I was able to take advantage of my scholarship award and buy the books I needed.

In my attempt to find out as much as possible as quickly as possible, I searched out sources of information from Mexican research institutes and government offices. I encountered limits to the availability of bibliographic materials and statistical information. There was no scarcity of information needed to answer my questions, but I found it difficult to retrieve that information. In part this was due to the lack of communication technologies. As well, given the size and conditions of Mexico City, a trip to the INEGI bookstore from *Ciudad Universitaria* for example, would take up at least half a day. This multiplied by the number of offices

I visited to conduct interviews, pick up material, review holdings and select publications, meant that many days quickly disappeared. This difficulty was also due to small publishers' lack of resources. At times it reflected a set of institutional relations not organised for the distribution of information in a public manner. I needed all the time I had to develop working relationships to help me overcome these limitations. It is worth noting that government and employers granted me relatively easy access to information that would have been very difficult for Mexican researchers to obtain. I would also say that there were many occasions when my working class background and Irishness facilitated communication. My interactions as a white woman amongst male auto workers and academics were highly gendered. I found myself in a contradictory location conditioned by class, ethnicity and gender.

Long before I ever came to any position on an issue, my first task was to recognise how the central issues had been defined within the discipline. This might sound relatively straightforward but I was able to identify only a limited number of written discussions of academic debates. My problem was to try to identify the different theoretical perspectives that framed these empirical studies. I was surprised to find that authors tend not to review the broad conceptual debates on a question before advancing their own argument. As a result, it took a long time for me to learn how to

differentiate between different "groups" within the discourse, especially since both traditional and critical approaches to a subject were often set within the discourse of the Revolution. As an outsider, it took a long time to uncover the difference between Revolutionary Nationalist and Marxist approaches, for instance.

The differences in academic experiences are in fact striking but the explanation is in the context. Individual academics do not work alone but with others who share their political project. They become associated with one press, journal or newspaper and distance themselves from others. To locate an individual author within a debate, one must first look for the community in which he or she is situated. Intellectual life is not a solitary enterprise. Even at the formal institutional level this is the case. Towards the end of their bachelor's degree, social science students write a thesis and work for six months in their national social service placement. At the end of this process, they are given the title of "*licenciado/a*" and the right to be called an economist, or a political scientist, or a sociologist etcetera.

Furthermore, in Mexico, oral traditions accompany written ones. Lectures take the place of secondary syntheses of debates in the literature. Written texts supplement but do not supersede those intellectual traditions advocating debate, discussion and formal presentations.¹² My explanation for

this rests on the mediating role of the state in academic life. Because of the deep roots of authoritarianism and corporatism in the University, meanings are encoded and written conclusions often cryptic. Critics and supporters of the state both show how their political positions fulfil the promises of the Revolution. It was pointed out to me that because many of the radical communist party members of the 1970s have become the radical neoliberals of the 1990s, abstract theoretical debates have been discredited within the student body. Neoliberalism provokes students towards what is considered to be a more "practical" orientation. Since government institutions do not work according to their formal framework, there seems to have been relatively little historical interest among political economists in the institutional structure of the Mexican state. As well, because government offices and official newspapers are seen to be unreliable sources of statistical information, critical political economists often try to counter dis-information with their own empirical studies. In this very complex country where education is prized and where intellectuals play a leading public role, academic life is highly politicised.

All of this meant that I engaged in many a long and fascinating conversation with colleagues who helped me identify competing views of Mexican society. I was seen as one of a community of academics, not as an autonomous graduate student. I was expected to take part in the life of the

faculty and contribute information about Canadian perspectives on a variety of issues during my tenure. I was asked whether I would engage in long term research projects with Mexican academics and whether I would be interested in developing links between Universities and Research Centres in Canada and Mexico. I was limited in my ability to respond to these initiatives since, as a Canadian doctoral candidate I had few institutional resources with which to develop these links. An academic in my position in Mexico, on the other hand, is usually quite established in the profession.

In my efforts to appreciate the specificity of Mexico's relationship to the rest of North America, I knew that an historical approach would be needed. Soon into my research however, I encountered problems in defining limits on the time frame in question. My primary concern was with the period 1968-to the present, but this period made no sense without an analysis of that which went before. Consequently, it was not long before I realised that any explanation of trade unionism in Mexico would have to incorporate an understanding of the "Mexican Miracle", *Cardenismo*, the Mexican Revolution and the *Porfiriato*, which was the period preceding it.

This issue took me to the heart of the project. If Canadians are to try to understand the profundity of the challenges facing Mexico at the moment, then that means challenging our limited perception of Mexico. I expected that most people interested in these questions would make certain

assumptions about the *maquilas* and the northern border region before they would ask about the 70 year old auto industry in the Valle de México. I could not assume a general knowledge among my readership of events that are as common to Mexicans as the British North America Act, Peace Order and Good Government and the National Policy are to Canadians. As a result, I had to rethink the organisation of this dissertation so as to incorporate chapters exploring the origins of labour regulation in the events which led to the Constitution of 1917 and the Federal Labour Law of 1931 and the Revolutionary Nationalist compromise that was institutionalised in the 1930s.

In summation, I would say that this research experience was fruitful beyond all expectations. It was, however, limited by my own inability to see where efforts to be truly interpretive conflicted with my assumption that I never really knew enough about the Mexican "reality" to be able to offer my own perspective. Furthermore, I was sure that my own biases and limited understandings would stand in the way of a defensible analysis. Rather than being able to mark distinctions or similarities between my views and others, I tried to erase those boundaries so that I could closely translate the experience of Mexican oppositional social movements for their Canadian counterparts. The problem with this effort was that neither direct translation nor objective observation was required. In any case the quotations, as well

as the fact-gathering, might have gone on forever had I not come to appreciate that interpretation is at the heart of all analyses, and my job was to provide an analysis.

In the dissertation that follows, theoretical reflections are intertwined with the extensive primary and secondary research that recreates the chronologies of these movements. In part, this effort derives from my appreciation of Fernand Braudel's reflection on his own subject matter in which he expressed a desire to "immerse myself in it and become familiar with it".¹³ Where Braudel was concerned with the habits and routines of material life that people undertake but are hardly aware of, here the attention to detail is meant to illustrate the extent to which active and conscious acts of resistance in Mexico have been bound up in a myriad of procedural, legalistic and organisational considerations. I have recounted many of these details because I believe they effectively demonstrate the extent to which the Mexican state is implicated in these contestations of an internationalised production process. I have also recounted these stories in chronological form because that is the way they were told to me in interviews with the union activists. I suspect that their long experience with the judicial system conditioned the way these trade unionists came to analyse their struggles. Furthermore, because I hope to speak to those who have a general knowledge of Mexican labour struggles, I decided that my attention to specifics would help illustrate some of the

difficulties Mexican labour activists face as they contest relations of power, and the notable challenges that have been mounted regardless.

Approaches to crises in Mexico

The interpretation of historical events and processes brings social analysts into dialogue with one another. To introduce my engagement with ongoing debates, I will briefly discuss the work of Kevin Middlebrook, Judith Adler Hellman and Alejandro Álvarez. For the past 30 years, the "Mexican Crisis" has been the subject of discussion in most accounts of state-society relations in that country. This is generally true of Mexican accounts as it is for those accounts published outside of the country. This long period of crisis is usually analysed in comparison to the relatively long-lasting stability that preceded it. Beginning in the years after the Revolution of 1910-1917, most observers would agree that Mexico was stabilised by a combination of legal idealism, corporatist institutions and national industrial development. Until the rupture represented by the repression of the students' movement in 1968, the social compromise is seen to have exhibited remarkable cohesion.

Kevin Middlebrook offers an insightful analysis of the transition from crisis to stability in early twentieth century Mexico. To explain why the Mexican social revolution resulted in authoritarian rule, Middlebrook argues that the insights of

both state-centred as well as society-centred approaches to comparative politics must be appreciated.¹⁴ In the case of Mexico, Middlebrook argues, state control of the labour movement is often commented upon, while societal explanations of elite control escape regular analytical attention. Specifically, he argues the alliance formed in the early period of Revolutionary Nationalism between elites and the labour movement must be understood. This alliance was conditioned by economic, organizational and ideological factors rooted in Mexican society but linked with processes of state development.

Middlebrook's work raises a conceptual challenge to those comparative approaches that have accepted the distinction between the 'political' and the 'economic' realms and the intellectual divisions that accompany them. He suggests that interdisciplinary analyses may offer insights into the Mexican case, but his challenge would seem to invite even further reflection. Middlebrook's analysis makes a strong case in favour of an approach to political economy in which these two spheres are seen as inseparable, rather than simply complementary. In the Canadian political economy tradition, for example, it is not 'state **and** society', as much as it is 'state **in relation to** society' that may become the basis for powerful analyses of the relations between labour movements, the state and capital in capitalist societies.¹⁵ The

relationship between state and society will figure prominently in this dissertation.

Middlebrook argues that most observers of Mexican history do not appreciate the enduring significance of the Revolution that began in 1910.¹⁶ Here I would agree. Middlebrook's emphasis on the importance of the broadly based perception of "a national identity and a just society" with its roots in the Revolution is well placed. As the Revolution became institutionalised, these ideas did legitimise the Mexican state's increased intervention and authoritarianism.¹⁷

Where I depart from Middlebrook's analysis, is in his definition of Revolutionary ideology as a combination of "liberal individual rights, constitutional rule, nationalism, economic redistribution and social justice".¹⁸ First of all, the formation of collective identities of worker and peasant did not happen simultaneously but in opposition to one another during the Revolution. General Carranza fought against the popular program presented by the *Zapatistas* during the Revolution and organised workers into "Red Battalions" to defeat the southern army of indigenous peasants. Subsequently, Carranza severely repressed the labour movement immediately before the Constitutional Congress of 1917.

Second, the "collective character"¹⁹ of Constitutional rights elaborated in Article 123 did not acknowledge the class location of Mexican workers. The social basis of Revolutionary ideology, as it was set out in Article 123,

depends upon a view of society in which the individual worker was considered in relation to his family and community, not his class. This is a conservative view that is more closely related to "red toryism" than any radical commitment to social justice.

Third, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Three, Article 123 of the Constitution was heavily influenced by the prevailing consensus among the leading industrialists within the United States. It was not just a national project that was advanced as Mexican elites consolidated capitalist production processes. Rather, a highly internationalist, corporate-liberal ideology became ascendent for a brief period in the early part of the century. I argue that it was not workers' grievances but management's concern for social harmony that were placed on the Constitutional table at the end of 1917.

Finally, I argue that it is useful to mark a distinction between the ideologies of Article 123 of 1917 and the Federal Labour Law of 1931. Immediately following the Revolution, Constitutionalist did not expect the state to play an active role in economic development. That came later. Indeed, what is striking about Article 123 is the designation of an active role for private corporations in reconstruction.

In addition to Middlebrook, the work of Judith Adler Hellman has offered a skilful analysis of the complexities of power relations in Mexico. Hellman's account of the long

crisis in Mexico following from the events of 1968 is rooted in her comparison with the stability of the previous period of Revolutionary Nationalist social compromise.²⁰ For Hellman, it was the combination of repression and persuasion that maintained the stability of class domination within Mexico throughout the period following the Revolution up to 1968. Hellman argues that with the onset of crisis, however, oppositional movements challenged the traditional arrangements. Social inequalities could not be diminished by the Mexican government without mobilizing the masses against the power of the national bourgeoisie.²¹ Successive *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) governments showed themselves to be opposed to this solution. Over time, the ability of the government to maintain its traditional strategy of cooptation was reduced as its economic position weakened in the face of the devaluations, the debt crisis and structural adjustment.²²

Hellman's insight into the simultaneous presence of repression and persuasion in the Revolutionary Nationalist compromise is suggestive of Gramsci's reflections on the role of consent and coercion in the construction of hegemony. In this dissertation, I will build upon Hellman's argument to explore how the concept of hegemony might be relevant for the Mexican context. To do this I will introduce the concept of the "condition of hegemony" in which both crisis and hegemony, as well passive revolution, may be contemplated.

In this discussion, "passive revolution" may be seen as one of the possible transformations of historical structures within the condition of hegemony. Passive revolution, of particular importance to countries at the margins of world order²³, may be seen as a mid-range condition between hegemony and crisis where temporary stability may be attained. In Chapter Two I will elaborate upon these three possibilities within the condition of hegemony.

In the case of Mexico, passive revolution in the mid-twentieth century depended upon a paternalist and authoritarian order in which the 'active consent' of the subordinate groups in society was not apparent. The order was, nevertheless, a stable one. By taking this historical view, I intend to show how the conflict between social forces during the crisis that emerged after 1968 must be understood in relation to their formation in the previous period.

In this regard, Alejandro Álvarez emphasises another dimension of continuities that must be appreciated in analyses of crisis in Mexico. Through his discussion of capitalist crisis, Álvarez emphasises the effect of international pressures upon the class structure of Mexico.²⁴ By the mid-1980s, he argues, international financial capital had subordinated Mexican capital to itself, while the economic crisis dramatically weakened the Mexican working class in economic as well as political terms. Authoritarianism and repression increased in the midst of economic stagnation. In

response, mass movements were unable to take the place of the weakened independent labour movements in developing a hegemonic project.²⁵

Álvarez argues convincingly that it is impossible to understand Mexico in isolation from the historical dynamics that have produced international inequalities. Specifically, "it is not possible to consider variations in economic processes as isolated or autonomous acts, since, in reality, national economies form diverse unities within a totality, the world economy."²⁶ As Álvarez argues, President Echeverría's response to economic and political crisis in the 1970s was "insufficient for the dominated classes and exasperating for the dominant classes".²⁷ The way out of the crisis, according to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), meant that the Mexican government would have to distance itself from alliances that had been constructed in the Cárdenas period.²⁸ In the wake of austerity and rebellions from below, labour's resistance movements were fought by the official union leadership.

I agree that an approach to the study of political economy in which national contexts are seen in terms of world order is crucial. The challenge of any such effort is to avoid reducing national level totalities to international economic imperatives or overbearing structures. I would argue that the political dimension of this relation ought to be highlighted, as Álvarez does. In this dissertation, the

relation between the "national" and the "international" will be explored.

Although my analysis focuses upon the importance of auto workers, I take issue with Álvarez in his assertion that the industrial working class necessarily forms the core of the dominated groups in society.²⁹ Indeed, if gender is as important to the construction of the working class in Mexico as I am suggesting, then the workplace cannot be seen in isolation from other sites where gendered identities are also constructed. To a certain extent, the incorporation of gender into the workplace depends upon its prior construction in locations outside of the wage relation, including the family. The state plays an important part in its construction as well. One of the implications is that the struggles of the industrial working class cannot be de-linked from the contestation and democratisation of gender relations in the family.

I argue that social relations arising out of the organisation of production may be insufficient to achieve capitalist hegemony in countries marginalised within world order. Passive revolution, however, may overtake crisis by incorporating social relations of gender into patriarchal historical structures. The reproduction of power within the dominant groups may not be entirely located within capitalist class relations but may also depend upon other relations of power defined in terms of gender. They may also be built out

of the history of colonialism and social relations of ethnicity and race. This would suggest that state leaders have room to define their political project in national terms, to a certain extent, even within structures of world order. In Mexico, we may see how gendered relations stabilised the mid-century Revolutionary Nationalist project by looking at the Constitutional discourse of the family, the paternalistic legal framework set down in the Federal Labour Law and the highly masculinised characteristics of production.

The recent period of crisis and restructuring seems to have dramatically altered the relative strength enjoyed by the male industrial working class. Consequently, the struggle against "downward harmonization" of wages and working conditions may depend upon the consolidation of a political relationship between trade unionists in the traditional core industries and those who inhabit even more precarious positions. Álvarez's discussion is one that lends itself to further consideration of the question of counter-hegemony.

Together, these three relationships: state-society, consent-coercion, and national-world order will be used to analyse trade union militancy in the context of sustained crisis in Mexico. In this dissertation, I will develop these points within a neo-Gramscian framework in which the question of gender will take a central place. A neo-Gramscian framework is useful for this purpose because it begins from an engaged epistemological commitment. It offers historicist

accounts of transformations within world order. It advances a critique of economistic Marxism by looking at the importance of ideas, intersubjective meanings and culture in the organisation of power within national societies and at the level of world order. It is characterised by a holistic theoretical engagement of "global", "national" and "local" historical transformations. This approach is not only capable of analysing historical transformation, but also revealing the potential for counter-hegemony. In this analysis of historical transformation careful attention be paid to the character of the historic bloc, including the role of dominant as well as subordinated social forces.

In Chapter Two I develop the theoretical concepts central to the analysis which is to follow. Using a feminist Gramscian analysis, I develop the idea that the relationship between hegemony and non-hegemony is not dichotomous. Rather, hegemony may be understood as existing along a continuum that I refer to as the "condition of hegemony". In order to situate the long crisis which is the focus of this dissertation, I also explore the concepts of hegemony, passive revolution and crisis. I argue that passive revolution was constructed in Mexico by engendering historical structures through a combination of paternalism and authoritarianism. This discussion is meant to contextualise the analysis of crisis which follows.

During moments of crisis, the legitimacy of the form of state and productive mode may be called into question but social practices do not change easily. Oppositional labour movements may reproduce traditional gendered forms of political practice. Older discourses may become the basis for new demands and state actors may become increasingly repressive and intransigent in the face of pressures for institutional change. I will argue that in conditions of crisis, continuities with earlier periods are apparent. This explains the relevance of analyses of the Revolutionary Nationalist period as background for explanations of the current crisis. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of counter-hegemony that focuses on possibility and contingency rather than functional necessity.

In Chapter Three, I begin to develop the argument by analysing the transformation from the crisis of the Mexican Revolution to a period of relative stability under passive revolution that lasted from the mid-1930s to the mid-1960s. It is commonly held that this period of stability in Mexico depended upon relatively strong rates of economic growth, corporatist forms of representation and the persuasive optimism of Revolutionary ideology. I argue that this history of stability in Mexico may be seen in light of a failed project of hegemonic leadership that emerged out of the crisis of the Revolution. The Revolutionary project did not immediately disintegrate into a coercive and fractious order.

I will argue that stabilisation was brought about by i) a highly internationalised and paternalistic ideology of the family that was written into the Constitution; ii) the institutionalisation of a paternalistic and authoritarian masculinity in the federal labour law; and iii) the imposition of a highly gendered and internationalised production mode centred in the heart of the Mexican development strategy.

Immediately after the Revolution of 1910-17, state leaders were influenced by the gendered ideology of a progressive capitalist form of organising production that was ascendent in the United States at the time. What has been called "enterprise corporatism" had little staying power and was transformed into "state corporatism" during the 1930s.³⁰ This transformation did not happen by itself. The form of state that emerged out of the Revolution was also transformed after failing to provide for any significant level of social consensus. Consequently, by the late 1930s, gendered dimensions of state corporatism were institutionalised within the state. A relatively stable period in Mexican history began in the 1930s despite the wholly non-hegemonic character of world order. Later, with the rise of *Pax Americana*, Mexico became a favoured site for US investment and increasingly tied into the new international division of labour. In this chapter I will also discuss how, as the internationalisation of production was extended in the 1960s, the Mexican government became active in promoting the interests of

national capital within the auto industry in an effort to advance the interests of domestic industry. Mexican auto unions were closely tied to this initiative and workers were highly controlled by the paternalism and authoritarianism of corporatist structures of representation.

In Chapter Four, I begin to discuss the struggle for counter-hegemony during a period of crisis. In the first section of the chapter, I show how the crisis emerged as a crisis of representation as the contradictions of the passive revolution were made visible by the resistance of subordinated groups in Mexican society. New feminised industries established under the New International Division of Labour (NIDL) were used to buttress the dominant forms of production that had been established in Mexico under import-substitution industrialization (ISI). The internationalisation of production during the weakening of *Pax Americana* conditioned labour struggles within state corporatism as it was being restructured.

In this Chapter, I pay particular attention to the ideological dimensions of crisis. The shock of the massacre of students in 1968 caused a rupture in commonly held understandings of the Revolutionary Nationalist legacy, but there were other intersubjective elements that persisted in this phase of the crisis. As oppositional labour movements challenged the official union bureaucracy, they were unable to prevent a new form of *caudillismo* from taking its place.

Because theirs was a struggle that became a reference point for future movements for democratic representation, independence from the official labour movement and autonomy from the state, I investigate the case of the movement of workers at Nissan Mexicana that organised to secure an independent trade union at the plant in Cuernavaca, Morelos. I explore what possibilities the alliance of local community and labour leaders offered the movement in the plant and how, in the end, this broadly based social unionism was defeated by a narrow trade unionism that had become independent of the official labour organisation, but reliant upon gendered practices relating to representation and closely associated with the modernisation strategies of the employer and the state.

In Chapter Five, I reflect on the challenge to the state corporatist productive mode emerging from a double process in which the restructuring of both the United States and Mexican economies was the objective. Restructuring included the internationalisation of production, the transformation of the state and the reorganisation of work. The "maquilization/feminisation" of the Mexican industrial heartland was the result. Internationalisation came to dominate the setting of national priorities during the 1980s not because of an inexorable process, but because of the way in which dominant class priorities were reflected within and reproduced by the state. In this period, the coercive aspects

of governing overcame any restrained appeal to paternalism. Radical social movements refused to accept a new social compromise under these new conditions. Repression of oppositional movements increased as the state tried to force through the neo-liberal agenda. Even as new social forces emerged among the urban poor and electoral contestation became a viable terrain of political struggle, the democratic trade union movements were crushed consistently. In this chapter I reflect upon the actions of the Democratic Movement of Ford Workers as it confronted the deepening economic and political crisis of the 1980s. Because they became increasingly conscious of the broad implications of their struggle, the Ford Workers' movement is a significant illustration of workers' efforts to contest the restructuring process at the level of class. The movement did not include gendered solidarity as part of its struggle.

In Chapter Six, I turn to the third period of crisis in which neoliberal restructuring is institutionalised. In this third moment, dominant groups attempted to consolidate neoliberal restructuring by embarking on a strategy of institutional transformation. Here I show how the attempt was made to thoroughly transform the dominant productive mode into a globalised version of enterprise corporatism that I call "global corporatism". In the current conjuncture paternalism is transformed within Mexican labour relations through a highly authoritarian version of *caudillismo* institutionalised

as a reinvigorated executive privilege. In the conflict which arose at *Volkswagen de México*, we have an illustration of this dynamic and workers' contestation of it.

In this moment in the crisis, we see not only the ongoing process of restructuring but an effort by dominant groups to effect a recomposition of the social compromise through the state. The new mode involves the reorganisation of work and technological change, as well as imposed changes to labour's institutions in a manner consistent with the continental neoliberalism of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The legitimacy of this effort is set in terms of "family values" of cooperation and team work. Because this paternalism highly ideological and has, in fact, been eclipsed by authoritarianism, it is unlikely that this production mode may be the basis for a new passive revolution. It may, however, become the basis for a renewed movement of labour resistance concerned with the gendered dimensions of struggle.

ENDNOTES

1. This starting point is influenced by the work of Robert Cox, Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).
2. See, for example: Jordy Micheli, Nueva Manufactura, Globalización y Producción de Automóviles en México (México: UNAM, 1994); Arnulfo Arteaga, coord., Proceso de Trabajo y Relaciones Laborales en la Industria Automotriz en México (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa, 1992); Yolanda Montiel, Proceso de Trabajo, Acción Sindical y Nuevas Tecnologías en Volkswagen de México (México, DF: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1991); Jorge Carillo, coord., La Nueva Era de la Industria Automotriz en México (Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 1990); Maureen Molot ed., Driving Continentally: National Policies and the North American Auto Industry (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993); Harley Shaiken and Stephen Herzenberg, Automatización y Producción Global: Producción de motores de automóvil en México, Estados Unidos y Canadá (México, D.F.: Facultad de Economía, UNAM, 1989); Ian Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico: The case of the automobile industry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Ilán Bizberg, Estado y Sindicalismo en México (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1990).
3. The term "hegemonic masculinity" is from R.W. Connell, Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 183.
4. Although most introductory texts in International Political Economy (IPE) concern themselves with the organisation of international trade and financial or monetary relations, more comprehensive approaches consider the importance of international production as well. Very few are concerned with the gendered dimensions of this three pillars of IPE. See, for example, Joshua Goldstein, International Relations, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1996); Ralph Pettman, Understanding International Political Economy: With Readings for the Fatigued (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996); C. Roe Goddard, John T. Passé-Smith and John G. Conklin, International Political Economy: State-Market Relations in the Changing Global Order (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996); Björn Hettne ed., International Political Economy: Understanding Global Disorder (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 1995). For accounts of the transformation of these three pillars of international political economy towards their "globalised" form, see Belinda Coote, The Trade Trap: Poverty and the Global Commodity Markets (Oxford: Oxfam Publishers, 1996);

Eric Helleiner, States and the Re-emergence of Global Finance (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Swasti Mitter, Common Fate, Common Bond: Women in the Global Economy (London: Pluto Press, 1986).

5. This dilemma is discussed by Robert W. Cox, "The global political economy and social choice" in Approaches to World Order, with Timothy J. Sinclair (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 191-208. See also, Stephen Herzenberg, "Calling Maggie's Bluff: The NAFTA labor agreement and the development of an alternative to neoliberalism," Canadian-American Public Policy 28, (December 1996), Occasional Paper Series, Canadian-American Centre University of Maine.

6. Stephen Gill, "Globalization, Democratization and the Politics of Indifference," in Globalization: Critical Reflections, International Political Economy Yearbook 9, James Mittelman ed. (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 216; Tony Clarke and Maude Barlow, MAI Multilateral Agreement on Investment and the threat to Canadian Sovereignty (Toronto: Stoddart, 1997).

7. This focus arose from the transformation away from British influence and towards a closer reliance upon U.S. foreign direct investment, "American" cultural domination and the institutional obligations developed under the hegemony of *pax americana*. The branch plant economy, truncated industrial growth, regionalism and resource dependency in English-Canada all contributed to Canada's skewed form of national development which led one observer to designate Canada as a "rich dependency" (See Glen Williams, Not For Export: International Competitiveness of Canadian Manufacturing, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994).) Canadian political economy scholarship defined "North America" in terms of Canada and the United States, despite the formalities of geography. Canadian political economists focussed on the post-war era in advanced industrial capitalist countries and the similarities and differences between the "North American" and European experiences. For two excellent overviews of the strengths and weaknesses of the New Canadian Political Economy see Rianne Mahon, Jane Jenson and Manfred Bienefeld eds., Production, Space and Identity: Political Economy Faces the 21st Century (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1992); Wallace Clement ed., Understanding Canada: Building on the New Canadian Political Economy (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

8. For citizens of the United States of Mexico, *norteamericano(a)* has always meant a citizen of the United States of America. The previously invisible Canadians became more real as either *canadiens* or *quebequenses* with the onset

of the NAFTA negotiations. Even the definition of what constitutes the continent was not held in common. For Mexicans, the world is divided into five continents, including America, Europe, Africa, Oceania and Asia. For Canadians, the world appears in seven continents including North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Australia, Asia, and Antarctica. The distinction took on interesting twists when, in the aftermath of the NAFTA debate, national coalitions of social movements organising joint campaigns to contest free trade met to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of proposing a "Continental Social Agenda". Initially, the Canadian participants expected that this proposal was meant to include three countries, while for the Mexicans, a Continental Social Agenda was thought to involve all the peoples of the Americas. As distinct from Canadian assumptions of the boundaries of continental North America, Mexico's recognition of the "American" continent has been an act of resistance that, at least in discursive terms, effectively balanced the powerful presence of the United States of America with the nationalisms, size, language, cultures and histories of the nations to its south.

9. Between 1992 and the present date, coalitions of social movements in North America have made declarations of common commitments to mark significant gatherings. At first, these statements were organised around the "trinational" struggles against the NAFTA. Increasingly, however, "continental" and "global" meetings of social movements have been organised around the institutionalisation of neoliberal globalisation in other negotiations including the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). See for example: Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC), Red Canadiense de Acción (ACN), Movilización para el Desarrollo, Comercio, Trabajo y Medio Ambiente (MODTLE), "Declaración Conjunta de Zacatecas," *Memoria de Zacatecas: La opinión pública y las negociaciones del Tratado de Libre Comercio: Alternativas ciudadanas* (México, D.F.: Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio, 1992) 83-87; "NGO Statement on the MAI," Dismantling Democracy: The Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and Its Impact, Andrew Jackson and Matt Sanger eds. (Ottawa and Toronto: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and James Lorimer & Company, 1998) 319-337.

10. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 13.

11. Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in Neorealism and its Critics, Robert O. Keohane ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 206-207.

12. This became evident to me in the university as well as in trade unions where the institutional memory was often not held in the institution at all. For reasons which are explored in the dissertation, trade union leaders do not pass on their experience to their successors by means of documents, but through discussion. Furthermore, historical continuity often depends upon the role of the legal advisors.

13. Fernand Braudel, Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 7.

14. Kevin Middlebrook, The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State and Authoritarianism in Mexico (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 29.

15. Leo Panitch, "Elites, Classes and Power in Canada," Canadian Politics in the 1980s (Toronto: Methuen, 1981), 168, 179.

16. Middlebrook, The Paradox of Revolution, 2-3.

17. Middlebrook, The Paradox of Revolution, 22-23.

18. Middlebrook, The Paradox of Revolution, 20.

19. Middlebrook, The Paradox of Revolution, 21.

20. Judith Adler Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983).

21. Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 212 and 228.

22. Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 228 and 232.

23. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations," 61.

24. Alejandro Álvarez, La Crisis Global del Capitalismo en México: 1968-1985 (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1987).

Chapter Two: **The Condition of Hegemony: A gendered neo-Gramscian approach**

Introduction:

A neo-Gramscian understanding of crisis is central to the argument being developed in this dissertation. The period from 1968 to the present in Mexican history is seen as a long "organic" crisis in which three key moments may be identified. The first moment corresponds to the years 1968-1982. The second moment spans the years 1982-1990 and the third moment runs from 1990 to the present. Each of these moments involves the *restructuring* of the economy and production; a crisis in *representation*, including the political sphere and labour's institutions; and changes in the form of *resistance*. Here, we are concerned with oppositional movements of working class men within the unions at, respectively, *Nissan Mexicana*, *Ford de México* and *Volkswagen de México*.

In this chapter I will introduce the concepts I will use to develop an analysis of the gendered dimensions of the struggle for counter-hegemony in Mexico. In the first section of this chapter, I will suggest a way of thinking about gender within a neo-Gramscian approach to historical structure. In the second part of the chapter, I will introduce a discussion of the "condition of hegemony" in order to think about the way hegemony, passive revolution and crisis relate to one another. Finally, I will raise some questions about counter-hegemony

and social transformation that are relevant to the Mexican context.

I. Towards a Gendered Neo-Gramscian Approach

Globalisation, set in a discourse of economic necessity, transforms not only trade relations, but most spheres of social life including the workplace, the family-household, the local community, the state, as well as world order. It is constructed within a discourse of economic necessity and, as a result, is meant to transform our shared understandings of those spheres as well as their material base. Because transformations of this kind concern not simply the spatial boundaries of these spheres, but the social relations within and between them, we must conceptualise the character of unequal power relations that emerge. This approach problematises the power relations that emerge in the relations between different historical structures including the organisation of production, the changing form of state and character of world order. This neo-Gramscian approach appropriately suggests that an historical structure, as the framework within which ideas, institutions and material capabilities interact in reciprocal relation, offers a powerful method with which to consider the agency of social forces.

In using the concept of historical structure I am drawing upon the work of Robert Cox, the main expositor of Gramsci's

work within international political economy (IPE). For Cox, these spheres of social life are not arranged vertically from the "global" down to the "local". Rather, production, state and world order are reciprocally related historical structures. Furthermore, historical structures are not simply objectively constituted. Cox sees the objective dimension of an historical structure in relation to its subjective aspect. When the structure is hegemonic, this relation is embodied in institutions.¹

Historical structures change over time. A productive mode may be championed by a state at one time, enter into crisis and fall out of favour, to be replaced by another mode. Similarly, at the national level, there is not just "the" state to consider, but a form of state that is likely to change over time, even within the parameters of a mode of production such as capitalism. For Cox, a form of state may be thought of as a specific state-society complex, arising from an "historic bloc" in Gramscian terms. As Cox explains it, the historic bloc "is the term applied to the particular configuration of social classes and ideology that gives content to a historical state."² This historical structure may be considered in relation to other possible rival forms of state.

The latter, according to Cox, form part of something more than an international sphere. Rather, they are elements within a particular type of world order, one that has been

constructed and may be transformed. In this view, the interstate system and the world economy together define world order. World orders may be hegemonic or not, and nascent alternative world orders may become visible periodically as potential challenges to a hegemonic order.³ For Cox, the relations between world order, form of state and production are reciprocal, whereby each constitutes the other. The task of historical analysis is to consider the way in which this occurs in specific circumstances.⁴

With such a method, we may understand historical structures as being both enabling and constraining of human action. Historical structures are social practices that are reproduced over time and so attain a certain stability.⁵ As Cox explains, they are not synonymous with institutions, but institutions play a role in their constitution. They are not tangible, but because people believe in them, and act as though they believe in them, they are real. Historical structures emerge as people repeat certain actions and think in familiar ways. They are to be found in all aspects of life. These structures may become part of the common sense of society such that they may seem quite natural and not socially constructed at all. When it becomes difficult to imagine doing things any other way, we can say that the structures are hegemonic.

Cox's approach, with its emphasis on understanding historical events through the concepts of world order,

production modes and forms of state, has much to offer. Nevertheless, it tends to privilege class relations over others, notably gender. Yet the gendered dimensions of historical structure must be brought into the picture. In fact, examination of the gendered dimensions of each of the three elements of historical structure help to reveal how unequal power relations are sustained, reproduced and even transformed.⁶

Gramsci offered a way to try to understand the world from inside history rather than from "the standpoint of the cosmos in itself".⁷ This recognition of the complexity of power relations, as they are situated in history, is an appropriate starting point for making visible social relations other than class in historicist analysis of historical transformations. My discussion of Mexican labour struggles will discuss some of this complexity by showing how social class is not the only relation of power involved in the constitution and transformation of historical structures.

While reflections on the experiences of male auto workers in Mexico do not offer the same insights as would a study of women workers in the export-processing zones, for example, one cannot conclude that gender is irrelevant. First of all, these two productive modes ought to be seen in relation to one another. Secondly, working class men are enmeshed in gendered social relations as well as women, although theirs is a position of privilege relative to working class women, while

remaining in a subaltern position relative to their employers. We may make provide important insights into the condition of hegemony, for example, by reflecting critically on the gendered experiences of working class men. This is not because they are "workers", but because they are "masculinised workers".

We may recognise the hegemonic character of masculinity during times when gender entitlements are often considered so 'natural' as to be quite invisible.⁸ At the level of world order, gender is a fundamental but little remarked on dynamic. As V. Spike Peterson has argued, "gender is a constitutive, not coincidental, element of the interstate system and the global capitalist economy".⁹ At the level of the state, gendered entitlements have become part of the very state structure and organisation of the economy: The worker in relation to his family; the auto assembly plant in relation to the export-processing zone; the president in relation to "his" people.

These structures are not, of course, only marked by gender and class. Colonialism continues to leave its imprint even under conditions of "post"-colonialism. Colonialist discourse, as Himani Bannerji argues, is white and imperialist, barely perceptible and submerged within common sense.¹⁰ The international division of labour, for example, is built upon gendered historical structures. It is also constructed in the wake of colonialism and in relation to

hierarchies of race and ethnicity that have been embedded in forms of state. The material dimensions of production and distribution contribute to the construction of racialised inequalities, while racialised assumptions pervade the intersubjective dimensions of historical structure.

In Mexico, the gendered dimensions of historical structures are overlaid by colonial discourses elevating the power of the priest, the conqueror, the *guero* (white man), the boss, the landlord and the father. These highly masculinised images are not constructed unaccompanied of course. There is also the national symbol of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* superimposed on the Aztec goddess Tonantzin; *La Llorona* who is both suffering mother and abandoned lover; as well as Cortés' indigenous consort and translator, *La Malinche*. These icons of submissive femininity are intertwined with mythical images of female treachery.

Embracing all of these, as Octavio Paz discussed so eloquently, there is the ever present symbol of *La Chingada*, the violated mother.¹¹ In Paz's view, the *chingada* resides in "the violent, sarcastic humiliation of the Mother and the no less violent affirmation of the Father."¹² The *chingada* is wrought by the *macho* foreigner who, through violation and conquest, destroyed indigenous community. In English, *macho* may be translated simply as "male", but Paz argued that *machismo* attains meaning in relation to the legacy of colonialism in which the "Macho" is seen as the "other" who

opens all that is familiar to external assault. *La Chingada*, if she tolerates the intervention, is never forgiven.

Paz' analysis of Mexico's colonial legacy became highly influential after its appearance in the 1950s. Although persuasive, Paz' conception of gendered ideology in Mexico did not consider the agency of those who have been subordinated within relations of authoritarianism or paternalism. He was, as Alfredo Tecla Jiménez argues, more likely to see the worker as one who "cannot realise any change, cannot be a protagonist in history, but can only be used, manipulated."¹³

Despite the obvious shortcomings of this conservatism, some of Paz' reflections may be taken up within a neo-Gramscian analysis of movements of male autoworkers. First of all, by focussing on the *chingada*, Paz contested the commonly held idea that Mexican *machismo* may be understood in national terms, or even in terms of gender relations in Latin America only. To locate *machismo* in the history of colonialism, is to raise important questions about gendered ideas in the context of ongoing processes of internationalisation. Furthermore, if we take the agency of the highly masculinised working class seriously, while remaining attentive to the importance of deeply felt, intersubjective ideas, we may expect to see these ideas expressed in working class movements. For example, as we will see in the cases that follow, working-class men will resist efforts to cast them in the role of *La Chingada*. Finally, if we accept Paz' attention

to the diversity of identities arising from the history of colonialism, we may assume there is nothing self-evident about the formation of the working class in twentieth century Mexico. There is, after all, a plurality of historical influences that have contributed to its heterogeneity and ongoing transformation.

Race and gender are intertwined with class in the ongoing construction of historical structures in Mexico. Yet the image of the Revolutionary Worker who is not-woman, not-peasant and not-indigenous remains within trade unions themselves. Long used to their role as representatives of a highly masculinised "universal" worker, neither the official trade unions, nor the oppositional trade union movements in masculinised industries have problematised their subordination in gendered terms. As I will argue throughout, this omission has limited their ability to present a counter-hegemonic alternative to capitalist forms of domination.

II. The Condition of Hegemony:

In Gramscian approaches to the study of International Political Economy, it is often argued that hegemony is established at the centre and becomes weaker at the periphery of world order. According to this view, there is reason to suppose that hegemony will be difficult to sustain in countries marginalised within world order if no leading class is able to present its own interests in universal terms.

Under such circumstances, it is expected that coercion rather than consent will tend to characterise social relations within civil society and the state. If social practices corresponding to the core are emulated in the periphery in ways that do not respond to the social problems experienced there, the ability of the leading classes to secure a hegemonic order at the national level will be undermined. Instead of constructing a coherent national project, leading classes become identified, and identify, with the processes of internationalisation. As described by Robert Cox, "hegemony is more intense and consistent at the core and more laden with contradictions at the periphery."¹⁴ As a result, the hegemonic character of world order may be weakened at the margins, where dominance characterises the role of the state. There, the intellectual and moral leadership of the centre becomes less compelling.

Of course, those working with Gramsci's insights would not argue that an openly coercive order verging on crisis characterises all marginalised countries at all times. Obviously, a dichotomous distinction between hegemony and non-hegemony is insufficient to comprehend societies that may have, at different times, achieved stability despite their marginalised place within world order. It is useful, therefore, to think of the space between hegemony and crisis as a continuum, so that we may speak of the "condition of hegemony", rather than its presence or absence. As regards

countries such as Mexico, we might ask what is the condition of hegemony at the margins? In other words, to what extent is the "general interest" perceived as being shared, and if it is, how is that perception created? While we look to see the relative place of consent and coercion within historical structures to see whether they are hegemonic or not, we may look for their gendered counterparts in paternalism and authoritarianism.

I will use the idea of the "condition of hegemony" as a unifying theme in this dissertation. I argue that the presence or absence of hegemonic historical structures is not necessarily as significant as whether hegemony is waxing or waning. With this emphasis on the rise and decline of hegemony, it is more likely that we might look for the ways in which subordinated groups continually test the boundaries of the relationship, assert their presence, and challenge their opponents, whether or not the order is characterised by the "active consent", passive resistance, militant organisation or armed rebellion of the subordinated groups in society. These are the social forces that may reveal the contradictions in historical structures through their active and self-conscious forms of organisation. If we are to consider the condition of hegemony, then, we are more likely to take seriously the role of oppositional social forces in challenging the boundaries of unequal social relations over time and in ways that do not always depend on cataclysmic events.

The understanding of hegemony used here does not rest upon the realist definition of hegemony as 'dominance'. Rather, I follow Antonio Gramsci who argues that the concept of hegemony is meant to explain the more complex phenomena described by the "consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group".¹⁵ Hegemony is understood to rest upon a balance of consent and coercion that is achieved when even the subordinated groups in society support the order. If we consider the constant interplay between coercion and consensus within the condition of hegemony, we may evaluate the changing balance between them. As Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy put it "these two forms of rule are mutually supportive and often combine in ambiguous ways."¹⁶

The strength of this definition rests on Gramsci's recognition of the agency of subordinated groups within a hegemonic structure. Here, agency is not seen to rest outside of structure, but becomes an aspect of social relations upon which structures are built. This may explain why the efforts, consciousness and self-organisation of subordinated groups may at times stabilise a hegemonic structure. For example, the strongest labour groups may support the order, not because they are passive, but because they perceive that their interests, and the interests of their members, will be furthered if they consent to the basic tenets of the order. This would provide a partial explanation as to why movements

of labour resistance may be defeated within their own organisations. The officially sanctioned leadership in all three cases under consideration here, did perceive the implications and extent of the challenge mounted by the opposition. It was not only the CTM that was enmeshed within corporatist forms of representation. Even when oppositional movements take power within a union, their contestation may abate when presented with officially sanctioned model of labour relations. Hegemony, however, has an ethical dimension to it that extends beyond material interests. If the order is generally accepted as being a good one, and begins to appear natural, then it is certainly hegemonic. Hegemony depends upon the ability of dominant groups to provide the "intellectual and moral leadership" necessary to produce widespread support for the order. This suggests something more complex than simple cooptation. As we shall see, "hegemonic masculinity" discussed below, had an important part to play in moving Mexico towards capitalist hegemony.

The concept of hegemony is relevant not only to national societies. Neo-Gramscians concerned with questions of world order have argued that a hegemonic world order was achieved after 1945 as the United States made its particular interests appear to be in the general interest.¹⁷ The convergence of ideas about economic development among the elites of the continent has been one of the most enduring characteristics of US hegemonic power.¹⁸ Gramsci's concept of "passive

revolution" offers insights into how, in the era of Pax Americana, such a convergence was reflected in a "peripheral" society like Mexico.

In Gramsci's view, a hegemonic society might have an impact on other societies if the ideas and practices of the dominant class in the most powerful state are transmitted to less powerful states. A "passive revolution" may be present in Gramsci's judgment:

...when the impetus of progress is not tightly linked to a vast local development which is artificially limited and repressed, but is instead the reflection of international developments which transmit their ideological currents to the periphery - currents born on the basis of the productive development of the more advanced countries- then the group which is the bearer of the new ideas is not the economic group but the intellectual stratum, and the conception of the State advocated by them changes aspect; it is conceived of as something in itself, as a rational absolute.¹⁹

Gramsci expected that when elements of a new order are brought into a social formation from the outside, the emerging class may be unable to transform the old order fully. Although popular forces could not drive the transformation, neither would dominant forces emerge to 'lead' society into the new moment. Rather, the social order would appear more like an impasse.²⁰ Under conditions of passive revolution, the "State which, even though it had limitations as a power 'led' the group which should have been 'leading' and was able to put at the latter's disposal an army and a politico-diplomatic strength."²¹

Gramsci makes a strong case by arguing that a wholly new hegemony is not necessarily created under the leadership of the bourgeoisie during the emergence of the liberal state in peripheral countries.²² First of all, in the transition from the revolutionary direct frontal attack on the state to the struggle for hegemony in civil society, older social relations may be reconstituted and previous structures reinvented.²³ It is possible that hegemony might be slow in coming or may not emerge at all. Again, the concept of passive revolution is illuminating. Following from a period of crisis and social upheaval, as Christine Buci-Glucksmann argues, the passive revolution may become the specific way in which the bourgeois continues to mount its struggle for a fully hegemonic capitalist society.²⁴

Although Gramsci was reflecting upon the particular historical experience of fascism in Italy in the 1930s, certain parallels were apparent in Mexico at the same time. Mexico was extraordinarily stable during the mid-twentieth century but it was not hegemonic. Passive revolution emerged in Mexico as an attempt to shape international dynamics to national priorities first through the idealism of the Revolutionary Constitution, and under the direction of the Party of the Revolution in the 1930s. The ideological dimension of passive revolution reflected Revolutionary ideals constructed in combination with nationalist guarantees and internationalised production modes that changed in relation to

practices in the United States. As late as the 1930s, however, Mexican structures of representation suggested that the 'active consent' of the subordinated social groups had yet to be secured. Stability was achieved as the Mexican state presented itself in nationalist terms.

By the middle of the twentieth century, Mexican state leaders and the dominant class were able to argue that they had been successful in regulating the expansion of US influence in Mexican society and in the economy in particular. As we shall see in the next chapter, this idea, and the material conditions and institutions that went along with it, was successful in moving Mexico from a situation of open civil war (1910-1917) to a period of stability that lasted from the 1930s to the late 1960s. This period can be characterised as one in which the passive revolution came to be institutionalised - for a while.

I discuss how stability was established in Mexico in the next chapter where I develop the argument that passive revolution is not constructed entirely on the basis of capitalist class relations. In fact, social relations other than class were central to stability in Mexico in the middle part of the twentieth century. In Mexico, it was not just the state, but those patriarchal historical structures, fashioned in colonialism and woven into capitalist society, that formed an important part of the passive revolution stabilising Mexican society for much of the twentieth century. A

particular form of "hegemonic masculinity" ensured that passive revolution was not blocked by patriarchal social forces, such as land owners or *caudillos* (regional strong men), as the latter were incorporated into the new social order in a manner that ruling groups would find beneficial.

The concept of "hegemonic masculinity" comes from R.W. Connell who defines it as the dominant masculine ideal of a culture to which all femininities, as well as devalued masculinities, are subordinated. Connell suggests that 'hegemonic masculinity' may be seen in relation to feminine forms such as 'emphasised femininity', in which compliance is highly valued. Other forms of femininity are hidden from view, while other masculinities are negated.²⁵ The presence of both consent and coercion in the construction of the gendered order, together with the fact that the hierarchy rests upon "strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation"²⁶ makes it hegemonic. Ann Tickner argues that, as a cultural ideal, the hegemonic masculinity legitimises patriarchal social relations, not only within a national society but at the international level as well.²⁷ Here again, however, while masculinity may be hegemonic within the world order, it takes different forms in different places.²⁸ In mid-century Mexico, I argue, unequal gender relations were constituted through a particular combination of paternalism and authoritarianism.

The hegemonic masculinity of mid-century Mexico is linked with *caudillismo* and may be identified with more generally recognisable "clientelistic" relationships. Across Latin America clientelism is recognised as the unequal relation that obtains between a patron and his subordinate. In more hierarchical societies, clientelistic relations depend upon highly personalistic, cross-class alliances in which protection and access to resources is exchanged for loyalty and support.²⁹ In Mexico, a specific expression of clientelism is found in the *caudillo*. As Berthea Lerner and Susana Ralsky describe it:

The regional *caudillo* is a military strong man, capable of offering a certain amount of protection to his followers. By means of his paternalism he attains internal loyalty to his persona and the dependence of his followers. As well, his leadership depends on the kind of strength that characteristically projects an image of exaggerated masculinity and heroism. He is a leader that ascends to power for his qualities of invulnerability and not by virtue of his education, his political vision with respect to the future or his social propositions at the national level. In general, he depends more upon his ample military intuition and on personal valour than on strategy or educated manoeuvring.³⁰

Caudillismo has been a central characteristic of Mexican politics and explains how the apparently "individualistic" leadership of strong men is, in fact, a system of power that is tied to "groups" of other powerful men and regionally based structures of power.

Paternalism may be understood as a set of social practices in which social inequality is legitimated and reproduced in ways similar to those of a patriarchal family.

In this image of family, the father may be benevolent but commanding. He exercises decision making power by arguing that it is in family members' best interests to defer to the internal hierarchy.³¹ To the outside, the family is presented as a homogeneous entity while the unequal power relationships within it are veiled in this process of legitimation. The privileging of such structures of masculine authority enables one actor to emerge in relation to a number of other "pre-actors" having no legitimate role in representing their own interests within or without the collectivity.³² In this sense, paternalism may refer to the way in which the usurping of rights to self-representation is legitimised by the dominant actor.

Within patriarchal relations, authoritarianism may underlie this paternalistic effort to legitimise relations of social inequality. Authoritarianism is the means by which the subordinated are threatened with the possible withdrawal of resources, or the application of violence if they challenge the relationship. The authoritarianism of patriarchal social relations is relatively easy to identify, but when authoritarianism is joined with paternalistic relationships built on the acquiescence and consent of the subordinated, gendered power attains a resilience that is much more difficult to contest. If we are to assume that the gendered dimensions of hegemony rest upon paternalism as well as

authoritarianism, then we can expect to see an interplay between the two in the hegemonic masculinity in question.

In the Mexican case we witness the ebb and flow of paternalism and authoritarianism within capitalist society. As the next chapter will argue, while victorious and authoritarian Revolutionary leaders sought to conclude the civil war, the paternalism of Henry Ford's ideology of progressive capitalism was incorporated into the Mexican Constitution through Article 123, which is the Constitutional Article dedicated to issues of labour and social provision. Although the main elements of this project were reshaped into corporatist forms of representation in the 1930s, the idealism of the progressive capitalist revolution persisted. Patriarchal relations of paternalism and authoritarianism were structured into the institutions of corporatism. As we shall see, both were significant and this interplay became the defining characteristic of trade union representation during the passive revolution.

In the next chapter, I will show how the transition from the crisis of the Revolution to the passive revolution depended upon three dimensions of gender that developed in succession. These included: i) a paternalistic ideology incorporated into the Constitution of 1917, in which the family, rather than the individual or class, was constructed as the basic unit of society; ii) institutionalised *caudillismo* as the hegemonic masculinity within the state and

expressed in the federal executive, the official union leadership, and the universal father-worker; iii) the masculinised character of state corporatism which was the productive mode favoured by the state and exemplified by the automotive industry.

Along with hegemony and passive revolution, we may also witness the crisis of historical structures. Such crises do not arise from the deterioration in material conditions only. They may also involve the discrediting of dominant ideas, as well as institutional impasses that combine to create a crisis of representation. In Mexico since 1968, the crisis has challenged the "common sense" informing the previous social compromise. Intersubjective meanings corresponding to the passive revolution have come into question. The ascendance of neo-liberalism has meant that the ideological basis of the old institutions have been called into question, even as new forms of representation are either not yet accepted, or rejected. This lack of resonance is perceived as a crisis of representation.

In Gramscian terms, we can recognise an extended crisis of representation as part of a deepening organic crisis. In Gramsci's view, such a crisis arises when:

the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a

revolution. A 'crisis of authority' is spoken of: this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or general crisis of the State.³³

As this quotation suggests, organic crises often emerge at moments of wider crises of world order. Thus, given the simultaneous transformation within *Pax Americana* and within Mexico, we need to explain Mexico's experience from the mid-1960s not only in national terms but also in terms of global processes.

I will argue that the current crisis in Mexico is of such profundity that we may speak of the non-hegemonic character of Mexican society at present. By any measure, by the end of 1994, the set of institutions, social relations and ideas that once characterised the passive revolution had come apart, leaving Mexico in the throes of one of the most inconclusive moments of its history. This view of crisis emerges out of an analysis of historical structure and is located within the condition of hegemony. We may think about crisis in general terms by using this framework and, more specifically, by analysing crisis in world order, production and the form of state.

Crisis in World Order

During the 1970s, a crisis of hegemony at the level of world order was observed in the breakdown in the Bretton Woods institutions that had stabilised the international economic system in the post-war period. This breakdown, however,

revealed the institutional weaknesses in the organisation of international trade and finance but it was not immediately obvious what structural contradictions underpinned it. To the extent that Nixon's unilateral decision to go off the gold standard reflected deeper problems in the productive structure of the United States, then we may agree with those who see in the world economic crisis, a crisis of United States relations with the Third World.³⁴ The balance of payments problems in the United States had become chronic. The 'stagflation' of the 1970s originated in the United States government's war in Vietnam, along with its simultaneous expenditures on domestic social programs and a regressive tax system. Increasingly, civil rights movements showed how shallow the sense of 'common interest' ran. So too did the anti-war protesters and conscientious objectors, feminist movements, labour militants and student movements. High oil prices along with declining rates of productivity increases reduced the competitiveness of US industry and multinational corporations increased the intensity of their search for cheaper production sites in newly industrialising regions. The OPEC oil price increases did indeed shift economic surplus into new hands, but the OPEC leaders did not promote a hegemonic project that would be of general benefit to countries of the south. Demands for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) were raised by the "Third World". In the early 1980s, the United States imposed the full force of monetarist policies on the global economy which

had the effect of closing markets and raising interest rates worldwide. With the ensuing debt crisis, demands for a NIEO were effectively destroyed.

In thinking about the crisis in relation to the level of world order, we move beyond the boundaries of comparative political economy. Where comparative political economy looks for the origins of crisis within the contradictions of capitalism as they are expressed in national social formations, neo-Gramscian IPE argues that a state-centric approach cannot offer structural explanations of common patterns of development.³⁵ It is helpful to think about world order in relation to forms of production and states as a way of explaining international consensus formation among states. It also presents a method of assessing the contradictory impact of global processes on national forms of state. Otto Holman, for example, argues it was often those states like Mexico, where governments attempted to limit the power of transnational corporations and the effect of foreign direct investment by turning increasingly towards state intervention, that ended up highly dependent upon international banks. As the global economic crisis deepened during the 1980s, the Mexican state was compelled to turn increasingly towards neo-liberalism in order to deal with its debt burden.³⁶ It was not simply the exhaustion of a structure of accumulation that provoked this long crisis in Mexico. The contradictions of a highly internationalised

form of production were exacerbated by a highly unequal class structure and deepened by the consensus among the internationalised dominant groups that there remained only one acceptable, ie. neoliberal, way to resolve the crisis.

Crisis in Production:

The challenge is to integrate an analysis of both national specificities and world order, even though crises in the production mode will be the primary concern of this dissertation. It is not necessary to replicate the problems of world-systems theory which have been criticised by neo-Gramscian theorists as having been far too ready to "collapse potentially contradictory state-society relations into an ahistorical, abstract unity".³⁷ I would argue that the emphasis on changes in the structure of production is the crucial means through which this specificity can be maintained. To account for these changes, I will use the concept of "mode of social relations of production" or "production mode" as a short form. These are Robert Cox's terms used to distinguish different productive structures having objective, subjective and institutional dimensions. They may be seen as ideal types or models.³⁸

In this dissertation I focus on oppositional labour movements within the auto industry. The production mode represented by automotive assembly, however, has never been the most common in the Mexican economy. Household production

and peasant subsistence production, for example, have had more of an impact on Mexico's economic structure, and have involved more people in its activities over time than has industrial production. It is the case, however, that throughout this century the state has valued industrial production, as characterised by the auto industry, over other all other modes of social relations of production. Since the Revolution, however, the state has given priority to three production modes including: enterprise corporatism, state corporatism, and most recently, a globalised form of enterprise corporatism I call global corporatism. The history of the auto industry and auto unions, therefore, offers insight into the core of Mexican development strategies over time.

Enterprise corporatism, as defined by Robert Cox, is a mode of social relations of production emerging out of monopoly capitalism in which large enterprises, able to provide secure employment to a segment of the labour force, foster the idea of the "social integration of the corporation as a productive community". In enterprise corporatism, conflictual social relations are considered to be illegitimate and workers' interests are directed towards those of the enterprise. The state tends to intervene very little in such a workplace and the enterprise provides for many of the welfare needs of its workforce and their families.³⁹ Enterprise corporatism did not really emerge as a stable

structure in Mexico, but its ideology was imported into the Constitution in 1917.

By the 1930s, the favoured production mode depended upon a state corporatist form of capitalist production in which labour was highly regulated by federal labour law, the official trade unions were more likely to represent the state to the workers than the other way around, but collective organisations of labour did play an important role and workers compelled their organisations to fight for many of the well known Fordist labour guarantees. The state negotiated the terms of investment by both national and foreign capitalists and regulated labour through its ample legal framework. Within a highly skewed distribution of income and polarised class structure the agricultural sector paid dearly for industrialisation on these terms.

At present, the productive structure of Mexico is characterised increasingly by a transnational form of enterprise corporatism that has less to do with the official relationship between the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) and its official labour body the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM), than with the imposition of new forms of work organisation and new representative structures within the work place. Although sometimes referred to as a "Japanese" method, global corporatism has strong roots in the ideology of enterprise corporatism which played an important role in North American industrial development.⁴⁰ Global

corporatism embodies the demands of flexibility, productivity and polyvalency that "global competitiveness" demands of the working class at the end of the twentieth century. It rejects the legitimacy of both bilateral and trilateral relations between capital and labour. Rather than expressing the unity of workers as they represent their collective demands to management and the state, under global corporatism, solidarity is redefined as the responsibility of individual team members to one another and to the company.

We may recognise elements of global corporatism in the reorganisation of work dubbed 'lean production' by the authors of The Machine that Changed the World, the report of a multi-million dollar research project conducted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the late 1980s.⁴¹ Their study was not limited to a concern for the restructuring of production in the United States. Indeed the authors of the report were so convinced of the global importance of this new productive system that they argued that "the principles of lean production can be applied equally in every industry across the globe and ... the conversion to lean production will have a profound effect on human society- it will truly change the world."⁴² The ideological commitment to "cooperation" in the transformation of state corporatism into global corporatism is quite important. The ideology is highly paternalistic. The new mode also depends, however, upon the authoritarianism of the state and on the rigidity of employers as they impose the

conditions of neoliberal globalisation. If the current crisis in Mexico is to be stabilised by yet another passive revolution, it is likely to come in this guise. Its future is not so promising, however. The reorganised workplaces of global corporatism cannot be understood outside of the context of structurally-adjusted forms of state and an increasingly globalised world order in which a crisis of representation seems to have become endemic.

Crisis in the Form of State:

Not only do production modes change but so too do forms of state. Unlike the realist view of the state that contemplates an unchanging "state" within a Westphalian inter-state system, the concept of "form of state" describes the state/society complex in terms of an historical structure that may change over time. The form of state is understood to correspond to Gramsci's notion of the "organic state". As Augelli and Murphy argue, the organic state does not sit above society but "may include institutions essential to the political life of the community even though they appear to be of a merely private nature, as is the case in contemporary civil society...(T)he state is a characteristic of society constituted by the articulation of political and civil society."⁴³ In Cox's view, the characteristics of a form of state are shaped by the historic bloc upon which it rests. The state will promote one production mode above others within

a national society. So too will the form of state influence, and be influenced by, the character of world order.⁴⁴ This relation between state and social forces, however, is not seen as an instrumental one. As with other historical structures, in Cox's view, a form of state will change according to disjunctures in the objective, intersubjective or institutional relations underpinning it.⁴⁵

In Mexico we see the emergence of a corporate liberal form of state in the period immediately following the Revolution. It did not last long and was overtaken by the developmental form of state in the late 1930s.⁴⁶ By the late 1960s, this structure also entered into crisis. At the moment, the crisis of representation is so severe in Mexico, that it is not yet clear what form of state may emerge.

When we speak about crisis in the form of state, we immediately face the question of representation. In Gramscian terms, we can recognise an extended crisis of representation as a moment in which "the traditional parties in that particular organisational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent, and lead them, are no longer recognised by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression".⁴⁷ Established political parties come to be seen as "mummified and anachronistic" and oppositional movements become more visible.⁴⁸ As the crisis deepens, it may spread beyond the level of parties to produce a general crisis of the state. At such moments,

(t)hese situations of conflict between 'the represented and representatives' reverberate out from the terrain of the parties.. throughout the State organism, reinforcing the relative power of the bureaucracy (civil and military) of high finance, of the Church, and generally of all bodies relatively independent of the fluctuations of public opinion.⁴⁹

Such situations arise not simply because the ruling class is no longer able to "lead" but because the decomposition of structures of representation occasions the relative recomposition of power in other spheres. In the process, ruling groups are freed from their attachment to the broader society such that they become, not simply unrepresentative, but dominating as well. Thus the coercive dimension of class relations comes to the fore.

These reflections are relevant to the case of Mexico. Beginning in 1968, the social compromise that emerged out of the Revolution, and had demonstrated a significant level of coherence during the thirty years before 1968, began to enter into deep crisis. The massacre of unarmed students at Tlatelolco is seen as the watershed between the two periods, but the crisis of representation extended deeply into the labour movement as well. The party that had governed Mexico since the Revolution and had come to be known as the "state-party", the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), could no longer maintain the stability of passive revolution in the face of political challenges from subordinated groups in society. The Revolutionary Nationalist compromise was ruptured, its nationalist ideology overcome by external

forces. A crisis of authority emerged as the state could not maintain a relationship of legitimacy with the subordinated groups in society. At times, it was unclear whether the state was even legitimate in the eyes of the dominant classes. At the same time, it would be a mistake to speak of this long crisis as if it were marked by excessive fragility on the part of state institutions. Many observers note the remarkable resilience of the governing PRI even after 1968.⁵⁰

The corporatist institutions of labour representation have not escaped the effects of these various political and economic crises over the years 1968 to the present, but in these struggles, gender has been as central as class, as the three cases I examine show. Thus, the story of the Nissan union indicates that the ideology of trade union *caudillismo* may be reproduced in the independent unions active during the first moment in the crisis, despite the illegitimacy of the old trade union bureaucrats. As regards the second moment of crisis, I make the argument that the gendered character of the leading productive mode becomes increasingly feminised. This is seen as a significant transformation in the gendered character of production, and in the role of the worker-father, but it indicates that gender remains significant. In the third moment of crisis, masculine authority is exerted through the office of the presidency which faced unprecedented challenges to its position as the epitome of *caudillismo* during the 1990s. In this moment, the institutionalisation of

neo-liberalism along the lines of a reinvigorated discourse of loyalty and cooperation has not resolved the crisis of representation. Indeed, the legitimacy of the state and the new productive mode is decreased among workers as labour opposition is repressed and democratic forms of representation are ignored and then closed off. No longer can the PRI argue that it is the representative of Mexico as a whole. Between the period of Revolutionary Nationalist social compromise and the current crisis of representation what appears to remain, however, is the flexible partnership of paternalism and authoritarianism.

III. Counter-hegemony and Social Transformation:

In Mexico, national "Revolutionary" institutions created a shared past among objectively divided social forces. This collective historical memory created various forms of intersubjectivity and common action. Historical memories identify shared links to the past and offer social forces common ways of thinking about the dynamics between social forces. As circumstances change, the ideas people have come to accept may also change and the structure may be called into question. Not everything will change during a crisis, however. Ideas, institutions, social practices, or forms of production do not necessarily change at the same time, or in the same way. The point is to recognise that while the correspondence between ideas, institutions and material

conditions may indeed have shifted, any one of these elements of structure may not have changed at all. The ideas of the Mexican Revolution, for example, may persist, while the Revolutionary institutions, such as the Constitution of 1917, are altered. Or, the regulatory and legal framework of corporatism may continue in labour relations, despite significant changes at the level of production. Some dominant ideas, such as those of defending national sovereignty from the tests of economic integration, may be wholly transformed by the introduction of a new continentalist ethos.

It is this unevenness that causes some of the most difficult challenges for social forces that had accepted the general framework of the previous compromise and their subordinate position within it. Their position in the newly emerging order is not yet determined and their ability to maintain a space for themselves during the crisis is conditioned, in part, by the extent to which the leadership of subordinated groups included, excluded or dominated their constituents in the previous order. For the subordinated groups, the crisis becomes both a moment of opportunity and necessity during which time they must organise to articulate their demands. During crises, it is not always clear whether movements of contestation will fight for the transformation of structures. They may fight to reestablish the old order. At the same time, those groups marginalised within previous structures of representation may organise to subvert the

internal hierarchies of their own organisations. This raises the possibility of social transformation which, for neo-Gramscians, emerge from the formation of counter-hegemony.

In societies with a dense civil society, Gramsci argued, counter-hegemony would depend upon the creation of a new social order within the old. In hegemonic societies, taking direct control of the economic resources of society is not sufficient. Rather, the counter-hegemony of subordinate classes would have to be established by disrupting the "common sense" of the age. This would be accompanied, Gramsci argued, by the creation of new institutions by the oppositional forces. Such a strategy would depend on strong alliances built up among subordinated classes within society.⁵¹ For Gramsci, this revolutionary project would create the basis for a new historic bloc.

In societies where capitalist states have not allowed "civil society a wider margin of self-regulation"⁵², the terrain is different but the need for the formation of counter-hegemonic forces is just as strong. In Mexico, the reactionary forces won the Revolution but were left in a highly unstable position without the support of the workers, peasants or indigenous peoples. In the late 1930s, however, the passive revolution came to be institutionalised as the state's authoritarianism was tempered by expressions of paternalism and a strong nationalist discourse. In the process, the state developed a corporatist mode of

representation in which the official trade unions played an important part. Even under conditions of passive revolution, counter-hegemony can arise if subaltern groups develop beyond the "economic-corporate" phase.⁵³ In this sense, the possibility of new leadership emerging depends upon "the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness and organisation attained" by the class in question.⁵⁴

That is, Gramsci saw the development of political consciousness in three stages. The first stage he called "economic-corporate". In this moment the worker may feel obliged to support another worker but does not feel solidarity with any other group. The second moment arises when members of a social group are conscious of solidarity of interests within their class. They may make demands of the state but they do not attempt to transform the social order. The third moment arises with the awareness that one's own group interests "transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too."⁵⁵ This is the political moment, in which one ideology wins out, not simply on economic and political issues, but as a unified moral and intellectual perspective. The transformation is from the interests of the group, to those of the class, and to a common or universal interest as the expression of a new historic bloc.

In the cases that follow, we see elements of these three moments that Gramsci described, but they do not appear in neat

stages from economic-corporate to political hegemony. One oppositional movement in the auto sector defended the separation of the "labour" terrain from the "political" terrain. Another tried to overcome this separation by rejecting economistic forms of trade unionism in favour of a broader, community oriented "social unionism".⁵⁶ At times we see the movements for independence making claims based on Constitutional ideals and juridical-legal terrain. At other times they call for international solidarity.

In order to bring to the fore the question of the counter-hegemonic potential of the radical movements within the trade unions at *Nissan Mexicana*, *Ford de México* and *Volkswagen de México*, I will focus on the following questions:

- * When do we see the consciousness of a group, class or new historic bloc? How strong is the movement's unity and organisation in each of these moments? Does internationalism play a role?

- * How do they contest the relations of power embodied in the state? When do they shift their attention from the corporation to their union and the state?

- * To what extent do they consider gender to be relevant to their struggle? Do they contest hegemonic masculinity?

- * What changes in intersubjectivity do we see as a result of this form of struggle during the crisis ? Does their mobilisation challenge neo-liberalism's claim to naturalism and permanency?

Conclusion:

In this chapter I have outlined the major concepts that I will use to analyse the struggle for counter-hegemony in Mexico. This may be done by engaging with the concept of historical structure in a way that focuses both on objective and intersubjective factors, so as to offer a deeper understanding of agency in the midst of structural crises. I suggest that if we consider the "condition of hegemony" we can situate hegemony, passive revolution and crisis on a continuum so that the continuities and disjunctures with previous orders may be made apparent. This may permit a clearer view of the less dramatic efforts of subordinated social forces to contest the processes that weaken or strengthen hegemony. In this dissertation, I will pay particular attention to the efforts of oppositional working class movements to contest the transformation of structures of production in the Mexican auto industry. I am especially interested in the paternalistic and authoritarian dimensions of hegemonic masculinity. These highly gendered historical structures become part of the terrain of struggle for self-conscious, organised and solidaristic efforts to transform the inequalities of social relations in an era of globalisation.

ENDNOTES

1. In Robert Cox's view, the objective factors include the power relations of domination and subordination, the organisation of production and technology, and distributional dynamics. These are related to subjective factors. These include the ethics of production which are characterised by custom, direct coercion, clientelism, contract, or inspiration for example. These are accompanied by the rationalities of production which include the various "common orientations to action of various groups." In hegemonic moments, both objective and subjective factors are embodied in institutions. Robert W. Cox, Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 22-28.
2. Cox, Production, Power and World Order, 6 ff.10.
3. Cox, Production, Power and World Order, 107-108.
4. Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in Neorealism and its Critics ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 127.
5. This discussion of historical structure draws heavily from the work of Robert Cox. See especially "Social Forces, States and World Orders"; and Cox, Production, Power and World Order, 395-396.
6. Sandra Whitworth, Feminism and International Relations: Towards a Political Economy of Gender in Interstate and Non-Governmental Institutions (London: Macmillan Press, 1994), 65.
7. Antonio Gramsci, "Problems of Marxism," Selections from the Prison Notebooks, ed. trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 445.
8. Matthew Gutmann's study of fatherhood in Mexico City is among the few exceptions. See: Matthew Gutmann, The Meaning of Macho: Being a man in Mexico City (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
9. V. Spike Peterson, "Dichotomies, Debates and New Thinking Spaces" (unpublished paper, June 1997), 5. Increasingly, feminist scholars reflect upon the highly masculinised character of international relations. For example see: Cynthia Enloe, The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); J. Ann Tickner, Gender in International Relations: Feminist

Perspectives on Achieving Global Security (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); V. Spike Peterson ed., Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1992); V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, Global Gender Issues (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

10. Himani Bannerji, "Introducing Racism: Notes Towards an Anti-Racist Feminism," Resources for Feminist Research 16 no.1 (March 1987), 11.

11. Octavio Paz, El laberinto de la soledad/ Postdata Vuelta a el laberinto de la soledad 2nd ed. (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 81-97.

12. Paz, El laberinto de la soledad, 88 (trans.mine).

13. Alfredo Tecla Jiménez, El Modo de Vida y La Clase Obrera en México (México, DF: Ediciones Taller Abierto, 1992) 117. (trans.mine)

14. Robert W. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method," in Gramsci, historical materialism and international relations, ed. Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 61.

15. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 12.

16. Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy, "Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective and Example from Recent US Policy Toward the Third World," in Gramsci, historical materialism and international relations, ed. Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 128.

17. Craig Murphy, International Organization and Industrial Change: Global Governance since 1850 (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 173.

18. Cox, Production, Power and World Order, 244-265.

19. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 116-117. See also Cox's discussion of this quote, in "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations," 59.

20. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations," 54.

21. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 105.

22. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations," 61.

23. Gramsci referred to military contests to capture the state as wars of movement, while he discussed the political struggles within civil society as wars of position. Although different historical conditions demanded different strategies, Gramsci argued that "Military leadership must always be subordinate to political leadership." Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 88, 229-239.

24. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, "State, Transition and Passive Revolution," in Gramsci and Marxist Theory, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 210.

25. R.W. Connell, Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 183.

26. Connell, Gender and Power, 184.

27. Connell, Gender and Power, 84-85. as cited in J. Ann Tickner, Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 6-7.

28. For a popular discussion of the tension between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities see Michael Kaufman, Cracking the Armour: Power, Pain and the Lives of Men (Toronto: Penguin, 1993).

29. See S.N. Eisenstadt and Rene Lemarchand, eds., Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1981) as discussed by Christopher Clapham in Oxford Companion to Politics of the World, ed. Joel Krieger ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 687-688.

30. Berthea Lerner and Susana Ralsky, El Poder de los Presidentes: Alcances y Perspectivas (1910-1973) (México: Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Políticos, 1976), 26. (trans. mine)

31. David Jary and Julia Jary, "Paternalism," in Dictionary of Sociology (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

32. I am grateful to Janine Brodie for her reflections on this point in conversation.

33. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 210.

34. Fred Block, The Origins of International Economic Disorder: A Study of United States International Monetary Policy from World War II to the Present (Berkeley: University

of California Press, 1977), as discussed by Augelli and Murphy, "Gramsci and International Relations," 133.

35. Holman, "Internationalisation and Democratisation," 215.

36. Holman, "Internationalisation and Democratisation," 223-4.

37. Mark Rupert, Producing Hegemony: The Politics of Mass Production and American Global Power (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10.

38. Cox, Production, Power and World Order, 14-15.

39. Cox, Production, Power and World Order, 69-74.

40. Cox, Production, Power and World Order, 70-74.

41. James P. Womack, Daniel T. Jones, Daniel Roos, The Machine that Changed the World: based on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology 5-million dollar 5-year study on the future of the automobile (New York: Rawson Associates, 1990).

42. Womack, The Machine that Changed the World, 7.

43. Augelli and Murphy, "Gramsci and International Relations," 129.

44. Cox, Production, Power and World Order, 105.

45. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," 226.

46. The "neomercantile developmentalist" form of state is discussed by Cox in Production, Power and World Order, 230-244. The "corporate liberal" designation owes much to the work of Richard Roman, "Ideology and Class in the Mexican Revolution" (unpublished manuscript, Sociology Department, University of Toronto, 1976).

47. Gramsci Prison Notebooks, 210.

48. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 211.

49. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 210.

50. Judith Adler Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 2nd. ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1983); Kevin Middlebrook, The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State and Authoritarianism in Mexico (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

51. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations," 53.

52. Kees Van Der Pijl, "State Socialism and Passive Revolution," in Gramsci, historical materialism and international relations, ed. Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 237.

53. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 160.

54. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 181.

55. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, 181.

56. The term "social unionism" is used by the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) to describe their commitment to a solidaristic approach to trade unionism that rejects the narrowly defined economism of "business unionism". As Sam Gindin describes it:

The UAW (and then the CAW) always rejected business unionism- a unionism that limited itself to the price its members got for their labour. In contrast, the union espoused social unionism - a unionism that considered workers as more than just sellers of labour, that was sensitive to broader concerns, and that contributed to those in need in the community and internationally...A more powerful version of social unionism, which could more appropriately be called movement unionism, existed in the early days of the union. The distinction is not one of degree or commitment but of orientation. In the early days, when workers were struggling to form their organization, the community wasn't so much the needy recipient of union support as it was the necessary resource for the union in surviving and winning broader battles. The union needed the community.

Sam Gindin, The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1995), 266-268.

Chapter Three
Hegemonic Masculinity and state corporatism:
The emergence of the Passive Revolution in Mexico

Introduction

After the crisis of the Revolution of 1910-1917, Mexico moved into a period of passive revolution which lasted from the mid-1930s to the end of the 1960s. This chapter will show how the passive revolution was constructed in Mexico. The way this transition was accomplished is of continued importance in the struggle for counter-hegemony in Mexico. With this background, it will be possible to discuss the continuities and differences between the passive revolution and the period of current crisis in the chapters that follow.

Here I will demonstrate the importance of gender within the condition of hegemony. I will argue that in Mexico, the transition from the crisis of the Revolution to the passive revolution depended upon three dimensions of gender that developed in succession. These included: i) a paternalistic ideology incorporated into the Constitution of 1917, in which the family, rather than the individual or class, was constructed as the basic unit of society; ii) institutionalised *caudillismo* as the hegemonic masculinity within the state. This hegemonic masculinity was expressed through the power of the federal executive, the official union leadership, and the universal father-worker; iii) the

masculinised character of the productive mode favoured by the state, and exemplified in the automotive industry.

I. 'Of Labour and Social Provision': Paternalism, Enterprise Corporatism and the Mexican Constitution of 1917

In this section I pay close attention to Article 123, the section of the Constitution referring to labour rights. I will do so because of the lasting significance of this Article in defining Revolutionary ideology as a contested terrain upon which both dominant and subordinate social forces continue to struggle. Analysts of Article 123 have long considered the disjuncture between the progressive aspects of this labour law and the conditions facing the country at that time. As Judith Adler Hellman notes, "good intentions" notwithstanding, the progressive provisions of Article 123 did not reflect the "social and economic conditions of Mexico in 1917".¹ To understand this contrast, I will develop Richard Roman's argument that the labour provisions in the Constitution were not simply paternalistic, but coincided with the emergent corporate liberalism of the United States and England. These ideas resonated with the "nationalistic point of view which believed that the state ought to subordinate internal conflicts in the society, in the interest of fighting the external enemy."² For Roman, the ideas of "corporate liberalism under conditions of external dependency" define the Constitution of 1917. Hellman also accepts Roman's argument

and suggests that "the authors of Article 123 adopted as their own, some of the most progressive ideas that were current in capitalist countries at that time."³ Although it will become clear in the course of this discussion that international influences were present during the Constitutional discussions, it was the national context of class forces that lent legitimacy to such solutions.

The Mexican Constitution may be seen as an ideological, rather than an institutional, response to the political problems that the new government faced after having banished all subordinated classes from the Revolutionary project. In the central assumptions of the dominant ideology associated with enterprise corporatism and in the exclusionary character of the Constituent Assembly, we may observe the contradictory process of Constitution making. Rather than incorporate the well articulated demands of the defeated social forces, the dominant bloc accepted the promise held out by the modernisers in the United States. Because of its defeat, the southern peasant army of led by Emiliano Zapatista was not able to transform this resolution to the conflict. Because of its challenge, there would be no simple transition to a hegemonic order.

Article 123 was influenced by international ideas in the construction of what has become a national symbol of the Revolution. We cannot assume, however, that the new state managers were compelled to accept the emerging paradigm just

because enterprise corporatism was ascendent in the United States during the Mexican Revolution. As indicated above by the Zapatistas Plan de Ayala, the option did exist for an alternative program that was more reflective of national conditions. This alternative, however, would have meant challenging the established interests which had grown up around the classical international division of labour.

The conditions for capitalist development in Mexico were set out in the Constitution of 1917. The Constitution enshrined the formal prerequisites that would create a market for labour and for land. There was no national class with accumulated capital disposed to invest in an expanding internal market and subsistence production had by no means been displaced by production for exchange, but it was expected that these conditions could be altered by means of nationalist economic policies. What the new project proposed was to provide the conditions for industrialization without disrupting the agro-industrial export base. What follows is a brief account of how state managers went about doing that in the transition from a "war of movement" to a "war of position".

Constituent Congress: 1916-1917

On September 12, 1916, General Carranza called for a Constitutional Congress to be held at the end of the year, with the intention of reforming Articles 4,5 and 6 of the

Constitution of 1857 and Carranza's own Plan de Guadalupe.⁴ Given Carranza's record during the Revolution, there were few reasons to suppose that the Constituent Congress would be able to address the broad social and economic issues facing the country at the beginning of 1917. The oppositional *Convencionistas*, with their transitional program of government, had been excluded from participation at these Constitutional talks, as were labour leaders. Carranza lacked popular support but had crushed the opposition in the areas where dissent might do the most damage. The peasant and rural popular forces were defeated by divisions fomented between worker and peasant organisations, and the workers had been marginalised in turn. Carranza continued to hold onto his position of authority through his military power and control over Mexico City and the centre of the country. Despite his self-designation as a defender of the Constitution, on more than one occasion, Carranza had deviated from Constitutional law. He did so again by calling for Constitutional reform before holding elections. As well, given the restrictions on the selection of delegates, it did not appear that the Constituent Congress would provide much of a basis for any lasting Revolutionary social compromise.

Given these antecedents, it is surprising that the *Carrancistas* were pushed beyond their initial limited constitutional program by a strongly articulated modernizing view within the Congress. In the course of this debate, the

Carrancistas recognised that any presidential contender would not be able to rely solely on the defence of legality and constitutionalism, underwritten by military power. The country was in too much economic and social turmoil for that. In response to the challenge, the *Carrancistas* resuscitated a version of their previous "Legal Project on Labour Contracts" and submitted it to Congress as "Article 123: Of Labour and Social Provision".

Article 123 grew out of that period in the Revolution when Carranza faced exile in Veracruz. The *Carrancistas* had successfully negotiated an alliance with the workers in the *Casa Obrera Mundial* (COM) by offering limited labour rights in exchange for their support in forming Red Battalions to fight the peasants.⁵ These labour rights were prepared as a code that was never officially proclaimed. Although the Veracruz labour code of 1915 was a weak response to the demands for social rights, it did have the effect of indicating to the intellectuals in Carranza's camp, that this strategy ought to be pursued. After the defeat of the Zapatistas at the hands of the Red Battalions, law professor José Natividad Macías was sent to the United States to observe working conditions, visit plants and conduct interviews with both labour and management. While there, he collected documentation on US labour legislation and studied the legislation of England, France and Belgium.⁶ When Carranza ran into opposition at the Constitutional Congress, these proposals were ready to be

quickly reworked into Article 123 during December of 1916 by a small committee of the Congress and accepted by the assembly.

"Of Labour and Social Provision": Article 123

Article 123 reinforces the assumption that nineteenth century Liberal and Conservative objectives could be accommodated within an organic, corporate construction of market society. It assumes that the family is the basic unit of society and reinforces the "natural" assumptions of a gendered division of labour. It favours communities, tripartite governing bodies and a limited corporate state. It assumes a model of labour relations in which both male and female workers are defined more in terms of family identity rather than class identity. In Article 123 there are few positive declarations of labour's collective rights. Rather, there is an explicit charge to preserve a balance between labour and capital. As part of the effort to create free wage labour, Article 123 elaborates a protective mandate, especially for women and children, but also for men. Article 123 suggests a limited role for the state in organising the basis for labour relations and an active role for employers in maintaining social provision. The state is deemed responsible for the creation of labour boards while employers shoulder the responsibilities for the social wage required by workers, their families and the local community.

Protection and the Family

The protective elements of Article 123 are highly conditioned by the assumption of a gendered division of labour within the family that would be extended as the labour market developed. In the way they regulated working conditions for workers in general, working class men, women and children, these provisions did not simply reflect a gendered division of labour but imposed a gendered framework as the labour market was constructed. For working class men, the Constitution limited the workday to eight hours during the day and seven hours at night. One day of rest per week was made mandatory and the Article restricted overtime to three hours per day, with 100 percent overtime premiums. While there was no right to refuse overtime, it was limited to three consecutive shifts. This circumvention of the original right to the 48 hour week was a significant limitation, insofar as it left the whole issue of the length of the working day a matter for individual or collective negotiation.

Women were not seen as full workers. They were referred to in clauses that also considered the situation of children under 16 and were prohibited from working overtime, from participating in unhealthy or dangerous work, from working past 10 at night in commercial establishments and from doing industrial night shifts. Children under 12 were not to be contracted and those between the ages of 12 and 16 were restricted to six hour shifts. Recognising the prevalence of

child labour, the Article only limited the practice. Women workers were assigned a differentiated status within the labour force. At the same time, Article 123 included a clear statement of the right to equal pay for work of equal value, as well as a prohibition on discrimination based on sex or nationality.

As well as special provisions based on women-as-workers, there were other provisions for women-as-mothers. Women workers were protected from engaging in physically demanding work in the three months prior to giving birth and they were guaranteed their jobs after one month of maternity leave, during which time they were to receive their wages and other benefits. Nursing mothers were to be provided with two extra half-hour breaks during the day for feedings, apart from a regular meal break.

The commitment to a vision of workers as family members was reflected in the protective articles concerning women workers, but also in the provisions for a minimum wage. It was decided that minimum wages should be sufficient, "depending on the conditions of each region, to satisfy the normal necessities of life of the worker, his education and honest pleasures, according to his role as the head of the family."⁷ Thus, in a somewhat contradictory fashion, the Mexican constitution provided for both an equal pay clause as well as for the right to a family wage.⁸

Article 123 dealt with the protection of working class men as well. Specifically, it restricted those historical labour practices recognised as having made male workers victims to outright swindling at the hands of their employers. These provisions set down specific protections that would seem to apply a moral code to working class men, as did those subsections issued specifically for women workers and children. Alcohol and gambling were not allowed on work sites and all employment pools were to be set up without charge to the workers. Employers could not establish stores at which workers had to shop, thus outlawing the infamous *tienda de raya*, or company store. Employers were prohibited from paying workers inside of any sort of commercial establishment and wages were to be paid in legal currency, not "in kind". In the event of bankruptcy, it was declared that workers would be the first to be reimbursed.

The Article ended by stating that all previously accumulated work-related debts would be cancelled with the proclamation of the Constitution. The fact that the Article forbade any employer from holding workers' families responsible for acquired debt was one of the most important contributions to the creation of free-wage labour in Mexico. This provision ended one of the most pernicious aspects of traditional labour relations through which workers had become indentured to their employers for generations.

Employers' Responsibilities to the Community

Although the Article provided for a family wage, the male worker was not seen as solely responsible for maintenance of the family. The worker-father existed in relation to the family, but the family existed within a community. The health of the community was seen to depend to a certain extent on the employer. Employers with establishments in town, and employing more than 100 workers were responsible for providing clean and comfortable housing at a regulated rental rate. Since establishments of over 100 employees were rare indeed, this provision would be rarely fulfilled. Rural employers were responsible for housing as well as the provision of community services such as health care centres and schools. This was meant to ensure that new communities set up around mines, for example, would have to be provided with the necessary social infrastructure. All employers had to establish public spaces for markets, municipal buildings and recreation centres.

In part, these provisions emanated from the Revolutionary aversion for the rapid urbanization and single industry towns based on resource extraction under the old order. The nationalists who were concerned to limit the power of the foreign investors, seemed to suggest that not only was the extraction of resources for foreign benefit to be curtailed, but so too was the unsustainable exploitation of labour. We must also remember that in the aftermath of the Revolution,

the *Porfirian* state was in a shambles. Not only had its institutions been undermined by seven years of civil war and foreign interventions, but there was at best only a very tenuous alliance between military victors, the landed classes and middle-class professionals who were intent on promoting a new nationalist project. It was not yet clear whether the emerging corporate liberal state would be able to secure a stable post-Revolutionary order, but all early indications pointed to its authoritarian tendencies that had thwarted any consolidation of social forces able to promote a hegemonic project. Whether due strictly to questions of state resources and material capacities, or perhaps because of the Revolutionary ambition for national economic development under the leadership of a domestic bourgeoisie, the new governors were unwilling and, perhaps, unable to take over tasks that employers might be made responsible for.

Maintaining the Balance: The State and Enterprise Corporatism

One of the most celebrated characteristics of Article 123 is the declaration of workers' rights to form "coalitions". Under this provision, it was recognised that both workers and employers hold equal rights "to group themselves in defence of their respective interests, by forming unions, professional associations, etcetera" (XVI). It is crucial to notice that the same right to organise applies to both workers and employers. Similarly, the right of both parties to conduct

either strikes or "halts" in production was recognised. Article 123 indicated that a strike by workers, or a halt in production by employers, were actions that were assigned a formal equivalence. Even more to the point, legal strikes were those that "had as their objective the establishment of equilibrium between the diverse factors of production, harmonizing the rights of labour with those of capital" (XVIII). There were limits on these provisions. To avoid an illegal strike, public service workers had to give ten days notice to the Councils and no strike could involve violence against property or persons by the majority of strikers. The only legitimate reason for employers to suspend production was when they could prove to the Councils that excess production was threatening price stability.

In making these provisions, the delegates to the Constitutional Congress articulated an important statement recognising the formation of collective identities of both workers and employers that assumed no necessary antipathy between them. Effectively, the right to organise employers' associations or unions, as well as the rights to strike and lockout, were premised on the argument that a balance of power was the natural social condition and conflicts would only arise when this balance had been upset, that is, in exceptional circumstances. Additionally, the concern with balance was addressed under the provision which permitted workers to claim a percentage of employers' earnings each

year. Workers were thus encouraged to see their interests aligned with the profitability of the enterprise. Municipal councils would determine the percentage of these profit-sharing programmes along with minimum wage rates.

Labour law was seen to be largely a matter of state jurisdiction and would be administered under state level Arbitration and Conciliation Councils made up of an equal number of worker and employer representatives as well as one government official. These Councils were to be ultimately responsible for most aspects of labour law, including dispute settlements and the approval of municipally determined minimum wages. They would determine whether a strike or halt in production was legal and they would respond to individual complaints and conflicts over contracts. If employers did not comply with the decisions of the Arbitration and Conciliation Councils, the worker would be provided with three months compensatory wages, or in some cases, the right to return to work according to the terms of the individual's contract. This provision also held if a member of a worker's family was mistreated by the employer or one of his family members, compelling the worker to leave his job.

Evidently the Constitutionalist understood Article 123 as part of a process of state development that would emerge as the legal framework was developed. The rights of labour were set out under a general statement giving Federal and State level assemblies the responsibility to formulate relevant and

future laws. As well, employers were meant to comply with laws on training and health and safety and were responsible to provide compensation for work related accidents, according to laws that would be written. Similarly, future consideration would be given to popular insurance funds in order to cover disability, old age and life, involuntary termination of work, accidents and other related matters, and to the institution of cooperative societies for the construction of cheap houses. As well, state and federal governments would denominate those goods that were part of workers' "family patrimony" and thus inalienable. It was yet to be seen whether "social provision" would be carried out in a way consistent with the Constitutional guarantees, but this legislation was to emerge within the regulatory framework of labour law.

Article 123 became an important ideological element in the construction of a liberal state in Revolutionary Mexico. Assuming the gendered division of labour within the family, protective legislation served as the legal mechanism through which free wage labour would emerge. Social reproduction was understood to be intrinsic to production relations at the workplace and appropriately situated in the domain of employers' responsibilities. The federal state gave jurisdictional supremacy to the local level of government in matters of labour law, while employers would be made responsible for most aspects of social provision. There are key assumptions about working class identities, family form,

employers' responsibilities and the role of the state written into this Article.

Article 123 actually includes very little in the way of collective labour rights. Insofar as a collective working class identity is recognised, it is to assign benefits to working class men through their roles as heads of their families. This was the case primarily because the Constitution brought workers into the model as individuals defined in relation to their families, not in relation to labour organisations that were, in any case, not very strong. Workers and employers are given equivalent rights to association and employer responsibilities are identified by a regulatory framework in which protective legislation and social provision are their central aspects.

At the outset, therefore, it appeared that the national state itself would have a limited role to play in the consolidation of capitalist relations of production. It was in no position to subordinate international capital to itself, despite the nationalist guarantees of land ownership and subsoil rights. The federal state would enforce this organic, corporate view of society within Mexico in tripartite institutions. Yet, the immediate post-Revolutionary period would compel state actors to closely attend to the role of employers in reconstruction. Economic development would depend, not only on the extent to which the newly emerging state would oversee the balance of social forces, but on its

ability to extend the discourse of national interest beyond the ideology of the Constitutional document into an institutional framework and a productive structure as well.⁹

Article 123, Idealism and World Order

Article 123 did not only emerge out of the national dynamics of the Mexican Revolution but was influenced by the international context as well. As Hector Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer argue, the first elected president of the Revolution had been assassinated because he was perceived to be unable to protect US foreign investment.¹⁰ The fact is that the United States occupied Mexico on two occasions during the course of the Revolution and there was a serious debate in the United States about the merits of mounting a fullscale intervention during the Revolution. US troops remained in Mexico during the Constitutional Congress.

But there was a second and very important international dimension to Constitution building in Mexico that arose out of the most modern and optimistic assumptions of industrialists at the turn of the century. When the Constitutionalist studied production and labour relations in the United States and Europe, they engaged with the experience of labour relations in other more industrialised countries. In granting these provisions Constitutional status, the Mexicans went farther than their northern counterparts. That is not surprising, however, given that the Constitution was the

central legitimating tool of the governing generals. So too was it in keeping with the long tradition in Latin America of idealist constitutionalism. As a formal declaration of a Revolutionary state, Article 123 of the Constitution was meant to be the centrepiece of the new productive regime. Whether or not it would ever be reflected in law or practice was a question that would be at the centre of future political struggle.

Article 123 embodied the progressive assumptions of a productive system that was not exceptional but rather was being implemented in the factories of the United States. One of the most important proponents of this system was none other than Henry Ford. During the period 1914-1920, the "world's first billionaire" promoted profit-sharing with his employees. He built schools, offered bonuses, organised credit for workers' housing and took an highly interventionist and paternalistic interest in the worker's family and community. This was done within the context of an extraordinarily productive system that was streamlined, efficient, profitable and modern. Of course that experience was watched closely by international observers.¹¹

The early years of the twentieth century, enterprise corporatism offered support for the argument that the power relations between labour and capital could be balanced if both recognised their mutual interests in the health of the enterprise. This perspective looked to the ideological as

well as the technical organisation of production as the basis for such cooperation. As Mark Rupert reminds us, American productive practices, technology, and ideology were highly developed by the late nineteenth century.¹²

In the course of the development of this level of productivity, analysts conducted time and motion studies on the seconds wasted in unnecessary or unproductive movements and offered management new possibilities for increasing the level of the division of labour, the standardisation of processes and the speed of the assembly-line. By the turn of the century, the success of Taylorism and scientific management was widely discussed and Europeans came to study it in the United States. Although Taylorism is associated with the work of industrial psychologists and their time-motion studies, Fredrick Taylor advanced a theory that was not simply concerned with the efficient use of human productive efforts. Scientific management rested on the idealist search for cooperation between workers and management. It sought the "transcendence of class struggle on the putatively objective terrain of science, making possible the realization of a common interest shared by employer and individual workers."¹³ Taylorism represented a paternalist management style that attempted to incorporate workers' interests within the whole enterprise. To be sure, it was during a period of declining hegemony and rising conflict that Taylor's ideas about cooperation and joint interest gained acceptance.

The similarities that are evident between enterprise corporatism and the Mexican Constitution turn upon the notion that productivity depends not only upon the social relations of production within the factory, but on other social relations as well. With this notion, the division between production and reproduction is blurred. The home and the factory, as well as the community are understood to be interrelated spheres. The most celebrated aspects of enterprise corporatism were based on the reorganisation of production but the creation of the mass worker had implications beyond the factory gate and was clearly related to household production. In this respect, the achievement of a harmony of interests compelled employers to declare their concern for these so-called private spaces.

In Mexico, the assertion of employer's responsibilities for schools, hospitals, and municipal infrastructure was not unusual in the context of single-industry towns in northern states where foreign investors had long been a dominant presence. Given the modernising example of enterprise corporatism, there was no reason to suppose that new industrialists would find an affirmation of such historical practices a challenge to local power relations. With the extension of private resources into these areas, the costs of reproduction were not socialised, but were recognised as serving a productive function. If employers agreed to take on responsibilities for social provision, it was clear that the

state would not. This permitted employers a rather large amount of discretion over the speed of fulfilment and scope of their responsibilities.

Article 123 incorporated the nation building priorities of a small class of liberal constitutionalists in the spirit of early twentieth century enterprise corporatism. The Constitution reflected the ideals of an emerging ruling class that looked forward to the creation of a minimalist state to oversee economic and political development. After the Revolution, the conditions for free market in land and labour were established. The labour code, together with other key constitutional provisions formed the ideological basis for the Revolutionary state. Together these principles are that "the land belongs to those who work it", "the worker has the right to strike", "the subsoil wealth belongs to the nation" and "public services should be nationalised"¹⁴. Yet any concessions were made on liberal terms that would not intrude upon the areas that were fundamental to national as well as foreign employers in Mexico. Furthermore, it was the effect of the exclusion of subordinated social forces, as much as the actions of the Constitutional architects that resulted in the appearance of an entire constitutional article devoted to labour rights. There was a paternalism to this idealism that incorporated workers' interests within the whole, such that representation was subsumed by cooperation. As a result of this fundamental contradiction of paternalism, the

Constitution became a paradoxical site of contestation by subordinated groups.

II. Hegemonic Masculinity and the Passive Revolution: The Institutionalisation of *Caudillismo*

The second way in which gender contributed to the passive revolution in Mexico may be analysed in the three overlapping levels of *caudillismo* that were present in the years after the Revolution but institutionalised within structures of representation during the 1930s. As discussed in the previous chapter, the *caudillo* is seen as both paternalistic as well as authoritarian and as such became the hegemonic masculinity of Revolutionary Nationalism. In the Revolutionary Nationalist state, *caudillismo* characterised the relationship between the Presidency and the labour movement. This relationship was institutionalised in the party system, but it was also constructed within the Federal Labour Law of 1931.

Presidentialism and the labour movement

Caudillismo was not overtaken after the liberal idealism of the Constitution-makers was ensconced in Article 123. In fact, it became the hegemonic form of masculinity within Revolutionary Nationalism and very quickly took shape in the principle of presidential supremacy. After Carranza was assassinated in 1920, the northern *caudillos* established a virtual presidential dynasty. Successive members of the

"Sonora Group" were the real power behind the presidency until General Lázaro Cárdenas came to the presidency in 1934.

After the Revolution, the power of the federal executive was reinforced in relation to other groups in society, including the labour movement. The *Casa del Obrero Mundial* (COM) had been the largest labour organisation of the Revolutionary period but gave up its anarcho-syndicalist pronouncements when it signed an agreement with Carranza's representatives to organise workers into Red Battalions.¹⁵ For their loyalty, COM members were guaranteed the right to organise within Constitutionalist territories.¹⁶ Yet, it was not long until the alliance between the state and labour was proved illusory. The "Red Battalions" were dissolved by Carranza in January of 1916 and Carranza's brutal anti-worker sentiments became evident during the "Big Strike of 1916".

This strike was sparked by the demands of the *Federación Sindical del Distrito Federal* for payment of all wages in gold or in legal currency, due to the fact that the Constitutionalist bills in circulation since the beginning of Carranza's term were not held in any confidence. Having been refused, the workers went on strike under the leadership of the Electrical workers union. The union cut all electricity to the Federal District and neighbouring states on July 31. At this point the labour leadership was called to an audience with Carranza. The First Chief threatened them with the 1862 Law Against Traitors and the leadership was arrested on the

spot. Carranza issued a decree on August 1st against all those who incited, supported, counselled, took part in, approved, defended, discussed or attended meetings about the suspension of labours. These offences were all punishable by death.¹⁷ In the fall of 1916, the *Casa del Obrero Mundial* was shut down by the government.¹⁸

Immediately after the Revolution, the labour movement was in no position to challenge the government directly. Neither did the proclamation of the Constitution mean that labour organisations would be considered legitimate interlocutors of the state. Rather, the *Carrancista* state governors continued to repress the labour movement within their jurisdictions. Nevertheless, a new labour organisation, the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* (CROM) was formed in 1918. Although Carranza did not oppose founding Congress of the CROM, its existence remained precarious during the years of his government.¹⁹ Rather than becoming a basis of support for the government, labour was seen as a potential ally of the nationalist petite bourgeoisie opposition that had been marginalised by big capital and the landed interests of the Carranza government. Accordingly, federal ministers who were both members of the Sonora Group and enemies of the President intervened on behalf of unions in important disputes. The mutual support thus engendered was essential for labour and useful to the Obregónistas during the campaign against Carranza.²⁰

In one of the first indications that the constitutional legitimacy might be transformed into a lasting social compromise, Obregón's government took the labour movement into its governing coalition. Departing from the anarcho-syndicalist tradition of earlier labour movements, the CROM adopted a more pragmatic approach to politics. Rather than build the a broadly based movement of mobilised members, the CROM sought to incorporate itself within the state.²¹

From its inception, the CROM advanced its position as the official voice of labour and its leaders sought to assume key positions and influence within newly emerging state institutions.²² Luís Morones, formerly of the anarcho-syndicalist *Casa del Obrero Mundial*, was designated the first General Secretary of the CROM and eventually became the government's Secretary of Industry, Trade and Labour and a member of the cabinet.²³ With the support of the government, the CROM grew from a membership of 50 thousand in 1920 to over one million two hundred thousand by the end of Obregón's term in office in 1924. It is important to note however, even according to CROM's figures, as many as forty percent of these members were peasants.²⁴

As General Secretary of the CROM, Morones signed a pact with President Obregón in August of 1919 in which it was agreed that the new government would create a Department of Labour in exchange for labour's support. The CROM would be consulted on the naming of the Secretary of Labour and the

Secretary of Agriculture. Most important was the clause which gave the CROM exclusive rights to handle union issues directly with the Secretary of Labour. This pact also resulted in the formation of the *Partido Laborista Mexicana* (PLM) which acted as the political wing of the CROM in support of Obregón and the powerful President Plutarco Calles during the 1920s.²⁵

After the initial surge of labour mobilisation during the De la Huerta government (1920-21), Obregón was concerned to reassure employers, as well as the US government that once he became president, he would not favour the interests of labour over those of capital, but would work to establish a balance of social forces. As a result, and despite the CROM's subservience, the alliance between Obregón and the CROM was a troubled one. Obregón did not comply with the terms of the agreement. CROM officials, however, were given a significant number of positions in the government.²⁶ A separate Department of Labour was not created but the head of the Department of Labour within the Secretary of Industry, Trade and Labour was headed by a *Cromista*, as were most of the other important positions within the Department. As a result, the CROM had some influence over labour relations during Obregón's years in office.

A more direct challenge to the CROM in the re-emergence of anarcho-sindicalism through the creation of the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* (CGT) in 1921. In its early years the CGT supported the *Partido Comunista Mexicana*

(PCM) but later disaffiliated from the Red International, causing the PCM and the Young Communists to leave the labour confederation.²⁷ Despite this new contender, the CROM was able to maintain its dominance within organised labour during the 1920s, not without the use of illegal methods and the repression by security forces in its favour. During the Plutarco Elías Calles presidency (1924-1928), the CROM became embroiled in a series of conflicts with the government, as well as the CGT, that fractured its base of support and left it weakened considerably.

Almost immediately after being reelected as Calles legal successor, Obregón was assassinated in 1928. Many *Obregónistas* accused the CROM of responsibility for the assassination and in an effort to calm the crisis, Calles ensured that one of Obregón's group was named to replace him as provisional president.

Calles could not be re-elected but he worked from behind the scenes to move the Revolution along the path towards institutionalisation, until Lázaro Cárdenas became president in 1934. Under his direction a revolutionary governing party, the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR), was created in 1929. The PNR was a decentralised body that institutionalised the alliance of regional *caudillos*, and served to strengthen the authority of the presidency. As well, Calles was responsible for joining the paternalistic idealism of Article 123 with the authoritarianism of presidential *caudillismo* in

the juridical-institutional framework of the federal labour law (*Ley Federal Del Trabajo* LFT) of August 1931.

The CROM, out of official favour since the assassination of Obregón, did not join the new party. Portés Gil, the new president, was ill disposed towards Morones. As government protection decreased, so too did the presence of the CROM.²⁸ The disaffiliation from the CROM of the *Federación Sindical de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal* led by Fidel Velázquez and four other union leaders in 1929 was the first in a series of ruptures that continued to weaken the Confederation. As dissatisfaction grew within the CROM, movements for union disaffiliation were supported by other union centrals, including the *Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México* (CSUM). This organisation was formed in 1928 and was the labour confederation most closely related to the *Partido Comunista Mexicana*.²⁹ The split by the reform group of the CROM, formed by Vicente Lombardo Toledano in 1933 meant that the CROM was weakened to such an extent that it would now have to cede its position as the exclusive voice of labour to competing labour confederations.³⁰

With the rise and fall of the fortunes of the CROM, we see the significance of *caudillismo* in relations between the President and the favoured labour unions. Labour's place within the emerging historic bloc was tenuous, even though it was clearly a subordinate one. By the time Cárdenas came to power, the CROM had been ousted. It had shown itself to be

neither a legitimate voice of labour nor an effective means of controlling workers' demands.

Cárdenas and the Corporatist Compromise:

Caudillismo was consolidated in the labour movement as state development continued. Very soon after it was proclaimed, the Federal Labour Law (LFT) became entwined with the institutions of corporatist representation established by the government of Lázaro Cárdenas. After the LFT was promulgated, there continued to be a divergence between those labour rights declared in official discourse and legislation and the actual enjoyment of those rights by the working classes. With no legitimate body to represent the state interests to workers, union militancy was on the rise.

Labour discontent was only one reason for the instability Cárdenas faced as he took power away from Calles in 1934. The years following from the Constitutional Congress were tumultuous ones marked by presidential assassinations and resignations, a civil war, negotiations over reparations to US interests harmed in the Revolution, a succession of presidencies thwarted by the manipulation of former president Plutarco Calles, and a world depression.³¹

At the heart of the social compromise that Lázaro Cárdenas forged was the promise that the working class was entitled to certain social guarantees and would receive them if it continued to lend its support to the state through the

official labour organisations. Despite the increasing level of Revolutionary institutionalisation, this promise ensured that *caudillismo* would remain at the heart of the relationship between the President and the labour movement. It was also a promise made to the peasants but their position within the social compromise was much more marginalised. They felt the effects of state authoritarianism much more directly. But for labour, the promise of *caudillismo* gave coherence to the divergence between the rights proclaimed in the Constitution and the uneven extension of social rights during the early years of the Revolution. The relationship was institutionalised through forms of corporatist representation in the Revolutionary Nationalist state.

Under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) was created in February 1936 as the institutional link between the working class and the *Partido Revolucionario Mexicano* (PRM)³².

Many diverse labour organisations were brought together in Cárdenas' consolidation of the state during the 1930s. The CROM was much weakened by this point, but remained outside of the CTM. Unions that had disaffiliated from the CROM in protest over the continuing power of ex-president Calles formed the *Confederación General Obrera y Campesina de México* (CGOCM) in 1933. As the largest labour confederation in opposition to the CROM, the CGOCM disbanded itself at its second congress in 1936 to affiliate with the CTM. During

1936, the *Federación Nacional de Trabajadores del Estado* (FNTE) was formed and affiliated with the CTM. At the same time, Fidel Velázquez brought the *Federación de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal* into the new organisation. Velázquez soon became General Secretary of the CTM and remained in that position until his death in 1997. Along with the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC) and the *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares* (CNOP), grouping a variety of business, trade and professional organisations and, for a time, the military, the CTM was intended to build and maintain broad support for the ruling party.³³

Cárdenas dissolved the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR) and formed a new party named the *Partido Revolucionario Mexicano* (PRM) in December 1937. Although it has been argued that the reorganisation of the ruling party along sectoral lines moved the party farther from a regionally based *caudillismo*, into a party with a broadly based mass organisation,³⁴ the Revolutionary Nationalist institutions were infused with *caudillismo* as the hegemonic masculinity.

Further institutional reordering ensued when, at the end of October 1938, the Secretary of the Interior called a Congress to remove state workers from the CTM and form the *Federación Sindical de los Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado* (FSTSE). Immediately afterwards a governmental decree compelled all state workers to join this Federation.³⁵ These

changes gave the state increased control in defining the terms of labour regulation.

A further reorganisation of the party took place in 1946 when it became the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI). Membership in the PRI was made mandatory for all CTM trade unionists. In exchange for its position at the head of the subordinated groups in society, the CTM was expected to deliver its membership in support of the ruling party. Over time this support became ritualised in May Day parades during which workers were compelled to march past the president or the governor at the presidential palace or state legislatures. Any worker failing to do so would be fined at least one day's pay and sometimes more. But, as we shall see below, this formal expression of support was the public expression of a much more profound power structure expressed in *caudillismo*.

In time *charrismo* came to refer to the specific form that *caudillismo* took in the official labour institutions. *Charrismo* is a term that stems from the anti-communist official union leadership of the late 1940s. During this period, the government directly imposed new leaders in the railroad, petroleum and mine and metal workers unions. One of these, Jesús Díaz de León was known as "*El Charro*" because he dressed in the typical cowboy fashion. The name "*charro*" now refers to the official union bureaucrats representing the state.³⁶

Throughout the period of import-substitution, the Revolutionary party, now known as the PRI, ruled continuously. The institutions of the party became inseparable from those of the state. In the context of passive revolution, these institutional links tended to mean that the state's promotion of economic development more closely reflected the interests of employers, rather than workers or other subordinated social forces. During this period, the Mexican state was enormously successful in surmounting the political challenges arising from the opposition. Electoral politics were not the site for contestation between social forces. The PRI extended de facto control over the party system and the power of the presidency ensured the transition of the leadership of the nation from one administration to another. It was an authoritarian system in which dissent was, on one hand, incorporated through the discourse, practices and institutions of the state and, on the other, repressed when it became too threatening.

The antagonistic relations between social forces in Mexican society were by no means mitigated by the establishment of corporatism. But implications of this reorganisation of the ruling party reached deeply into state-society relations, insofar as it provided for the formation of mass organisations as the base of state power. In Mexican corporatism, as Arnaldo Córdova describes so clearly, "*that which exists is that which is organised; that which does not exist, is that which is not organised.*" (italics added)³⁷

It is not individual citizens, but organisations that are the political subjects in corporatism. Córdova argues that the PRI was the only national political actor not because Mexico has a one-party system, which it does not, but because the PRI is the only party based upon mass organisations.³⁸ Córdova's analysis offers an important insight into how the CTM has historically structured working class politics, not only in organisational terms, but with respect to questions of legitimacy and efficacy in relations with the state and employers.³⁹

The CTM did not simply represent the interests of its membership within corporatist forms of representation. It embodied the paternalistic and authoritarian dimensions of gendered power institutionalised in the Federal Labour law. By restricting autonomy and independence within the labour movement the CTM was only part of a system of representation in which the dominant classes exerted control over the working class through the state, as well as in the social relations of production. Given the lack of accountability within the labour relations regime, labour law acted with the corporatist organisation of state structure to prevent the development of a strong relationship between the working class and its leadership within the labour movement. It is to the implications of labour law that we now turn.

The Federal Labour Law and Representation

In the Federal Labour Law, the three levels at which hegemonic masculinity shapes representation are highly evident. These are elaborated in the i) federal executive power over union recognition; ii) centralisation of representative functions within union executive bodies; iii) affirmation of working class men's responsibilities to defend their individual rights as part of "social provision"

The Federal Executive powers of Recognition

Labour law, which had been the responsibility of the states, was transferred to the Federal government in 1929 by means of a constitutional amendment of the power to proclaim a Federal Labour Law. One of the most important aspects of this jurisdictional shift meant that the regionally based tripartite Conciliation and Arbitration Boards now became subject to federal authority. Almost immediately afterwards the Department of Labour was separated from the Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Labour.⁴⁰ One of the central institutions of the labour relations regime is the *Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje*, the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Board. It is, in turn, highly subject to the power of the Executive Federal Power by means of its subordination to the *Secretaría del Trabajo* (Department of Labour). While the national character of labour law confers most responsibility for labour relations on the federal

institutions, the structure of the Federal Board is mirrored at the state level through local Conciliation and Arbitration Boards.

This is by no means a decentralised system. The presence of the federal executive power is felt in every dimension of labour regulation in Mexico and because of the way in which *caudillismo* is reflected in state-society relations, state governors extend Presidential prerogatives through the control they exercise over the decisions of local boards.⁴¹ Unions are required to keep the labour authorities up to date on any changes in leadership or changes to statutes within ten days of their occurrence, with quarterly reports on membership and on other matters as requested.⁴²

The labour boards are comprised of three members who are meant to represent the interests of labour, capital and the state. If a union wishes to apply for registration, it must make its application at the labour board. If a union wishes to hold a strike, it must make an application in which it proves that its objective is to "(s)ee the equilibrium between the diverse factors of production, harmonising the rights of labour with those of capital".⁴³

If the union leadership is changed in an election, or at any other time, the labour board must be notified. The union must receive a document stating that the Board has "taken note" that the leadership has changed for it to become official. The federal labour board is the epitome of a corporatist

institution. The decisions reached there have a significant effect on the character of the labour relations regime given that the majority of labour actions are mediated through this tripartite institution. Labour autonomy is highly restricted as a result.

To exist legally, a constituted union must obtain registration by the labour authorities.⁴⁴ The Federal Arbitration and Conciliation Board is responsible for the approval or rejection of applications. Strictly speaking, while the Board may comply with the legal procedures outlined in the law, it may make it nearly impossible for workers to organise. The law states that an application for registration must, among other things, include the employee numbers, names and addresses of the leadership and all union members, as well as the names and address of the company. The Board might require, in addition, that the union have the company prepare or stamp the forms to verify that these workers are indeed employed by the company.⁴⁵ Such demands are coercive, threaten members with instant dismissal and, in effect, curtail the right to association.

In fact, the LFT contains the most minimal requirements for authentic representation of workers' needs. A union or executive committee may be registered without any indication of support from the membership and there is nothing that would cause a General Secretary of a union to call a strike or desist from doing so, according to the wishes of the

membership.⁴⁶ Union assemblies might never be held and workers need never meet their union leadership.

A contract may be negotiated only by the officially recognised union. If there are a number of unions in the workplace, then the one that has the majority will sign the collective agreement, provided they are officially recognised by the labour authorities. If there is a dispute over which union is entitled to negotiate the collective agreement, challengers must go before the Labour Board for judgement on the matter. The first step is to bring the matter before the Labour Board. After an initial hearing, the process allows for a membership vote to be taken in order to determine which union they wish to belong to and thus, who will hold the title to the contract. Although there are limits on how long this process should take, there may be delays of two years or more. These votes are not taken in secret. For plebiscites such as these, the Labour Board names the place and date of the vote. Usually they take place in the workplace. Only those workers who attend the meeting can vote and only those who are valid employees, except for those fired after the demand was laid, may vote.⁴⁷

The right to strike is a clearly defined collective right described in the Constitution. The Federal Labour Law elaborates the way in which this right is to be exercised. The Federal Labour Law will deny approval for a strike if, in the opinion of the labour authorities, the petition is not

made according to proper procedures.⁴⁸ "Proper" applications must be directed towards the company, describe the petition, warn and give notice as to when the strike will be. It must also justify the legal basis of the strike. If these requirements are not met to the Board's satisfaction, it may call the strike "non-existent" once it is underway.

A strike may be called non-existent if less than fifty percent of the members are on strike or if they have not tried to seek the equilibrium between the factors of production, the revision of the collective agreement, violations in the distribution of profits or in the contract itself. Solidarity strikes may also be called non-existent. If the strike is declared non-existent, workers must return to work within 24 hours, or else all labour agreements are considered broken.⁴⁹ If the employer becomes bankrupt, all labour relations are ended, as is any strike that is occurring at the time.⁵⁰

Before a strike is held, labour authorities must arrange an audience between itself and the parties for purposes of conciliation. The union must attend the hearing, but there are no sanctions against management if they do not attend. The law does state that the public forces may compel the company to respond to the demands of the workers.⁵¹ If the strike is considered "existent", it may go on indefinitely. The union is the only party that may ask for arbitration by the Board. At the petition of the union, within 48 hours, a hearing must be held at the Labour Board, to determine whether

the union or management is responsible for the strike. If management is the cause, then it is obliged to comply with the petitions of the workers and pay lost wages.⁵²

What becomes evident from this analysis of the Federal labour law, is that the federal executive is highly interventionist in its control over union representation. The *caudillismo* of the presidency is apparent throughout the LFT.

Centralisation of representation in union executives

The second aspect of representation comprehended within the Federal Labour Law is the centralisation of representative functions within union executive bodies. This has the effect of reproducing *caudillismo* within the union leadership. Labour law permits practices which consolidate the power of union leadership over its members and effectively centralises power within the organisation through the union's own constitution. For instance, the right to association is guaranteed in subsection XVI of Article 123, but the Federal Labour Law diminished that collective right and transferred all legal powers of representation to one person. Article 376 of the LFT established that "the representation of the union will be exercised through its General Secretary *or whomever is designated by the leadership*".⁵³ This could mean, for example, that the General Secretary could designate a labour lawyer to stand in the stead of the union executive.

Moreover, the Federal Labour law does not require unions to prepare financial reports for their members, nor is the employer required to offer any account of the monies given to the union leadership.⁵⁴ Union dues are automatically deducted from workers' paycheques by the employer and given over to the union. As stated in union statutes, Ford workers, for example, are responsible for one percent of their basic salary in union fees. With this arrangement, the union has the security of numbers as well as a stable financial base, but this too, is a contradictory provision of labour law. While it ensures that the union has resources to carry out its work, the National Union will customarily gather the resources and, at its discretion, disburse money to the locals. Money is also allocated through the official union hierarchy to the governing party.⁵⁵

One principal claim of labour law is that workers are entitled to continuous improvement in their conditions of work. It is explicitly stated that a collective agreement that diminishes workers' rights or is less advantageous than the previous agreement, may not be concluded.⁵⁶ Yet almost no union includes provisions allowing workers to vote on the revision or signing of the collective agreements. Neither is there any requirement that votes be taken secretly, and again, very few unions have union statutes to that effect.⁵⁷

In the Federal Labour Law, the task of labour representation is moved into the offices of the union

bureaucracy. As a result, *caudillismo* is reproduced within the labour institutions themselves.

Working class men and social provision

The third aspect of *caudillo* representation in the Federal Labour Law further entrenches patriarchal relations within the working class family. There are aspects of labour law that construct the "individual" worker⁵⁸ as the "worker-father" since the family is highly dependent upon the benefits accorded him. The emphasis on individual rights within the LFT reinforces the male worker's responsibility for attaining conditions of work that, in other circumstances, might be within the purview of collective agreements or social welfare policy. This level of *caudillismo* is intertwined with the power of the union executive hierarchy, however, and depends upon a highly ambiguous situation created through the hiring process. Under the Federal Labour Law, the union is responsible for providing the employer with the names of workers whenever the employer decides to hire. Relatives of current employees are given priority and the trade unions regard this right to an "Inclusion Clause" in the collective agreement, as one which protects their integrity as a working class organisation. The collective agreement at Ford, for example, stated that "the union will provide job applications to all applicants recommended by whomever works in the company", while the Union statutes indicated that applicants

who were sons of union members would be given priority.⁵⁹ Upon reaching the age of 16, these apprentices would work on simple tasks in all parts of the plant during school holidays, under the assumption that this would prepare them for their future and eventual permanent contract. With this provision, fathers could offer their sons a 'patrimony'. In the words of one worker, "Because I am not rich, the best that I can give my son is a good job". Further,

It is not like 'from such a staff such a splinter'. Above all else, it is that the company's mechanisms of control will be widely strengthened by the control that the father exercises over his son. The father advises his son or nephew on how to behave and the latter, in order not to mislead him and not wanting to "stain" the recommendation, behaves appropriately. In this way he integrates himself into the Ford Family and to the factory system. The father puts his best foot forward so that his son can enter and the son responds with his labour for his father and the company.⁶⁰

Both fathers and sons are disciplined by their shared relation to the employer and their need to remain employed. But what is also important is that the union also plays a role in determining whether or not they maintain their job security. The union has the right to suspend workers from their jobs for a short period of time, or to suspend the union rights of a worker entirely. In this example, we see that the power of the union leadership is strengthened by the responsibilities of the father.

This point requires further elaboration. Under the federal labour law, "Exclusion Clauses" may be negotiated in collective agreements. Again, following upon our earlier

example, Ford workers losing their rights to union membership also lose their job, since all workers must be union members. Workers may be expelled from the union only if in a general assembly, two-thirds of the membership vote against the member and after the member has an opportunity to offer a defence. Nevertheless, each Ford Union's constitution includes a list of conditions for which members may be automatically expelled. If a worker is expelled from the union for any reason, the company is required to fire that worker. In such cases, the employer is under no obligation to compensate the worker with a severance agreement. The union statutes of the National Union of Ford workers state that:

Members who commit the following misdeeds will be expelled from the Union, with the application of the Exclusion Clause:

- a).-Contributing to the dissolution or the disorganisation of the Union.
- b).-Misuse of Union funds.
- c).-For free or paid espionage in the service of the Company.
- d).-For unfounded attacks to the prestige or the dignity of the union.
- e).-Working against strike movements, or activities undertaken by the Union.
- f).-Betraying the trust of workers after being designated to a Union Commission.⁶¹

Any one of these "misdeeds" certainly would be antithetical to the principals of trade unionism, but the ability of the union to ensure the firing of any union member through the application of the exclusion clause is based on highly politicised factors. As a result, the exclusion clause has been a very effective instrument, whether it is used or simply threatened against oppositional movements within unions.

Taken together then, we see that the inclusion and exclusion clauses are mediated through the patriarchal relations of the family and the social relations that have constituted a male workforce at the core of the industrial model. They are part of a larger social structure in which labour relations are intertwined with the gendered relations of *caudillismo*. One implies the other and is at the heart of the Revolutionary Nationalist state.

The Ethical dimension of Passive Revolution

The LFT is a contradictory site of contestation in which the labour movement in Mexico has been enmeshed for over 50 years. It is the primary means by which the relation between consent and coercion was constructed during the period of relative stability that obtained between the 1930s and 1960s. To the extent that we may speak of social compromise during this period in Mexico, it is in large part because of the success of the historic bloc in constructing a shared set of norms based in Revolutionary principles. This intersubjectively constituted framework meant that the dominant parties could agree that the Constitution embodied the general good. It protected the nation from foreign domination. It reaffirmed the family as the basic social unit. It elaborated a wide range of rights that would be realised over time. The debate among social forces took place within this framework. Labour Law, rather than Constitutional

Article 123, became the site of contestation in circumstances which prevented an autonomous and representative labour movement from emerging.

There are many reasons why the LFT is not simply the means for the direct domination of Mexican workers. In establishing a labour code within federal jurisdiction, it held out the possibility that the personalistic relations of *caudillismo* might be overcome with a more general and impartial juridical regime. Labour boards, after all, were comprised of representatives of the state, capital, as well as labour. The right to association was accepted by both labour and management, within the discourse of "equilibrium". This provision underlined the social dimensions of the legislation. It showed how both the general as well as the particular interest could be furthered. Furthermore, the provisions for "inclusion" and "exclusion" gave unions a significant role to play in labour relations. As well, the collective interests of workers appeared to be well served by the provisions authorizing unions' control over hiring lists and union activities. Although unions were subject to the interlocking hierarchies of patriarchy and capitalism, unions played an important role in the construction of hegemonic masculinity within the union and in the working class family.

Contributing to the argument that the Mexican state was overseeing the construction of a just order were the strict sanctions that the LFT was meant to level against workers who

were mistreated or fired unjustly by their employers. Workers were entitled to a significant percentage of annual profits and severance agreements were generous. Both labour and employers were permitted to shut down operations under certain conditions, so employers could not easily discredit this provision by arguing that the right to strike disadvantaged them in particular. Workers, however, fiercely defended their right to shut down operations entirely during a strike. So too did workers defend their individual rights to the labour standards set down in the LFT. Here again, we may recognise the persistent assumption of the importance of the Revolutionary worker-father in relation to his family. Social reproduction was shared by the state and the employer. Ostensibly, workers were paid by the day according to the needs of their families and conditions of the regional economy. Employers were responsible to pay them on their day of rest as well as on the days they worked. As well, part of the social compromise depended upon the state's taking responsibility for other costs of reproduction, including subsidised housing.

Furthermore, because important guarantees in the LFT, such as the right to sectoral bargaining, were left unfulfilled there was a certain amount of legitimacy to the claim that the law itself was not so bad. Either it was unenforced or it was corrupted by the impunity of powerful men. As a result, the unfulfilled promises of the Federal

Labour Law became constant rallying points for labour struggles. The expectation that social rights had a place in Mexican society was an idea that persisted in popular consciousness. Even in the official discourse of the most conservative Presidencies, the rights of the peasant, working and capitalist classes as they were regulated through the Constitution were a constant point of reference. The fact that the state had not lived up to its full responsibility to preserve and extend social rights was a matter which was acknowledged within the rubric of the Revolution that was ever becoming, ever present, and ever 'perfecting'.

Every labour mobilisation engages with the institutional arrangements of Mexican corporatism. Trade unions move within the legal and judicial terrain constantly. The history of trade unionism in Mexico is conditioned by the specific way in which labour law is written and applied. In trying to understand this legal framework, it quickly becomes apparent that the Federal Labour Law is central to the history of contestations of the form of state which, for almost forty years, established the limits of passive revolution in Mexico.

III. Masculinised Production: The Automotive Industry and State Corporatism in the Passive Revolution

Since the promise of paternalistic economic development under cooperative social relations was not realised in the period after the Revolution, the social relations underpinning

large scale production came to be increasingly regulated by the state. Labour organisations were accepted as legitimate entities within this new productive mode but they were not meant to mobilise workers in support of their collective interests. Indeed, they became subordinated to the national interest. In the period following from Cardenas' term, state authoritarianism imposed the cooperation that paternalism could not elicit. Enterprise corporatism was transformed into state corporatism.

In this mode, while the idea of the workplace as a "productive community" gave way to more clearly defined social relations, the importance of the working class family persisted. As seen above, the institutions of labour law organised a gendered terrain of labour struggle in which the gendered division of labour was strictly enforced. Women were excluded from the most favoured production mode in which the established male worker and the family wage was championed by the state. The automotive industry offers a clear example of an industry in which the overwhelming majority of the relatively protected workers were men.

The masculinised and mestizo character of the auto industry was also apparent in its relation to other "devalued" productive forms such as the household and peasant agriculture. Even the "mexicanised" auto parts sector existed in a subordinate relationship to the foreign assemblers. Technological innovations in the auto industry set the pace

for technological change elsewhere, as did patterns of work organisation. The assemblers were concentrated in the industrial heartland of the country. To the extent that other productive modes were incorporated into the productive structure, they supported the growing industrial base, while their subordinate status was reinforced by regionalism. As well, patterns of class power, including the management structure and labour relations depended upon the paternalism and authoritarianism of *caudillismo* as the hegemonic masculinity. Feminised work and other devalued masculine productive modes are constructed in opposition to this complex.

In this section we shall emphasise the material basis of this mode. Like its counterparts in Southern Europe, state corporatism in Mexico has its beginnings in the years after October 1929 during the Great Depression. Mining production fell by 50 percent and oil production by almost 20 percent. Since these industries did not have many linkages to the rest of the domestic economy and the economic impact of the generalised downturn was not as severe as in those economies more open to international capital flows.⁶² In this context, Cárdenas' support for nationalist economic development strategies was supported by the dominant social classes. The nationalisation of the oil industry provided much of the economic basis and ideological legitimacy for the state-led

developmentalist direction that Revolutionary Nationalism took.

Although auto assembly had been established in Mexico as early as 1925, manufacturing did not emerge in the industry automatically or easily. The market for vehicles was small and the infrastructure needed to support their use slow to expand. In this early stage of production (which ends with the restructuring of the industry after the 1962 Presidential Decree on the Auto Industry), vehicle parts were imported and assembled in small workplaces within the Federal District.⁶³ Here Mexican companies assembled automobiles for the internal market, usually under license from a foreign producer. There was no corresponding auto parts industry and technological advances were few. Official unionisation rates were close to 100 percent in these years.

Between 1940 to 1960, the Mexican economy experienced what external observers have called the "Mexican Miracle". In Mexico, the period of economic growth is referred to as *desarrollo estabilizador* (stabilised development). In these years the annual growth of the GNP averaged 6.3 percent and growth in the industrial sector averaged 7.7 percent.⁶⁴ The state corporatist mode underpinning economic growth depended upon an internal market among the upper and middle income groups supplied by a domestic manufacturing sector in consumer goods, both durable and non-durable goods. This may be

described as an import-substitution industrialisation (ISI) strategy.

Much of this economic growth depended upon the intervention of the state. In 1947 the PRI government issued a decree limiting automotive imports to a ratio of each auto company's level of production. Tariffs on auto parts were reduced relative to those on assembled vehicles and companies were required to adhere to national content levels in vehicle production.⁶⁵ This policy developed the basis for import-substitution in the industry and increased the number of assembly plants in the country.

With the intention of deepening the effect of import-substitution policies, the government of President Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964) focused on the development of the auto industry. As a result, the production of consumer non-durables became well established. López Mateos expected that the auto industry could become the catalyst furthering the development of the model into consumer non-durables. Auto manufacturing was expected to expand the possibilities for forward and backward linkages, increase employment and decrease foreign exchange losses.⁶⁶ While foreign investment would be necessary for such a project, the dominant view held that the state would be able to initiate a process of "Mexicanization" in the industry.⁶⁷ As a result, state policies supported the development of a national capitalist class.

This form of development in Mexico's productive capacity was supported by changes at the level of world order. As the strongest of the post-war economies and a leader in the politics of reconstruction, the United States fostered the development of the hegemonic "Pax Americana". Immediately after the Second World War, US corporations tended to export their products to emerging markets, but as the war-torn economies recovered in the late 1950s and through the 1960s, US corporations, along with their Japanese and European counterparts, turned increasingly to direct foreign investments. The US automotive industry was built in tandem with the internationalisation of production brought about by the rise of foreign direct investment and the emergence of multinational corporations in the late 1950s and into the 1960s. This network of US firms that had extended throughout the world during the postwar period was based on the idea, central to hegemony, that the most efficient form of industrial production was that of Fordism.

By 1960, there were 17 auto assemblers and 41 car models available in Mexico. This contributed to an irrational productive structure given the size of the domestic market. A series of decrees and regulations between November 1960 and May 1961 led to the withdrawal of some producers from the market. During this period, 22 makes of vehicles were taken out of production.⁶⁸ In 1960, in an effort to increase efficiencies in the industry, the Inter-ministerial Committee

for Planning and Development of the Automobile Industry, led by the state development bank, *Nacional Financiera* (NAFIN) made a series of recommendations in 1960 for a new automotive policy.⁶⁹ It recommended that companies be required to incorporate 60 percent local content in the finished vehicles. It suggested that the number of companies in the market be limited so as to increase the economies of scale and it recommended that companies standardise parts and limit the number of models in the market in order to enable autoparts companies to organise longer production runs. The report also recommended that all companies have majority Mexican ownership.

The 1962 Automobile Manufacturing Decree did impose a 60 percent local content requirement for assembly operations and it encouraged the development of the Mexican auto parts industry by limiting the vertical integration of auto producers. No assembler was allowed to manufacture parts except for engines and those parts produced before 1962 and production increased in the parts sector. After 1964, the importation of assembled engines was prohibited unless companies could indicate their plans for local production.⁷⁰ Foreign capital was not permitted to exceed 40 percent in the parts industry.⁷¹ Still, the Decree did not require the standardisation of parts, nor did it limit the number of companies producing in the market. Under the 1962 Decree, Ford and General Motors were the two foreign-owned companies

to be approved for licence, followed by Nissan in 1964. Other companies approved to manufacture, which were entirely or majority Mexican-owned, included DINA, *Fábricas Auto-Mex*, *Impulsora Mexicana Automotriz*, *Promexa*, *Reo*, *Representaciones Delta* and VAM. Given the government's decision not to limit the number of producers, as Bennett and Sharpe argue, all of these companies could not survive the inefficiencies that were created.⁷²

Mexican-owned assemblers did not fare well under the Decree, partly because they did not have the same access to credit and technology and their import costs were higher than their foreign competitors.⁷³ Soon afterwards, three of the Mexican-owned companies shut down and three others sold most of their equity to their foreign affiliates, leaving five foreign-owned companies (Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Volkswagen, Nissan) and two state-owned companies (DINA and VAM). *Promexa* sold to Volkswagen in 1964. VAM sold 40 percent of its equity American Motors and the Mexican state held the rest. The Mexican family that owned *Auto-Mex* sold one-third of its equity to Chrysler. DINA remained a wholly-owned state company.⁷⁴

Labour, Production and Passive Revolution

Ford Motor Co. de México was the first of the transnational auto producers to arrive in Mexico in the tumultuous years after the Revolution. The company arrived in

the neighbourhood of San Lázaro, Mexico City in 1925. In this first installation, 295 workers built 5 Model T autos each day in the "Completely Knocked Down" (CKD) assembly production. Ford Motor Company was welcomed to post-revolutionary Mexico with guarantees from President Plutarco Elías Calles that it would have no labour problems to contend with.⁷⁵ Indeed, Ford workers were not unionised until 1932 despite evidence of dissension in the workforce and an unsuccessful 1929 work stoppage. Although Mexican Ford workers had been eight years without a union, they were organised earlier than their US counterparts, who did not become members of the United Auto Workers until 1941. Mexican Ford workers were initially affiliated with the prominent but declining CROM.⁷⁶ They later transferred to the CGT but found themselves in a jurisdictional dispute in the late 1930s. At the *Junta Local de Conciliación y Arbitraje*, the question of affiliation was resolved in favour of the CTM.⁷⁷

Although the presence of the Ford Motor Company was significant, there was no real correspondence between auto production at Ford and the broader character of the Mexican economy in these years. It is impossible to speak of this mode as "Fordist" if mass markets, high incomes for workers and standardised production processes are the central indicators. In the early years, the characteristic link between patterns of production and consumption was that the

Mexican market was exclusive and served by a limited number of craft based producers.

By the late 1930s, however, the production mode was expanding. General Motors was founded in Mexico in 1935. In 1937, 48 workers formed a union and affiliated with the *Federación Sindical del Distrito Federal*.⁷⁸ After holding an assembly in 1947 to discuss the question of affiliation and the possibility of forming a national autoworkers union, the union at General Motors decided to affiliate with the *Confederación Única de Trabajadores* (CUT) that had been formed in the same year. In 1952, the CUT joined with other centrals to form the *Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Campesinos* (CROC). The General Motors, Federal District union continues this affiliation to the present.⁷⁹

The first strike at General Motors occurred in 1965 when the company attempted to move workers to a new plant in Toluca. Previously, the company won the right to sign collective agreements in new plants with new unions and with centrals other than that of the CROC. In its relations with the CTM, General Motors acquired a more advantageous collective agreement at the Toluca plant than those in the old plant in Mexico City. General Motors workers were divided into two unions, with two different centrals.⁸⁰

In 1938, *Fábricas Automex* was established to assemble Chrysler vehicles. A union was formed in the same year. In 1964 the union became part of a national union of *Automex*

workers and affiliated with the CTM. In the next year, the union was transformed again, into a national autoworkers union named the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz Integrada, Similares y Conexos de la República Mexicana* (CTM).

Volkswagen was one of the plants built outside of Mexico City in the relocation of production during the second stage of the development of the Mexican auto industry. In 1954, the company *Promexa* was established to assemble Volkswagens in Mexico. A local union was established in the same year and affiliated with the *Confederación General de Trabajadores* (CGT). In 1964, in an attempt to extend their influence within the sector, the workers formed a national union, *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Metalúrgica, Mecánica de Precisión, Similares y Conexos de la República Mexicana* and also affiliated to the CGT. In 1966, the company was bought by Volkswagen. Soon after, Volkswagen moved the plant from Xalostoc to Puebla and in collaboration with the CTM, facilitated the formation of a local CTM union.⁸¹ The union at Volkswagen left the CTM in 1972. After the elections of 1975, the victorious official slate suspended the union rights of their campaign opponents.⁸²

In 1946 the assembler *Willys Mexicana* was established in the Federal District and later transformed into *Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos* (VAM). The union was formed at the end of the 1940s, and by the end of the 1950s was affiliated with

the *Federación Sindical de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal* and the CTM at the national level. In 1966 the union affiliated with the *Federación Sindical de Toluca* (CTM).

Diesel Nacional was established in 1951 and the union was organised in 1954. The *Sindicato de Trabajadores de Diesel Nacional* affiliated with the CTM. After five years of internal divisions, the union left the CTM and joined the CROC. During 1961 and 1962, two strikes were called and both were declared "non-existent". The union remained divided between CTM forces and opposing groups and a coalition executive could not function.

From this brief overview we see that even in periods of relative stability, contestation persists. Although working class men in the auto industry may be considered the epitome of the relatively protected, well-paid worker with stable employment, they continued to be subordinated, not only by their employers, but by the state through the official labour movement. As a result, we must not suppose that the "Mexican Miracle" was a golden age for workers that has been recently eclipsed. The auto workers were not the first to form themselves into a movement in an effort to contest the *charrismo* of the period. This was achieved by the teachers, the miners and, most forcefully, by the railway workers, who ushered in a period of "effervescence at the national level" that began in the late 1950s and lasted until the late 1970s.⁸³ During the late 1950s, the *Movimiento*

Sindical Ferrocarril (MSF), was violently defeated within the Railway workers union, and it was over a decade before another would take up its issues in such a forceful way again. Although this is a subject deserving much fuller attention, here we can note that workers struggled within and against the production mode in the "molecular fashion" described by Gramsci.

In response to the obvious cracks that were appearing in the official confederation's ability impose authoritarian solutions onto the contradictions of the period, an institutional reorganisation took place within the official labour movement in the mid-1960s. Since its foundation in 1936, and after the end of Cárdenas' rule in 1940, the CTM held an important position as interlocutor with the state. In 1966, a central labour congress, *Congreso de Trabajo* (CT), was formed to preside over the organisation of officially sanctioned labour confederations. The CTM was a founding member. The *Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos* (CROC) joined the CT, as did the CROM, the CGT and the *Confederación Obrera Revolucionaria* (COR).⁸⁴ The CT also grouped together federations such as the *Federación de Sindicatos de Empresas de Bienes y Servicios* (FSTSE). Some national industrial unions such as the mine and metal workers (STMRRM), the petroleum workers union (STPRM), and the railroad workers (STFRM) were also directly affiliated.

IV. Conclusion

I have described this period of passive revolution as a mid-point in the condition of hegemony achieved partly by means of patriarchal social relations. Gendered social structures intersected with the power of the state and capital to lend legitimacy to the form of production that had occupied a central place in the regime's economic model. Unequal gendered social relations were at the heart of a social order in which only a small and privileged sector of the population benefitted from economic growth. In the passive revolution, patriarchy became a central part of intersubjectivity that legitimated inequalities of power within the most significant sites of social relations. These unequal relations were extended and linked to the state corporatist form of production privileged by the developmental state in alliance with international capital.

After the Revolution, while popular classes were prevented from taking a leading role in the historic bloc, the Constitutional Congress represented an attempt to gain legitimacy for the regime by constructing itself as the architect of a nationalist political project.⁸⁵ Legitimacy did not depend upon the cynical inclusion in the Constitution of a few key radical ideas that later would be ignored. Some of the most important Revolutionary Constitutional guarantees were ones that established the basis for a free market in labour and in land, thereby consolidating the framework for

capitalist production relations. This held legitimacy with the dominant social forces. Furthermore, what were seen as "progressive" labour articles were progressive according to the principles of enterprise corporatism, a paternalistic form of production emerging in the industrial heartland of the United States. This framework was premised upon the gendered assumptions of a patriarchal family. For the new state managers, the appeal of enterprise corporatism lay in its claim to high productivity levels together with workplace unity. The emerging form of state was shaped by the promise that hegemony could be constructed out of cooperative production relations. This promise had an indelible effect on Article 123 and the emergence of paternalist labour relations in Mexico. As well, it offered a liberal response to the social crisis facing the emerging Revolutionary state. Together, these elements approximated a minimal response to demands for egalitarian social relations and the redistribution of wealth. The paternalism espoused at the outset was both a concession to marginalised social forces and the means of their subduing. Hegemony, however, was not easily constructed.

The legitimacy of enterprise corporatism depended upon nationalism and paternalism which proved unstable and ephemeral. In the period immediately following the Revolution there was no coherent historical bloc prepared to translate legitimate Constitutional proclamations into an hegemonic

order. We could say, therefore, that a non-hegemonic situation obtained. Social and military conflict persisted until the mid-1930s developmental form of state was consolidated. Despite persistent crises, however, some social practices remained deeply rooted in Mexican society. In other words, although many dominant intersubjective meanings lose their legitimacy during non-hegemonic periods, other gendered practices and ideas central to relations of power may persist many years after the onset of prolonged crises. After the Revolution, Mexican politics continued to be highly influenced by the highly gendered political leadership of *caudillismo*.

The Revolutionary Nationalist state was consolidated under Lázaro Cárdenas. To the Revolutionary nationalist claims were added a significant level of institutionalisation from which material benefits for privileged workers at the heart of the new social compromise were derived. Once again we see a convergence of ideas around what was considered by dominant social forces to be the appropriate relationship of state to civil society in national development. The relationship was paternalistic, but it was also authoritarian and, as a direct result, the Mexican labour relations regime was organised in such a way as to limit effective working class representation. This is why radical labour movements have long demanded democratic representative institutions, as well as autonomy from the state and independence from the official trade union movement in their struggles⁸⁶.

As we have seen, the passive revolution depended on the exclusion of a great many social groups from the benefits of economic growth. In part, this exclusion had a spatial dimension to it. In Mexico, the consolidation of industrial production in the *Valle de México* proceeded along with the centralist patterns of corporatist development. Such a centralist ideology of participation became the national myth to which the state could refer while defending the uneven outcomes of economic development. For example, the national health care program for workers in the private sector only applied to a minority of workers and most of those were concentrated in the Federal District. Moreover, the state would argue that the Revolution was still in progress, that as descendants of the great heroes they were charged with the historic role of defending the Revolution, and over time, improving the situation for workers, peasants and employers, as set down in the Constitution.

Additionally, the passive revolution limited the emergence of social forces to those officially identified as legitimate collective identities. The popular discourse of the Revolution persisted, but inclusivity was limited to those social forces within the official realm. Indigenous peoples did not appear within the corporatist structures. Neither did women, the urban poor, or workers in the informal economy. By the 1960s, the levels of state violence used to suppress popular demands reached levels incongruous with a stable

society. With both the material and ideological underpinnings of state corporatism weakened, the historical inequalities that existed between social forces within Mexican political and economic structures could no longer be legitimated.

As *Pax Americana* was established, the developmental state established room for dominant groups to manoeuvre within the hegemony of world order. The historical bloc would not accept the overt domination of the United States and it made many efforts to redirect the power of US corporations towards its own interests. The shadow of the nationalisation of the oil industry was present even in the post-war period when Revolutionary Nationalism had succumbed to the economic demands of *desarrollo estabilizador* or stabilised development. While official discourse was both Revolutionary and nationalist, it arose in the context of economic dependency. The passive revolution depended upon foreign investment after all. Although state policies encouraged state corporatism, national capital was subordinated to the logic of international production. Workers paid the price for social stability by way of their official representatives. Without effective representation, the participation of the "universal" father-worker in the passive revolution became open to question.

ENDNOTES

1. Judith Adler Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), 22.
2. Richard Roman, "Ideology and Class in the Mexican Revolution, unpublished manuscript" (Sociology Department, University of Toronto, 1976), 143-44.
3. Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 22.
4. Daniel Moreno, El Congreso Constituyente de 1916-1917 (México, D.F.: UNAM, Coordinación de Humanidades, 1967), 21.
5. The *Casa Obrera Mundial* (COM) was formed in 1912. Barry Carr, El movimiento obrero y la política en México: 1910-1929 (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1981), 47.
6. Diario de los Debates vol.I, 1035-1047. as cited in Eberhardt Victor Niemeyer, Revolution at Queretaro: The Mexican Constitutional Convention of 1916-1917 (Austin, Tx: University of Texas Press, 1974), 113-114.
7. "Título VI, Del Trabajo y de la Previsión Social: Artículo 123," as reproduced in Daniel Moreno, El Congreso Constituyente de 1916-1917 (México, D.F.: UNAM, Coordinación de Humanidades, 1967), 47.
8. That the Mexican Constitution encompassed both of these provisions suggests an unusual combination when compared with the British and French cases in which two different social structures may be seen as having created divergent political demands around issues of social and biological reproduction. For a discussion of early twentieth century politics of the family wage in the British case and equal pay for work of equal value in the French case, see Jane Jenson, "Gender and Reproduction, or Babies and the State," in Feminism in Action: Studies in Political Economy, eds. M.Patricia Connelly and Pat Armstrong (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1992), 201-236.
9. Roman, "Ideology and Class," 143-144.
10. Hector Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer, In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution: Contemporary History 1910-1989 (Austin, Tx: University of Texas Press, 1993)., (Austin, Tx: University of Texas Press, 1993) 34-35.
11. Antonio Gramsci was among the observers. See Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism," in Selections from the Prison Notebooks, trans. eds. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 277-318. This is a much

overlooked era in the development of "Fordism" in the United States. I refer to it as "HFordism" in order to mark its distinctiveness from the post-war order in the United States and other industrialised capitalist countries.

12. Mark Rupert, Producing Hegemony: The Politics of Mass Production and American Global Power (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 62.

13. Rupert, Producing Hegemony, 60.

14. Ramón Beteta, James W. Wilkie y Edna Monzón Wilkie, México visto en el siglo XX: Entrevistas de historia oral (México, D.F.: Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Económicas, 1969), 31-32. as cited in Revolution in Mexico: Years of Upheaval 1910-1940, eds. James Wilkie and Albert Michaels (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 13-14.

15. Javier Freyre Rubio, Las Organizaciones sindicales, obreras y burocráticas contemporáneas en México (México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Azcapotzalco, 1983), 65.

16. Niemeyer, Revolution at Queretaro, 21-25.

17. The full text of Carranza's decree is published in Daniel Moreno, El Congreso Constituyente, 14-19.

18. Berthea Lerner and Susana Ralsky, El Poder de los Presidentes: Alcances y Perspectivas (1910-1973) (México D.F.: Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Políticos, 1976), 46.

19. Fabio Barbosa Cano, La C.R.O.M. de Luis N. Morones a Antonio J. Hernandez (Puebla: Editorial Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1980), 9-14.

20. Barbosa Cano, La C.R.O.M., 13.

21. Graciela Bensusán, "La Ley Federal del Trabajo: una visión retrospectiva," Documentos de Trabajo 24 (México, D.F.: Fundación Ebert, 1989), 10.

22. Freyre Rubio, Las organizaciones sindicales, 80. Ian Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico: the case of the automobile industry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 13.

23. Moisés Ochoa Campos, Calles: el estadista (México: Editorial Trillas, 1976), 43.

24. J.H. Retinger, Morones of Mexico (London, 1926), 107. as noted by Barry Carr, El Movimiento Obrero, 132.

25. Carr, El Movimiento Obrero, 110-115.
26. Carr, El Movimiento Obrero, 132-133.
27. The CGT was formed in February of 1921 and during its first congress in September of the same year, decided to leave the Red International. Freyre Rubio, Las Organizaciones sindicales, 84.
28. Lerner and Ralsky, El Poder de los Presidentes, 84-87.
29. Ian Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico: the case of the automobile industry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 16-17; Barry Carr, "Labour and the Political Left In Mexico", in Unions, Workers, and the State in Mexico, ed. Kevin Middlebrook (San Diego: Centre for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, 1991), 128 (121-152).
30. From October 26 to 31, 1933, the dissident groups organised a congress forming a new proletarian organisation named the *Confederación General de Obreros y Campesinos de México*. The CGOCM was formed by the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM)* "depurada" (purified); the *Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT)*; la *Confederación Nacional de Electricistas*; la *Confederación sindicalista de Obreros y Campesinos del Estado de Puebla*; la *Federación Sindical del Estado de Querétaro*; la *Federación Local de Trabajadores y la Federación Local de Trabajadores y la Federación Campesina del Distrito Federal*. Freyre Rubio, Las Organizaciones sindicales, 88.
31. For a detailed discussion of these events see Aguilar Camín and Meyer, In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution.
32. Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 39.
33. Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 33-49.
34. Alejandro Álvarez, La Crisis Global del Capitalismo en Mexico: 1968-1985 (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1987), 48. See also Arnaldo Córdova, "La política de masas y el futuro de la izquierda," en México Hoy, 13o ed., coords. Pablo González Casanova y Enrique Florescano (México D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1990), 385-404.
35. Freyre Rubio, Las organizaciones sindicales, 107-109.
36. Dan La Botz, Mask of Democracy: Labor Suppression in Mexico Today (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 66.
37. Córdova, "La política de masas," 389. emphasis in text. (trans. mine).

38. Córdova, "La política de masas," 390.
39. Córdova, "La política de masas," 397.
40. Freyre Rubio, Las organizaciones sindicales, 107-109.
41. Manuel Fuentes, La imposición laboral que nos viene del norte (México, D.F.: Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, 1994), 37-38.
42. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 47.
43. Nueva Ley Federal del Trabajo, Capítulo II "Objetivos y procedimientos de huelga," Artículo 450:I (México: Berbera Editores, 26a ed., 1993), 97.
44. Article 356 as cited by Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 42.
45. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 45.
46. These practices are in contravention of International Labour Organisation Convention 87 on "Union Liberties" signed by Mexico on 4 July 1950. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 40-41.
47. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 78.
48. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 110-11.
49. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 113-114.
50. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 111-12.
51. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 117.
52. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 116-117.
53. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 41. See also footnote #12 (Emphasis added).
54. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 39.
55. Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Ford Motor Company - CTM, "Capítulo Vigésimo: De las Cuotas Sindicales, Art. 110," Estatutos (México, 1989).
56. Ley Federal del Trabajo, Article 394 as cited in Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 75.

57. The *Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social* (IMSS) is a rare exception and even then, ratification is taken by indirect vote. Union delegates vote on the collective agreements. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 75-77.

58. Fuentes, La imposición laboral, 135-136.

59. Ford Motor Company - CTM, Contrato Colectivo del Trabajo, 1979. as cited in Armando Meza Ponce, Fábrica y poder, mecanismos de control empresarial: el caso de la ensambladora de automóviles Ford (México, D.F.: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1984), 36.

60. Meza, Fábrica y poder, 36. (trans. mine).

61. Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Ford Motor Company-CTM, Capítulo Décimo Quinto, Artículo 62:V, "De las disciplinas," Estatutos (México, 1989).

62. Aguilar Camín and Meyer, In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution, 106.

63. This is the first of three phases (or "productive nuclei") and their central characteristics as analysed by Arnulfo Arteaga in "Innovación Tecnológica y Clase Obrera en la Industria Automotriz", in Testimonios de la Crisis: reestructuración productiva y clase obrera Tomo I, coord. Esthela Gutiérrez Garza (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1985), 152-156.

64. Douglas Bennett and Kenneth Sharpe, "Agenda Setting and Bargaining Power: the Mexican State versus the Transnational Automobile Corporations," in The Political Economy of the Latin American Motor Vehicle Industry, eds. Rich Kronish and Kenneth Mericle (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984), 200.

65. Javier Aguilar García, La política sindical en México: industria del automóvil (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1982), 20.

66. Bennett and Sharpe, "Agenda Setting and Bargaining Power," 202.

67. Bennett and Sharpe, "Agenda Setting and Bargaining Power," 201.

68. J. Otón Quiroz, Proletariado e industria automotriz (una visión histórica) (mecanografiado, 1979), 12-13, as quoted in Meza Ponce, Fábrica y Poder, 28.

69. For a full discussion of the bargaining process between the state and transnational capital regarding the 1962 Auto Decree see Bennett and Sharpe, "Agenda Setting and Bargaining Power," 195-229.

70. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 22.

71. Douglas Bennett and Kenneth E. Sharpe, Transnational Corporations versus the State: the political economy of the Mexican auto industry (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 127.

72. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational Corporations versus the State, 148.

73. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational Corporations versus the State, 127.

74. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational Corporations versus the State, 117-127.

75. Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, La revolución mexicana y el movimiento obrero (Editorial Era: México, D.F., 1978), 147. as cited in Meza Ponce, 26.

76. The Unión de Obreros y Empleados de la Industria Automovilística y Similares del Distrito Federal affiliated with the Federación Sindical de Obreros del Distrito Federal (FSODF) at the regional level and thus with the national Confederación Regional de Obreros Mexicanos (CROM). Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico, 76.

77. Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico, 77.

78. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 45.

79. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 47.

80. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 47-48.

81. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 50.

82. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 57-58.

83. Alfredo Domínguez, Comisión Nacional de Relaciones y Solidaridad, Frente Auténtico del Trabajo, interview by author, April 14 1993, Mexico, D.F.

84. The Confederación de Obreros Revolucionarios was formed in 1966. Ángel Olivo Solís, "Entrevista con Ángel Olivo Solís," in Lucha Obrera en México: La visión de sus líderes y

conceptos fundamentales, eds. Tatania Coll et.al. (México, D.F.: editorial popular de los trabajadores, 1983), 25.

85. Richard Roman offers an excellent analysis of the Constitutional Debates and concludes that the Constitution was informed by nationalist corporate liberalism that contributed to the development of a hegemonic ideology. Roman, Ideology and Class in the Mexican Revolution.

86. Alfredo Domínguez, interview, April 14 1993.

Chapter Four
From Passive Revolution to Crisis:
The constraints on social unionism in Nissan Mexicana

Introduction

In this chapter we shall see the profound rupture that emerged in the social compromise as the Mexican passive revolution entered into crisis in the late 1960s. From our vantage point at the end of the century, it is apparent that the years from 1968 to 1982 marked the first stage of a long organic crisis of the state. This first stage of the crisis is significant for the shattering of commonly held assumptions as the Mexican state-party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), showed itself unable to meet its obligations to lead the ongoing construction of the Revolutionary Nationalist social compromise. The failure of state-led efforts to resuscitate state corporatism through paternalist means becomes evident in these years.

By the end of the 1960s, the highly favoured, masculine productive mode of state corporatism was contributing to worsening economic conditions in the national economy. Instead of challenging the class relations underlying this deterioration, the Mexican government opted to subordinate a new feminised productive mode to the demands of state corporatism, while reinforcing the role of the worker-father in social provision. The crisis of the state emerged, however, as significant sectors of Mexican society began to

demonstrate publicly that the "Party of the Revolution" no longer represented them. The failure of the dominant classes was manifested in the massacre of students in 1968.

This first moment of crisis may be characterised by the tension that resulted as previously dominant social forces made efforts to reestablish the corporatist social compromise in opposition to the conflicting demands of other groups for more far-reaching sorts of transformations. The dominant groups were at odds with each other, while subordinate groups could not formulate a coherent common response. Throughout the 1970s, the state was unable to reestablish the passive revolution that had characterised mid-century Mexico.

In this period, movements for trade union independence challenged the corporatist basis of trade union representation as well as the state's legitimacy as guarantor of Revolutionary ideals by attempting to disaffiliate from the PRI's official labour Confederation, the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM). It was in this context that workers in the Nissan union struggled to create a new independent union that would respond to both the "labour" and "political" issues they faced in the plant and in the region. The Nissan movement is important in the history of independent trade unionism in Mexico because it shows how the highly developed class consciousness of social unionism was actively undermined by the paternalistic practices associated with an economistic, but "independent", alternative union movement.

In the end, the paternalism at the level of the state gave way to increasingly authoritarian efforts to resolve the ongoing crisis.

I. Beginnings of Crisis: Restructuring, Representation and Resistance

The 1968 October student massacre by the infantry in Tlatelolco, Mexico City at once revealed and provoked a profound crisis in Mexican society. This was not the first time that the state had revealed its authoritarian face. During the late 1950s, the railway workers had been harshly defeated during the late 1950s and their leaders jailed for more than a decade. Tlatelolco, however, is seen as a watershed between two epochs marked by stability and crisis. This was the first time that state repression had been brought to the "most sacred places" within the system.¹ With this atrocity, those sectors of Mexican society that felt most entitled to the Revolutionary guarantees were confronted with the authoritarianism that had been intrinsic to the stability of Mexican corporatism, but never visited upon them in such a direct way. After thousands of unarmed students were corralled and over three hundred massacred by the army, the idea of the Revolutionary social compromise was forever altered. Soledad Loaeza explains the rupture as follows:

The Cárdenista experience was the lens through which these groups understood the dynamic of power, until the brutal shock of 1968 expelled it from the collective memory; then they began to write the history of

Cárdenismo. From the student movement, the middle classes began to understand politics in a new way.²

No one would forget the events of October 2. The passive revolution was over.

Economic Crisis: The Roots of Restructuring

The transition from passive revolution to crisis in Mexico was constructed within the economic as well as the political sphere. During the so-called "miracle", economic growth came at high costs to those subordinated within less favoured production modes such as the household and peasant production. Despite the guarantees of the Revolutionary Constitution, land reform had been minimal and welfare spending limited. Peasants did not benefit equally from the growth of the economy and a cheap food policy supported urban industrial development through the state institutions that controlled the distribution of agricultural products. As with other experiences of import-substitution industrialisation in Latin America, income distribution remained skewed and the market for consumer durables was only narrowly extended into the industrial working class.³ Educational spending was only 1.4 percent of GNP in the late 1950s.⁴ By 1970, out of a population of 50 million, 12.2 million or 24 percent were covered by social security.⁵

The anti-inflationary policy of *Desarrollo Estabilizador* (Stabilised Development) ensured that taxes would not be increased, so as not to discourage private investment. That

the peso had been pegged at the rate of 12.5 to the US dollar since April of 1954 was based on a longstanding agreement between the government and both national and international business leaders to ensure monetary stability and investor confidence.⁶ Convertibility was the disciplinary factor that prohibited the government from increasing domestic taxes. Internal credit was not sufficient to meet the government's expenses, however, and it sought international credit and foreign investment. Because of profit repatriation, this strategy increased the pressure on the current account. Between 1960-1970, 2,059 million US\$ in new foreign investments and reinvestment had been made in Mexico, while 2,991 million US\$ in earnings and other payments was taken out of the country.⁷ To finance the current account deficit, the government increased its external debt.

The government's "Mexicanised" industrial production strategy was unable to limit the chronic balance of payments problems that had become endemic by the late 1960s. Especially in the auto industry, rising import levels pushed forward a debate over appropriate state responses.⁸ During the 1970s, the state began to turn towards an export-orientation that would, it was argued, increase the economies of scale and offset the strain on the balance of payments.

President Echeverría was compelled to respond to Mexico's deteriorating economic situation, but the ensuing restructuring was conditioned by dynamics at the level of

world order as well as within the national context. This tension became apparent with the continued decline in United States competitiveness relative to Japanese and Western European industrial economies. US corporations attempted to meet competition by reconfiguring the internationalisation of production. As we see in the auto industry, US producers broadened the geographical basis for economic restructuring. No longer was the North American industry organised within the bounds of import-substitution industrialisation under the hegemony of Pax Americana. Instead, restructuring extended the rationalisation of production beyond national boundaries. Canada and the United States increased the integration of the auto industry through the mechanisms established by the "Auto Pact" of 1965. Over time, corporations took advantage of uneven development within the United States and moved some branches of production to the southern states, leaving behind what came to be considered a "rustbowl" in the former industrial heartland.⁹² Continental integration expanded as corporations took advantage of the provisions of new trade regulations between the United States and Mexico setting up low-wage, labour intensive production zones along the northern border. Consequently, Mexico became a significant part of the restructuring of the US economy.

Mexico was initiated into an increasingly internationalised production process according to what Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye called the "new international division of

labour".¹⁰ For these observers, economic restructuring did not mean so much an increase in world trade, as the relocation of certain parts of the production process to countries that had previously not been centres of industrial production. From the classical international division of labour in which former colonies exported raw materials to the industrialised north, by the mid-1970s a significant number of these same countries had become producers of industrial goods for export to the world market. This transformation, they argued, was brought about by the creation of a world market in labour, new transportation and communication technologies, and a fragmented production process.¹¹

Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye took quite a pessimistic view of this form of production as far as the interests of the newly industrializing countries (NICs) were concerned. They suggested that governments accepting "free production zones" would not be able to meet their goals of reducing unemployment, training a skilled workforce, gaining access to modern technology and increasing foreign exchange. They concluded that such industrialization oriented to the world market could not contribute to the development goals of the governments involved.¹²

An alternate view would suggest that the NIDL was not driven solely by the requirements of international capital. Stephen Hymer argued, for example, that the ideological basis for an export-orientation was already apparent in the

consciousness of dominant classes within import-substitution industrialisation. The post-war internationalisation of production did not favour national capital in the core countries only. The relocation of multinational firms behind tariff barriers drew national societies into the world economy, thus strengthening the tendency for dominant class actors to perceive their interests as lying within the international sphere.¹³ Hymer suggested convincingly that import-substitution industrialisation promoted an "international class consciousness on the part of capital."¹⁴

Political Crisis: The Demands of Representation

During the Echeverría years, the state moved between negotiation and repression. Equitable growth was not a priority.¹⁵ For the Mexican government to effect a modernisation of the economy, it would have to confront entrenched and powerful interests that had been established during the period of passive revolution. In part, this meant that the highly protected owners of national industries would have to be compelled to invest in their companies to increase productivity levels. As well, it meant that the official trade union bureaucracy would have to be modernised as well.¹⁶ As Alejandro Álvarez argues, the government's relations with unions in the 1970s must be seen in light of the legitimisation crisis of the state, the corporatist system of domination over the trade unions, and the union

bureaucracy.¹⁷ Echeverría did not try to end corporatism in the trade union movement, but his plans for modernisation depended upon his success in compelling the union bureaucrats to follow his lead. Otherwise, Álvarez argues, the antiquated trade union structures would not have been able to withstand the discontent that had arisen within the subordinated classes. As a result, the government's labour policy was two-faced, "if one side legitimised union dissidence, the other repressive side crushed, without compassion, all opposition to the union bureaucracy."¹⁸

The government did not face opposition from subordinate groups only. From the beginning of his mandate, business leaders and their organisations fought a sustained battle against Echeverría's policies. They began to withdraw their investments and, over a prolonged period, refused to invest in the Mexican economy. As a result, there were severe shortages in basic goods, due to years of marginalisation of the countryside, but also because businesses did not increase their production levels to meet the sustained increases in demand which had arisen partly as a result of state expenditures. Suspicions of hoarding abounded. Prices increased at outrageous levels and most labour organisations led sustained battles against the deterioration in real wages. Despite the government's economic development and social security policies, the legitimisation crisis persisted throughout the 1970s.

While subordinated groups continued to mobilise around the limits to the reform program, the increasingly internationalised dominant groups came to resent the inflation and increased debt-load.¹⁹ During the Echeverría administration, the external public debt grew from 4 billion US\$ to 20 billion US\$ and balance of payments problems worsened.²⁰ Landowners and large agro-industrialists were disaffected by the land reform²¹, while industrialists began to convert their currency to dollars, fearing a devaluation of the peso.²² By the end of Echeverría's term, the political crisis was profound.

International capital exerted its dominance within the economy by forcing a devaluation on August 31, 1976. A subsequent stabilisation agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) moved the economy further into the international sphere.²³ When Echeverría signed the stabilising agreement with the International Monetary Fund in 1976, state interventionist policies were abandoned in favour of a new phase of austerity. The previous social contract, which offered some concessions to labour, had come into question as a result of economic crisis. Where an expanding economy once offered labour increased wages and state services, the López Portillo years ushered in the first moves towards privatisation and cuts to government spending.²⁴

Years of militancy/ Years of tragedy: Movements of Popular Resistance

The repression of the student movement in 1968 caused wide sectors of society to question the actions of the Díaz Ordaz regime and the violent way in which it moved to contain dissent. 1968 stands as a critical moment in Mexican history. The massacre of unarmed students at Tlatelolco opened a period of intense social debate in which the entire passive revolution was reexamined. Because of Tlatelolco, the most important ideas pertaining to the legacy of the Revolution were undermined. The Revolutionary state had shown itself to be uninterested in arbitrating between conflicting social interests, not only with respect to its conflict with the student movement, but in relation to the struggles of other subordinated social groups as well.

In part, the students challenged aspects of the gendered structure of authority within the passive revolution. Hugo Hiriart suggests that the anti-authoritarian rebellion was not limited to middle class and urban students from Mexico City. He argues that the movement also comprised students who came to the capital from other states to study. These were students who worked while they studied. Others were from working class families in the capital who were the first in their families to go on to higher education. As a result, they had a certain degree of authority in the household. Presumably most of them were also men, a factor which would

contribute to their growing autonomy from the family in a specific way and differentiate their experience from women students. Hiriart reflects on the significance of this:

We can imagine, then, that it was this type of student, partially liberated from the familial authoritarianism who ventured to, and was able to, guide others in their frontal and uncompromising opposition to the paternal and authoritarian Mexican state.²⁵

The importance of the student movement and the events of 1968 lies in the fact that it was the catalyst for the expression of social discontent in subsequent years. The students opened up a political space in which it became possible for wide sectors of society to explicitly challenge the legitimacy of the regime. The effect in the universities was profound and immediate. Academic reflection on the structure of power in Mexican society flourished. The contradictions of "Stabilizing Development", dependent capitalist development, the ideological legacy of the Revolution and state corporatism were all questioned.

The use of force on the part of the state was catastrophic, but the entire meaning of the students' movement is not to be found in their brutal defeat in the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas*. Alejandro Álvarez suggests that the success of the students was threefold:

In spite of the obstacles, what remained were the necessary foundations for the political and social recomposition of the movement of masses: a profound confidence that they had destroyed the government's strategy of cooptation; the abandonment of the political and social isolationism that the left had been subjected to in the post-world war two era; and, finally, the

stereotypical image of the "Mexican economic miracle" was broken for once and for all.²⁶

What emerged with the students' movement, as it had developed throughout the decade of the 1960s, was a fundamentally new form of mass politics expressed through its independence, autonomy, and through its sense of collectivity. As student leader Raúl Álvarez Garín reflected years later:

The only way of doing politics before 1968 was the way the PRIistas did it. The alternative movements were sold out for the price of a suit, for money, for little cars and little houses. There was constant manipulation. 1968 offered a new way of doing politics... 1968 was the revindication of politics, because it was mass politics. It was lived out in a collective way. The stakes were defined, and what was established in unequivocal and heartrending terms, in response to the threats of Díaz Ordaz, was this: They will be able to repress us, to kill and jail us. They can do all the barbarous things they want, but the movement is not going to be bought. These things are very costly things to say, as everyone is aware.²⁷

With this rupture from past practices, the students opened a process through which other organisations of civil society were able express their own affirmations of autonomous action and their resistance to the power of state and capital which railed against such expression.²⁸ In this regard, the movement had a durable and national importance.

Mexican auto unions entered a new phase of militancy during the 1970s. In many respects, the tragic years (*la docena trágica*) of the 1970s were also militant years (*la docena militante*) for the labour movement as a whole. Unions in the automotive sector represented one of the manifestations of popular discontent within state corporatism, but not the

only one. In the labour movement, the Democratic Tendency of the electrical workers union (STERM) led a sustained battle against the official labour movement and the state. Raising similar issues, the university workers union (STUNAM) entered an period of organising in the early seventies, which culminated in an important strike in 1977 as the state turned increasingly towards authoritarian responses. Mine and metalworkers, telephone workers, and health workers were among those public sector unions that confronted the state over incomes policy, lack of union democracy and the decline in real wages.

A striking example of the level of the challenge may be seen in the railway workers' struggle. In February 1971, the elections which brought Mariano Villanueva Molina to power in the railway workers union were denounced by many observers including the radical *Movimiento Sindical Ferrocarril* (MSF).²⁹ The MSF was engaged in an effort to democratise the railroad workers union on a local by local basis but was meeting with opposition from its employer the state, and the *charro* leadership that had so severely beaten the previous movement for democracy in 1959. The movement was facing astonishing odds since it was evident that the government made every effort to preserve the railway workers union for the CTM leadership.

There were, however, other competing alternatives. The democratic movement in the Electrical Workers union was

nationalistic and revolutionary in its origins and pushed for the fulfilment of guarantees long promised by the State. The Movement of Railway workers (MSF), for their part, battled with the Communist Party over whether it was more important to gain control over the local unions by displacing the *charro* leadership, or to dedicate their efforts to broad based union organising under the Party leadership.

Undoubtedly the pluralistic character of the debate was part of the "effervescence" of the decade, but it did not provide a consolidation of ideas around which the movements for labour independence could unite in the building of counter-hegemonic historic bloc. This too was part of the fracturing that affected structures of representation in this first moment of crisis.

There were, however, certain issues around which oppositional labour movements could agree. Foremost among these was the general sense that the leadership of the official labour bodies was based upon deception. *Caudillismo* lost its legitimacy as oppositional movements were crushed by the official labour authorities by illegal and brutal means. The lack of democratic elections was so completely accepted as one of the unfortunate facts of labour politics that the President of the Republic apparently felt no hesitation in commenting upon it. In his address to the meeting on February 2 1971 in which Villanueva took office, Echeverría declared:

I know that the protests have been given up. It was a democratic triumph. Certainly, the elections in which

they triumphed were not perfect elections, as my own election was not perfect in many details, but we are making improvements and we are about half way along the way in the democratic process in our country; and we have to accelerate the pace as the fatherland moves along its uphill journey.³⁰

As one labour mobilisation followed another, it became apparent that a reorientation of state-society relations would be necessary to contain the political and the economic crisis.

Among the subordinated groups, issues of autonomy and democracy were raised together with demands opposing the policies of austerity imposed towards the end of the 1970s. Militancy was met with repression; in many cases, the large strikes were defeated. As real incomes fell and unemployment worsened over the decade, workers demanded effective representation from their union leadership. In moments when this was not forthcoming, internal conflicts within union locals emerged as conflicts in the labour boards or in regional organisations of labour centrals and thus challenged the institutional ordering of power between unions and the state. Insofar as movements for internal union democracy and autonomy from the state were generalised among many sectors of the labour movement, labour militancy took an unprecedented form in the 1970s. The wide variety of oppositional movements within trade unions opened up divisions within the historic bloc that had been consolidated inside of the governing *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI).

In general, the locus of dispute was the relationship between official labour bodies and the PRI, although the

character of independent trade unionism during this period was heterogeneous. Some independent union federations, or "white unions", were formed with the support of employers dissatisfied with their obligations to observe social rights under corporatism.³¹ In other unions, such as the Electrical workers or the Railway workers, democratic movements formed parallel organisations within the official union. Telephone and University workers mobilised to democratise the national union itself, and others in the civil service, such as health care workers, engaged in campaigns on a local by local basis. Where it became evident that the movement would not be able to withdraw the union from the official centrals, other democratic movements concentrated on gaining local level elections or creating new structures within the union to defend representational rights. Competing political ideas within the movements, as well as institutional divisions between different sectors of the economy resulting from Mexican labour law contributed to this heterogeneity.

The lasting significance of these mobilisations lies in the shifting of the political terrain by conflict among social forces within the context of economic crisis that Mexico faced by the end of the Echeverría presidency. In this sense, militant labour movements were protagonists within conditions of crisis. The severity of economic chaos and political turmoil indicated that the passive revolution would not be easily reconstituted, if at all. Indeed, as the decade came

to a close, coercive responses seemed much more likely to resolve immediate difficulties for the state than consensual ones.³²

II. State Responses to Crisis: The "Shared Development" Experiment

As the head of the Ministry of the Interior in 1968, Luís Echeverría played a key role in the repression of the student movement and, as President from 1970-76, was compelled to respond to the social and economic tensions threatening the stability of the regime.³³ Echeverría's reform program included nationalist economic development initiatives and a widening of the internal market by increased social spending. State strategies responded to the inability of state corporatism to overcome chronic balance of payments problems and external debt, but Echeverría's version of "shared development", based on state-led growth strategies and income redistribution, gave way to austerity and a vigorous export-orientation introduced by Echeverría's successor, López Portillo towards the end of the 1970s.

State-led Development in the Gendered International Division of Labour

In this section we will examine three significant state responses to the crisis as it was expressed in the state corporatist productive mode. These include, respectively, the

extension of the *Maquiladora* programme, the Automotive Decree of 1972 and the more general policy of "Mexicanisation" in industries within the state corporatist mode. Each of these contributed to the engendering of state responses to crisis.

The Mexican government bore some of the costs of the crisis in Pax Americana by continuing the policies set down by Echeverría's predecessor, Díaz Ordaz. This strategy brought about Mexico's entry into the new international gendered division of labour. In the mid-1960s, the Mexican Border Industrialisation Program (BIP) replaced the twenty year old Mexican Labor Program under which Mexican male farmworkers (*braceros*) had been encouraged to work in the US³⁴ When the agreement between the US and Mexico ended in 1964, 200,000 *braceros* were suddenly unemployed. The militancy of new peasant organisations and unemployment of up to 50 percent in the border towns heightened pressure on the state to respond to the worsening situation.³⁵

The Border Industrialisation Programme ushered in the *maquiladora* industries. "Maquiladoras" or "in-bond plants" were developed according to a twinning arrangement with factories on the US side of the border. The Mexican government argued that it meant to attract light assembly industries to the region. Consequently, Mexican laws restricting foreign ownership were lifted and domestic content levels were never imposed on these industries.

In the early years of the programme, each *maquila* depended upon a twin company located in the United States. Many of these companies had already worked together as transnational participants in the import-substituting industries. Capital goods as well as raw materials or semi-processed goods were imported to the *maquiladoras* without Mexican tariffs, as long as 80 percent of the finished goods were exported. Under US tariff codes 806.3 and 807, these finished goods were then imported to the United States. The US tariff applied only to the Mexican value-added, if US goods were used in production. Given the high level of imports and low wages, assembly work in the *maquilas* provided a relatively low value added. Consequently, low tariffs were paid upon entry to the US market. With this arrangement, employers were able to avoid the restrictions corporatist labour relations required.

The Border Industrialisation Programme never resolved the problem of male unemployment in northern Mexico, since employers sought out a female labour force. In the *maquila* region, employment for men continued to be scarce. Furthermore, employment was unstable, and workers were subject to plant closures.³⁶ Nevertheless, as María Patricia Fernández-Kelly convincingly argued, employment in the *maquila* industries did not challenge women's subordinate position in Mexican society.³⁷

There was more to the gendered character of this regional transformation, however. Although the *maquiladora* program appeared to respond to issues specific to the northern border region, it was closely related to problems in the industrial core at the centre of the country. In Mexico, the verb *maquilar* means 'to assemble', while the verb *maquinar* means 'to machine'; the first is a highly feminised production mode, the second highly masculinised. The similarity in the two verbs evokes the relationship which the two forms of industrial production have had over time. In a spatial sense, as well as in terms of the dominant economic model, the *maquilas* were marginalised. Nonetheless, they offered a partial resolution to one of the central problems associated with import-substitution under state corporatism. In particular, the auto sector yielded a chronic balance of payments deficit.³⁸ By promoting the *maquiladora* program, the Mexican government attempted to gain in technology transfer, employment, foreign exchange, and income generation in the border region.³⁹ If the export-oriented *maquiladora* industries replenished the national balance sheets with foreign exchange drained by the import-substituting industries, however, they would have served an important function. This was far from a marginal initiative. The first *maquilas* were meant to complement state corporatism.

Whether or not these new export-processing zones would meet the stated economic objectives, the *maquilas* also

responded to the crisis of legitimacy faced by the dominant groups in Mexico. The new border industrialisation programme showed them to be actively seeking out "forward looking" solutions to serious regional and national problems. In Mexico, the BIP met some of the ideological as well as material objectives that dominant groups sought as the limitations of import-substitution became widely apparent. Not only did dominant groups argue in favour of a solution to crisis that would not challenge the unequal social structure of the country, but this strategy depended upon the reproduction within the workplace of social practices subordinating women workers to the demands of the "common good".

Together with the *maquiladora* programme, the federal government attempted to overcome the contradictions of state corporatism by nationalising key industries and expanding levels of national private ownership of industry. This national strategy was expressed in the 1972 Auto Decree ("The Decree to Establish the Bases for the Development of the Auto Industry") which outlined the government's objectives to increase employment and alter the structure of supply in the auto industry to more accurately reflect the purchasing power of the population. The government sought to increase efficiencies and encourage the industry to develop its capacity as a net generator of foreign exchange. In this

Decree, support for majority national ownership in the parts industry was encouraged.

The new auto policy made it the responsibility of the manufacturers to overcome their own imports deficits by increasing exports and generating foreign exchange. Companies involved in final assembly were required to compensate for the value of their imports with a proportion of net foreign exchange generated by exports. It was expected that 30 percent of the value of imports would be compensated by revenue generated by exports in 1973. This percentage would increase to 60 percent in 1976 and 100 percent by 1979.⁴⁰ At the same time, the Decree required auto manufacturers to permit national auto parts producers a share in production. The Decrees obliged auto assemblers to meet no more than sixty percent of their export requirements from their own production. Forty percent of required foreign exchange was to be attained by the export of parts produced in the domestic auto parts industry. The rest could be produced by themselves, or in other parts plants not primarily Mexican-owned.⁴¹ Assemblers were required to incorporate a national content level (level of national integration) of at least 60 percent in the final product, based on direct production costs. Companies that complied would be granted increases in production quotas. Vehicle assemblers producing under the terms of the previous Decree were obliged to incorporate component systems and mechanical units as listed in the

implementing agreement. Terminal producers were not permitted to produce parts that the domestic parts industry could supply, unless the Secretary permitted it, or if their production was exclusively for export, or if the foreign exchange that was generated would be applied to their import compensation obligations (but no more than 60 percent).⁴²

The final assemblers were permitted to produce only the lines and models already authorised by the government. Companies producing the smallest cars (sub-compact/*popular*), were not permitted to produce any other car, nor could producers of compact, standard and sport cars, produce sub-compacts. The Decree limited the number of models produced by each company to seven. Any company making more than one basic gas engine, would be required to export at least 60 percent of the new engine. Prices were to be controlled by the Secretary of Industry and Commerce. In exchange for compliance, the Secretary of Finance and Public Credit would grant tax rebates of up to 100%.⁴³

Under the 1972 Decree, auto parts companies were required to be at least 60 percent Mexican owned. They too were required to comply with 60 percent content requirements in order to receive tax rebates of up to 100 percent. Parts had to be fabricated under a production program approved by the Secretary of Industry and Trade. Otherwise the parts producers would lose their licenses. An Inter-secretarial Commission on the Auto Industry was formed to act as a

resource for the Federal Executive and oversee the implementation of the Decree. Three representatives from each of the Secretary of Industry and Trade (*Secretaría de Industria y Comercio*) and the Secretary of Finance and Public Credit (*Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público*) comprised the Commission.⁴⁴

While the Decree was an important indicator of state strategy in this period, the active presence of the state in the auto sector did not achieve the results anticipated. Mexico had a relatively high growth rate in manufacturing between 1970-1978, during which period the average rate was 6.5 percent⁴⁵. Yet, in vehicle assembly, the performance quite uneven. From 1970-1974, the industry grew at an average rate of 19.1 percent, fell sharply each year between 1975-1977, and climbed dramatically between 1978-1981. Following the 1972 Decree, exports increased, yet the international recession of 1974-1975 and resulting market contraction complicated the strategy. Furthermore, the goals of the Echeverría government conflicted with the strategies of foreign companies since, they argued, the Mexican market was not large enough to compel them to support exports from Mexico in a recessionary period.⁴⁶

During Echeverría's presidency, the auto industry demonstrated a higher than average growth index than all manufacturers and stayed ahead of the oil industry until 1976.⁴⁷ Mexican automobile production increased 263.8

percent between the years 1970-1981, but changes in production levels were closely linked with expansions and contractions in international markets.⁴⁸

In 1970, Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Nissan, *Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos* (VAM) and Diesel Nacional produced both cars and trucks. Automobile producer *Fábrica Nacional de Automóviles* ceased production in 1971, the year Volkswagen began to manufacture trucks.⁴⁹ In 1970, Volkswagen was the largest producer of automobiles in the country, at 26.7 per cent. Chrysler followed at 18.8 per cent; Ford was third at 16.9 percent; General Motors at 10.4 per cent; DINA at 9.2 per cent; Nissan at 8.8 per cent; VAM at 8.9 per cent; and *Fábrica Nacional de Automóviles* at 0.3 per cent.⁵⁰ These standings remained relatively steady throughout the decade, although DINA left auto production and Renault took over last place from *Fábrica Nacional*.⁵¹ In this period, the national producers virtually left the scene. In 1977, *Renault de México* was made independent of *Diesel Nacional* (DINA) and began to produce its own automobiles. DINA continued only with truck production. *Trailers de Monterrey* produced trucks in the same category, but ceased production in 1977. International Harvester ceased truck production in 1980.⁵²

By the end of Echeverría's term and with the trade deficit in the auto sector increasing, the import-substitution versus export debate was renewed. In March 1976, the

Interministerial Commission for the Automobile Industry proposed a set of policy guidelines to bring the industry back to a focus on import-substitution. The Commission advocated an increase in local content to 80 percent, the merger of some auto companies as well as standardised parts production. Companies would be expected to balance their imports by 100 percent and if they would doubly compensate for their imports, the local content would be lowered to 70 percent.⁵³ This policy never appeared, in the chaos of the final months of Echeverría's government.

Together with the *maquiladora* programme and the regulation of the auto industry by Decree, state intervention was directed to the rescue of state corporatism in other highly masculinised industries. State-led development programs included grants for small businesses, aid to exporters, the development of primary industries and industrial decentralisation. The government provided regional development grants for communication and transportation and promoted infrastructural development.⁵⁴ Assuming that demand would be met by the unused productive capacity of the national economy, the administration argued that state-led economic growth would not be inflationary.⁵⁵

This strategy increased Mexican ownership in mines, mine-metal installations, steel, energy, petroleum and petrochemical industries. By the end of Echeverría's term, 99 percent of the 920 mining companies in the country had been

"mexicanised". As well, the state promoted the development of large industrial centres around these industrial sites. The Mexican transportation industry was promoted in the vicinity of Ciudad Sahagún, Morelos for example. In this zone three companies *Diesel Nacional*, *Siderúrgica Nacional* and *Constructora Nacional de Carros de Ferrocarril* worked with another 8 companies employing 17,000 workers to develop the industry. As well, Ciudad Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán was built up around the new Mexican iron and steel complex Lázaro Cárdenas-Las Truchas. To promote this industrial hub the government built railways, a port, highways and industrial parks. The new city was expected to become one of the largest industrial zones in the country.⁵⁶

The state-led development strategy also focused on the regulation of foreign investment. Despite negative reactions from the US government, the 1973 *Ley para Promover la Inversión Mexicana y Regular la Inversión Extranjera* ("Law to Promote Mexican Investment and Regulate Foreign Investment") was instituted in order "to consolidate independence and avoid foreign interference in national decision-making". It defined areas of exclusive jurisdiction for the state and national capital, instituted the principle of national ownership, restricted the sale of national companies to foreign investors and was overseen by the National Commission on Foreign Investment. According to Echeverría:

There is no reason to grant special privileges or excessive stimuli. We need foreign participation to

accelerate our growth process, but we are not disposed to accept it under conditions that place the heritage and the future of the nation at the mercy of interests that are not those of Mexico.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the legislation to regulate foreign investment could not address the severe crisis that the Mexican economy faced as a result of the deteriorating condition of the world economy.

Throughout Echeverría's term, Mexico came under continuing pressure as a result of the weaknesses of *Pax Americana*. In the early years of the government's mandate, the Echeverría's minister of finance tried to maintain financial stability by announcing that the government would not alter the traditional practice permitting free convertibility of the peso, nor change the convention that pegged the peso to the US dollar at a rate of 12.5.⁵⁸ On August 15 1971, however, the United States announced that it would no longer tie its currency to the gold standard and would raise tariffs by 10 percent on many imported goods. In response, the Mexican government instituted a tight monetary policy and restricted its own spending.⁵⁹ It soon became evident that this strategy was politically unsustainable since there were far too many unresolved social inequities for the government keep this monetarist option alive. By the second year of its mandate, the government reported increased economic growth as well as a renewed commitment to public investments and increased social expenditures.⁶⁰ Mexico's troubles continued in the wake of the worst economic crisis

faced by industrialised countries in the post-war period. The recession of 1974-75 had severe effects on marginalised countries, including Mexico. In 1974, for example, prices for imported goods increased on average of 40 percent, while export prices increased only 27 percent. Not only did the country face deteriorations in the terms of trade, but the markets for exported goods stagnated as well.⁶¹

In the 1970s, the Mexican state development plans were oriented towards the resuscitation of the state corporatist productive mode. This strategy depended upon the strengthening of the industrial infrastructure through targeted expenditures, along with the strengthening of the national capitalist class through targeted production plans and controls over foreign investment. Under Echeverría, the reinvigoration of the state corporatist mode depended upon ongoing foreign direct investment, complemented by the simultaneous subordination of the "mexicanised" industrial sectors, and the highly feminised form of export-oriented production created in the newly industrialising regions. Although the *maquiladora* industries appeared to be quite marginal to nationalist development undergoing critical care in the centre of the country, it acquired meaning in response to the contradictions of state corporatism, as well as in relation to the crisis at the level of world order.

Social Provision and the Renewed Role of the Worker-Father

Along with the state-led economic development strategy that built upon the gendered dimensions of the new international division of labour, Echeverría attempted to rebuild the social compromise by expanding the internal market, redistributing income and extending the social security system. These initiatives depended upon the gendered relations of the family and the social construction of the worker-father.

In Mexico, social policy is organised around the Constitutional principle of the male wage earner, but the social wage was not extended widely until Echeverría reformed the legislation. The idea of the social wage had always been present because of the Constitutional promises ascribed to "Social Provision". Echeverría's reforms re-asserted the industrial worker at the heart of his attempt to rebuild the social compromise in the 1970s. In Echeverría's words:

Constitutional Article 123 is the principal foundation of all of our social policy and synthesises the Mexican philosophy towards development. It contains not only the essential norms of labour protection, but also the juridical instruments to attain the well being of the working class, the equilibrium of the factors of production and the more egalitarian distribution of what is produced."⁶²

While Article 123 of the Constitution "Of Labour and Social Provision" pertained to the reproduction of the working class, the question of entitlement was still outstanding in the 1970s.

Echeverría was explicit in his assertion of the relationship between collective identities as expressed in the Constitution and the rights that were derived from it:

The social guarantees consigned to the Constitutional text, and in particular the dispositions of Article 123, are founded on the principle which considers man as a member of a social group and not as an abstract subject in juridical relations. The right to work, social security, and in a wider sense, all our systems of social well being are structured according to this conception.⁶³

But we must remember that the "social group" to which Article 123 referred was as much the family as it was class. Article 123 was the pillar of the social security regime in Mexico and beneficiaries were determined by their status as worker or the dependent of a worker. This, of course, was a principle that had serious implications for those who were not "workers" including the unemployed, most women, children, the elderly, peasants, indigenous people, agricultural workers and workers in the informal sector.

Since "social provision" is understood to rest in the realm of labour relations, the employment status of working class men has an impact upon the extended family. Essential social services are not extended on the basis of universal citizenship rights; access depends on whether the bread winner is employed in the public or private sector. The *Ley Federal Del Trabajo*⁶⁴ is the only labour law for all Mexico but because Constitutional Article 123 considered "labour" and "social provision" together, the LFT came to be associated with other laws including the national *Ley del Seguridad*

Social (Social Security Law); the *Ley del Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores* (Infonavit) the national worker housing fund; the *Reglamento General de Seguridad e Higiene en el Trabajo* on health and safety; the *Reglamento de la Procuraduría de la Defensa del Trabajo*.

This construction of the worker-father increased the dependence of family members not considered "workers", while exerting a disciplinary effect on those who were employed. Once a worker becomes unemployed, social benefits are lost and since there is no unemployment insurance, the loss of a job can mean economic destitution for an entire family. Health care and housing rights are social rights based on the wage relationship. The lack of unemployment insurance in Mexico and the relatively good benefits derived from the social programs for a worker and family within the state corporatist mode therefore offer a powerful incentive for workers to remain employed.

In the private sector, workers and their dependents fall under the jurisdiction of the *Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social* (IMSS). In the public sector, workers and their dependents are covered by the *Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado* (ISSTE). Everyone else received little or no assistance before 1970 and was attached to a residual category only after the reforms to Social Security Law in 1973. What little coverage they did receive was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public

Health which was responsible for serving over half the population with a budget less than one-third of IMSS.⁶⁵ By 1970, only 10 million people were covered under social security; 40 per cent of these were residents of Mexico City, a region in which only 17 percent of the total population lived.⁶⁶ The percentage of the population covered by social security doubled during Echeverría's term as president. Yet, out of a population of 63 million, the social security program covered only 25 million people, or 39.7 percent of the population in 1976.⁶⁷

Under Echeverría, the 1943 *Ley del Seguro Social* was reformed to increase benefits to workers and their dependents and extend limited coverage to unprotected but economically active people, including homeworkers. Although agricultural workers had been officially incorporated since 1954, very few had been covered in actual fact. Echeverría's reforms allowed for Decrees that would, on a piecemeal basis, permit agricultural workers and peasants to be incorporated into the IMSS under the Social Solidarity program. Members of *ejidos*, agricultural communes, urban colonies and small property owners would also be incorporated but according to their specific relation to production.⁶⁸ The reforms permitted beneficiaries to receive social security during strikes. Daycare centres were set up for "worker-mothers" and child benefits were reorganised under the *Instituto Mexicano para la Infancia y la Familia* (Mexican Institute for Children and the

Family) which increased its presence in rural areas. Where non wage-workers were concerned, Social Security benefits were issued on a targeted basis. Echeverría issued a 1972 decree, for example, which declared that the *ejiditarios* of the Yucatán would be covered by social security financed on contributions from the federal government, regional credit unions and solidarity (community) groups.⁶⁹

Echeverría revealed part of the gendered view of society underlying these initiatives:

These results are the fruit of a new theory and a new practice of social solidarity, through which important transformative forces have been liberated; above all, feminine ones that up until a few years ago, had been frustrated in prejudice and in frivolous pastimes.⁷⁰

The integration of rural communities into the "new practice of social solidarity" depended heavily on the volunteer labour of women, as well as the ideas of feminine virtue. The Sixth State of the Union address proclaimed during Echeverría's term indicated that one million peasant women and thousands of urban women had volunteered to participate in the National Coordinating Plan in 30,000 centres across the country. Under the Social Solidarity plan, 15,000 midwives were trained, 217 million vaccinations were delivered and 612,507,000 rations were distributed to nursing or pregnant mothers, as well as children.

While women were brought into the rural programs to facilitate the extension of social services in the most peripheral regions and among the most marginalised populations

in the country, in the Valle de México, relatively privileged working class men were still incorporated into the social security net through their union affiliations, although their benefits increased along with Echeverría's commitment to "Shared Development". Auto workers and their families received retirement and disability pensions, full medical care in IMSS clinics and hospitals, as well as recreational benefits at IMSS holiday centres. In the case of work related accidents, the state guaranteed life insurance of two months wages. Worker-mothers were entitled to six weeks paid leave before and after the birth.

In the Mexican Constitution, employers are held responsible for providing housing for workers and their families. This right was never universally available. In the changes to labour law set out in 1970 under Díaz Ordaz, this constitutional guarantee was amended to establish the *Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda* (National Housing Fund) that granted workers cheap credit to buy houses. Echeverría further institutionalised these constitutional amendments in the creation of the *Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores* (INFONAVIT). The Institute offered workers very low rates of annual interest and repayment schedules over 20 years. Employers were obliged to designate 5 percent of nominal wages to the fund and the government would contribute enough to provide 100,000 new houses per year. The program was intended to increase employment in the construction

industry and promote economic growth.⁷¹ Through the state-sponsored housing program, trade unions were responsible for having units built and allocated. As the number of housing units was insufficient for the requirements of the workers, allocation was often politicised, with loyal trade unionists having the best chance at receiving the housing benefits. The government's increased efforts in this area did not meet the existing need, even among its targeted population of established unionised workers, and the program could not even begin to meet the demand for housing among the growing underclass of workers in the informal economy that began to migrate in droves to urban areas during the 1970s.

The official labour movement played an important political role as labour's representative within the government. Workers' reactions to the deterioration in wages during the 1970s prompted the Labour Congress (CT) to campaign for the creation in 1974 of the *Comité Nacional Mixto de Protección al Salario*. This joint Commission, composed of union and government officials, developed the basis for a 1976 federal law protecting consumers against shortages, unsanctioned price increases and hoarding. One of the most important initiatives which distributed national agricultural products was extended to 11 thousand stores across the country.⁷² As well, the *Fondo Nacional de Fomento y Garantía al Consumo de los Trabajadores* (FONACOT) was created to

support savings and that workers could use to buy consumer durable goods.⁷³

The state was compelled to intervene in the sphere of direct wages as well. Emergency increases of the minimum wage and for public sector workers were decreed during the periods of highest inflation.⁷⁴ The day after the Congress of Labour (CT) called for a general strike for the first of October 1973, the President declared that workers and employers organisations would negotiate emergency wage increases.⁷⁵ Other unions bargained for higher increases in contract negotiations. Emergency wage increases were again decreed for September 1974 according to the official rate of inflation. After a period of negotiations among labour and employer organisations, a general increase of 22 percent was agreed upon, effective in 50,000 collective agreements.⁷⁶

Echeverría responded to the demands for protection of wages and the purchasing power of workers with a minimal labour law reform. In order to attend to the effects of inflation, the 1974 reforms to the Labour Law provided for an annual wage revision, instead of the traditional two year cycle. In the same reform, the profit-sharing provisions of the Labour Law (which had been rarely applied) were changed to entitle workers to 8 percent of pre-tax company profits payable each December.⁷⁷ With this reform, there were now two lump sum payments due workers near the end of every year. The first payment was the profit-share (*utilidades*), while the

second was the Christmas bonus (*aguinaldo*) which was equivalent to 15 days of wages. The bonus was to be paid by December 20 each year and increased in contract negotiations. Despite Echeverría's reform, it was uncommon for workers to receive the profit-sharing payment.⁷⁸

Early on in his mandate, Echeverría managed to reclaim legitimacy in the eyes of some important academics. Author Carlos Fuentes, for example, called for popular support for Echeverría, arguing that it was a choice between Echeverría or fascism. In June of 1972, however, state violence was once again visited upon the student movement in a brutal confrontation during a demonstration in Mexico City.⁷⁹ As the movement of university workers grew, the universities continued to be centres of political debate and organising among student and labour movements both together and in their separate activities. Echeverría attempted to win the support of intellectuals and the students by increased funding and by inviting open debate with his critics in the universities. Over his six year term, Echeverría increased educational spending sharply.⁸⁰ For the students, academics and university workers, however, the "university question" was not simply about chronic underfunding. They demanded that the public educational institutions become democratic institutions. The students continued to fight for free and accessible universities, representative governing structures, democratic union-management relations, and academic freedom.

By the end of Echeverría's mandate, with national capitalists and conservative forces in open conflict with the Presidency, the elements of the official labour movement calling for a return to economic nationalism, and with the prospect of a resurgence of armed battles in the countryside, it did appear that "social solidarity" lived only at the level of official discourse. Echeverría's bid to return the state to legitimacy seemed to have failed miserably and the move towards further integration with the international economy was the strategy advocated by the next government as the way out of the crisis.

From Shared Development to Austerity and Export-led Growth

As it became apparent that state policies favouring state corporatism were failing, the government of José López Portillo (1976-1982) turned away from the paternalism of "shared development". The new government ushered in a national austerity program as a response to the demands of the dominant classes in Mexico and in accordance with the three year IMF stabilisation program. Price controls were eliminated on many goods and social services were cut. Concerned with the reestablishment of business confidence, López Portillo secured investments from the private sector and wage controls from the unions. The discourse of modernisation continued to be set in terms of the Revolution but state policies marked a departure from previous practices.⁸¹

Intending to reestablish confidence and administer the crisis with authority, López Portillo followed the devaluations of 1976 with wage cuts and wage freezes in 1977-78.⁸² The paternalistic aspect of presidential *caudillismo* receded as the authoritarian response to crisis gained ascendancy under López Portillo. Such was the price of stabilization.

With the transition to the new administration, economic policy became increasingly outward-oriented. The 1977 Auto Industry Decree attempted to increase the industry's performance with respect to balance of payments equilibrium by rationalising the use of foreign exchange and favouring expanded exports. The Presidential Decree noted the deleterious effects that currency rates were having on the level of national integration in the industry. An overvalued peso made it more expensive for producers to use nationally produced parts. At the same time, the Decree retained the objectives relating to other areas of national priority that would focus on the industry's national development. These included its concern to generate employment, take advantage of the internal market, develop a parts industry through import-substitution and the national integration of the industry, support national companies, rationalise production and increase productivity levels.⁸³

The new Decree stipulated that the *Secretaría de Patrimonio y Fomento Industrial* (Secretary of Heritage and Industrial Development) would assign an annual foreign

exchange budget for auto producers based on an initial authorised quota and net exports.⁸⁴ This quota would be calculated according to each company's previous balances of foreign exchange, the proportion of Mexican capital in the company and the national content levels of the vehicles. The quota was a highly formalised means of regulating the use of foreign exchange. Final assemblers were required to generate at least 50 percent of net foreign exchange for their budgets, with the export of components manufactured by companies in the auto parts industry with programs approved by the Secretary. The remaining 50 percent could be obtained by export of vehicles and in-plant auto part manufacturing, or from parts producers without approved programs. Component parts manufactured by maquiladora companies (under paragraph three, article 321 of Customs Code of the United States of Mexico), could only account for up to 20 percent of net foreign exchange required.

Minimum national integration levels were set at 50 percent for automobiles, 65 percent for trucks, 70 percent for tractor-trailers and buses and 65 percent for agricultural tractors. It was recommended that companies increase these levels by 5 percent in 1978 and each year following to 1981. As before, the Inter-Secretarial Commission on the Auto Industry published a list of obligatory national components. The assemblers were prohibited from manufacturing components produced by national parts producers, but the Secretary

provided more leeway for applications when, in its judgement, it would be beneficial for the economy. As a result of the new Decree, companies were required to export, not only according to the importation of parts for assembled vehicles, but in compensation for the imported components from parts suppliers as well. Half of the exports would have to come from the parts suppliers. In addition, they had to balance foreign remittances, such as shipping and insurance costs through exports.⁸⁵

The 1977 Decree was proclaimed in a year of severe economic crisis, but vehicle production increased dramatically in the following four years.⁸⁶ From 1977-1981, vehicle production increased 97 percent and automobile production increased at an average rate of 19 percent per year. Exports, however, did not increase proportionally and in fact, the auto trade deficit with the United States tripled between 1977 and 1979.⁸⁷ An initial wave of major investments in new export-oriented plants and equipment were made in the years 1978-1979 for production dates set in 1982-1983. Employment increased by 72 percent to 37,830 workers and employees in the terminal industry. National integration increased significantly in the two categories which includes the smallest cars and the largest trucks while increasing only marginally in all other categories.⁸⁸

As oil prices rose dramatically on the world market, the Mexican state turned toward the exploitation of new found oil

reserves during the oil boom during the years 1978-1981. During this time, oil exports remitted as much as 75 percent of all foreign earnings⁸⁹ and the GDP increased at an average rate of 8.4 percent in real terms.⁹⁰ This was an extraordinary rate of growth but the development of resources did not overcome the problems in the Mexican political economy. In fact, the way in which the state and dominant classes organised the development of the oil reserves brought the country to utter chaos.

New public spending was required to develop the reserves. The state, anticipating the continuation of high oil prices and low interest rates, invested heavily. As a percentage of total public long-term debt, the state-owned petroleum monopoly PEMEX's share rose from 12 percent in 1975 to 21 percent in 1979 and to 37.8 percent in 1981.⁹¹ PEMEX received 25 percent of the public budget in 1976. This percentage was increased to 45 percent in 1980. López Portillo borrowed to the point of increasing the public debt by 102 percent between 1980-82.⁹²

Furthermore, this export-led development strategy also required the increase in imports of capital goods for petroleum development. Although the 1979 *Plan de Desarrollo* (development plan) suggested that domestic industry would develop capital goods, neither backward or forwards linkages resulted. López Portillo refused to limit imports, according to the IMF stabilisation plan.⁹³ The balance of payments

problems worsened as a result of the import of capital goods, but also because of the import of consumer goods during the economic expansion. Imports grew from 5.9 billion US\$ in 1977 to 23.1 billion US\$ in 1981.⁹⁴ Manufacturing exports became too expensive for external markets due to inflation and the overvalued peso. Oil exports were increased, in order to deal with the trade deficit, but this contributed to the cycle of increasing imports and borrowing. Consequently inflation and export problems worsened.⁹⁵

The crisis approached as oil prices fell 11 percent in 1981 and US monetary policy increased international interest rates. Capital flight increased to 15 billion US\$ in 1981 and the peso was devalued by 20 percent in 1981 and by a further 78 percent in February 1982. Much of the government's borrowed foreign exchange went to supporting the currency, but, in the most cynical of practices, massive amounts of private capital were converted to dollars and then reconverted to pesos after devaluation.⁹⁶ As a result of the *Plan de Desarrollo*, the state offered domestic industrialists low energy prices in the hopes that they would increase investment, but investors preferred speculation and capital flight to long-term investments, despite the extent to which the state had gone in meeting their demands.

On August 1, 1982, Mexico announced that it could no longer meet payments on its international government debt. Its bankruptcy threatened the international financial system

and caused chaos within Mexico. A month later, on the eve of leaving the presidency, López Portillo announced that the banks would be nationalised. The bank nationalisation, while it was important for a number of reasons, indicated that the Mexican state still retained a measure of autonomy vis a vis the dominant bloc. The dominant classes intended to ensure this autonomy would be closely circumscribed.⁹⁷ The antagonistic relations between the state and dominant classes in their response to the international market had changed the face of corporatism.

In the first moment of crisis, state responses to crisis depended upon the social relations of the family. Not only did the Mexican state facilitate the emergence of a new feminised productive mode, but it did so as part of a general strategy to animate state corporatism. Concurrently, with the intention of stimulating national demand, the family became the locus of social welfare provision and part of the focus of efforts to resolve the legitimisation crisis. As we have seen, there was a gendered aspect to this period in the crisis which structured unequal relations of power within Mexico. Male workers, both fathers and sons, were both beneficiaries of, and subjected to, the limitations of the *caudillismo* of the worker-father as expressed in the relatively privileged state corporatist productive mode.

As it became apparent that paternalism would not resolve the crisis of the state, austerity and export-oriented

strategies took on increased importance. With the outward turn, Mexican workers faced the disciplinary dynamic of the international market along with increased repression of oppositional labour movements as they struggled to change the terms of representation. As we shall see in the case of Nissan workers' movement, given the serious implications of unemployment, the costs of dissent were evident to any Mexican trade unionist engaged in an oppositional movement. The failure of paternalism and the turn towards authoritarianism was the characteristic of this period. If there was one common understanding that emerged as a result, it was that the reconstruction of the passive revolution was not in the offing.

III. Independent Trade Unionism at Nissan Mexicana: Social Unionism vs Paternalistic Economism

During the 1970s, the union at Nissan involved itself in a series of conflicts covering a broad range of issues. It raised contract issues and questions of shop floor representation. It broke with the official trade union confederation and challenged the practices of the local labour board. It developed links with the urban popular movement in Cuernavaca and with other unions in the state of Morelos. It negotiated with two independent labour federations and was embroiled in a long internal conflict over competing political alliances. Despite all of this activity, the most vital

features of this struggle for independent trade unionism had disappeared by the end of the decade. In this case study, I will examine the struggle for social unionism at Nissan and the *caudillismo* of trade union leadership that led to its defeat. Although it benefitted from the "democratic opening" of the Mexican state in the early 1970s and was defeated with the turn towards repression towards the end of the decade, the movement at Nissan was not a simple reaction to governmental strategy. It was, as we shall see, a highly organised and self-conscious movement.

In the auto industry, movements for trade union autonomy, democracy and independence were an important part of the "national effervescence" of this period.⁹⁸ They were also implicated in state strategies in the labour movement. Faced with a severe legitimisation crisis within its official labour organisations, the Mexican government was compelled to emphasise the significance of its "democratic opening". Facing the wrath of employers engulfed in the pressures of competitiveness, it had to find a way to bring labour organisations into the modernisation project.⁹⁹ In the case of the independence movement at Nissan, there were two "independent" unions vying to represent the workers in the plant. Insofar as the more economistic option closely reflected the priorities of the Echeverría government, it had the advantage. At the same time, a more solidaristic

influence on the independence movement at Nissan was active but was eventually defeated.

The first tendency was represented by the most successful independent federation in the auto sector. This was the *Unidad Obrera Independiente* (UOI) led by a lawyer, Juan Ortega Arenas. The UOI succeeded in organising movements for disaffiliation from the CTM in the Volkswagen plant in Puebla during 1972.¹⁰⁰ The Nissan union, along with those of DINA, Renault and a number of large national auto parts companies also affiliated with the new federation. By 1976, the UOI had more auto workers affiliated to it, than did the CTM.¹⁰¹ As I will show in the discussion that follows, the form of labour representation advocated by the UOI was economistic, sectarian, paternalistic and one that resonated closely with the interests of the state and employers as they endeavoured to restructure the industry.

The alternate tendency within the Nissan movement was represented by the *Frente Auténtico del Trabajo* (FAT), an independent labour federation which played a crucial role in the struggle for "democratic, autonomous and independent" trade unionism in the auto sector. The FAT was oriented towards a more communitarian form of trade unionism we might refer to as "social unionism".¹⁰² The FAT sought to strengthen organisational links between workers in the region. In this effort, they supported a union school, cross-sectoral solidarity movements and solidarity between men and women

workers. Their efforts in support of community based organising among the urban poor and with Christian Base Communities (CBCs) were diametrically opposed to the isolationism of the UOI.¹⁰³ In this contest, however, productivism and paternalism won out over broadly based social unionism.

To explain this outcome, we shall analyse two crucial moments in the history of this struggle. In the first moment we see the rise of social unionism which took place through a process of reflection and mobilisation on a regional basis. It was this process which led to the disaffiliation of the Nissan union from the CTM. The second moment emerged as social unionism was challenged and then overtaken by a rival and narrowly constituted independent trade union movement. This reversal, however, had wide ramifications indeed. Not only did the paternalistic economism of the challenger undermine the social unionism of the region, but it contributed to the general weakening of the independent trade union movements at the national level as well.

This early history of trade unionism at Nissan illustrates some of the differences within independent trade unionism in the auto sector. During the 1970s, the central debate was whether there ought to be a separation of the "political terrain" from the "labour terrain". Workers associated with the *Unidad Obrera Independiente* (UOI) adhered to "workplace" issues. On the other side of the debate were

those union activists linked to the *Frente Auténtico del Trabajo* (FAT). This organisation promoted a type of independent labour activism that fostered broader relations with other unions in the state of Morelos and the city of Cuernavaca. Each was an independent federation not affiliated with the *Congreso del Trabajo* (CT), yet they had fundamentally different perspectives on the role of independent unions. Both federations built up competing bases of support within the union although the UOI emerged victorious in October 1972 when the General Assembly at Nissan voted to leave the CTM.¹⁰⁴ This debate represents the struggle between social forces over the parameters of new state forms outside of the bounds of corporatism.

Breaking from the CTM: the Role of Social Unionism ¹⁰⁵

Nissan founded its Mexican subsidiary in 1961 and began production of cars and small trucks in Cuernavaca, Morelos in 1965. The Nissan workers' union, the *Sindicato General de Trabajadores de Nissan Mexicana del Estado de Morelos*, was formed early in 1966 and affiliated with the *Federación de Trabajadores de Morelos* (FTM-CTM), the official labour federation of the state of Morelos. A scarce three years later, oppositional currents began to voice their discontent with the CTM leadership, contesting the executive committee elections in February of 1969 and April 1970. Official authorities moved the conflict to the Local Arbitration and

Conciliation Board where the newly elected leadership, including Raymundo Jaimes, an oppositional activist associated with the FAT, was not permitted to take office after the Board's ruling.¹⁰⁶ Discontent continued to build.

There is no one reason why the Nissan union was able to disaffiliate from the official labour body. Many tensions arose as a result of labour relations in the plant. In 1971 an oppositional slate was organised to contest the local elections that had been controlled by the CTM. Nissan management made it clear that it preferred the official labour body to the opposition. To give an indication of the temper of the times, it is instructive to refer to a letter sent by Nissan to the CTM local union leadership a short time before the 1971 elections were held in the plant. The letter ran:

We are sending you the invitation issued by the government of the State of Morelos. The invitation is for workers to attend a Protest Meeting due to the fact that foreign elements are disturbing the national tranquillity. The meeting will take place... in the same place where last year's First of May procession was held.¹⁰⁷

By writing in support of an invitation to a rally from the PRI government to a CTM union, Nissan management indicated that the company was not at all neutral as regards labour representation in the plant or in the region. This intervention was, perhaps, counterproductive as far as the interests of management were concerned. The oppositional slate with Raymundo Jaimes as General Secretary, was elected with high levels of rank and file support in November 1971.

Jaimes remained part of the Executive Committee until 1973.¹⁰⁸ It was during this period that the Nissan union disaffiliated from the CTM.

Some of the issues the union faced were very concretely related to working conditions.¹⁰⁹ Bad food in the cafeteria often made workers sick. The women who worked in the cafeteria suffered deplorable working conditions. As a result, the new union executive was able to respond to workers' discontent with management as well as their own union central by organising around the cafeteria issue.¹¹⁰ Eventually, the union accepted the cafeteria workers as members, thus broadening their base of support, and raising another contentious issue with the CTM. This action was opposed by the company and the food workers section of the CTM. This led to the subsequent firing of the cafeteria workers in 1973. The workers in the plant stopped work for one day, demanding the reinstatement of the cafeteria workers.¹¹¹ They were unsuccessful. It appeared that the union was not permitted to cross the gender or the sectoral divide that worked to undermine solidarity between men and women workers.

Other reasons for disaffiliation grew out of the regional landscape. One of the most significant was the relatively weak and inexperienced CTM bureaucracy in the predominantly rural state of Morelos. This may have presented opportunities for the newly independent union which were not available to

independence movements in regions with a longer industrial and union history.¹¹² Only with the creation of the *Ciudad Industrial del Valle de Cuernavaca* (CIVAC) in 1963 did regional industrial production surpass that of sugar cane.¹¹³ The conflict over affiliation was brought to a head by the decision of the FTM-CTM requiring all workers to help finance a new sports complex by contributing one day's pay.¹¹⁴ Not long afterwards, Jaimes and the executive committee were locked out. Again the conflict went to the highly politicised *Junta Local de Conciliación y Arbitraje*.¹¹⁵ The union argued the company was not abiding by the collective agreement since it had fired seven permanent workers. The conflict was eventually resolved at the local board level, but not before Fidel Velázquez, leader of the CTM, raised the ire of the executive by claiming responsibility for the successful conclusion of the conflict.¹¹⁶ The Nissan union was supported with demonstrations of solidarity by other unions in the state of Morelos in its call for the dismissal of the president of the local labour board.

What was perhaps the most important reason this independence movement took on the character of social unionism was due to the active presence in the Valley of Cuernavaca of the *Frente Auténtico del Trabajo* (FAT). The FAT saw its role as a promoter of a broadly based "independent, autonomous and democratic" labour movement. In the view of the FAT, any such

movement would present a fundamental challenge to the political and economic structures from which power was derived in Mexico. As the FAT's General Secretary, Alfredo Domínguez expressed it at that time:

The FAT's position is a position which questions all of society and the capitalist system. We do not conceive of the union movement only within its everyday claims that it must undertake. The union movement has to re-evaluate its whole structure and functioning and has to move towards constructing the organised power of the workers, considering every area: trade unionism, urban issues, cooperatives, consumer issues, women workers, young workers, rural areas. ... (S)ometimes the FAT appears to be more of a political organisation than a union. Some do not understand; it is a whole mental process that we have to go on developing in the workers' movement, to be able to understand that the union movement, constituted from workers and the people, has a much larger scope which implies structural change. Any other way makes no sense for a renewed union movement.¹¹⁷

From its birth in 1960, the FAT became active in the independent labour movement. It did not affiliate with the *Congreso del Trabajo*. Instead, the FAT promoted local organising and leadership training to develop its institutional base. One of the most significant initiatives of the FAT in this regard emerged from the *Centro de Formación Sindical en el Estado de Morelos* (CEFOSEM), a small union school which brought together union educators, as well as leaders from the Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEBs). This labour centre had been organised to train union activists who were promoting independence and raising questions of democracy in their unions. The school worked clandestinely at first with small groups of leaders of democratic movements attempting to contest elections in the factories. It became

one of the first efforts to coordinate activities between democratic sections of CTM unions and the independent unions.¹¹⁸

Of importance too, was the role played by the Archbishop of Cuernavaca, Sergio Mendez Arceo. As an outspoken and radical theologian who supported the workers' movements, the bishop lent legitimacy to social unionism within the Nissan union and in the region more generally. Gerardo Thijssen recounts the story of the conversion of Archbishop Sergio Mendez Arceo to the workers' cause as follows:

In 1952 he became bishop. He arrived here as a very aristocratic bishop, a friend of the rich but he was converted to the poor. One time he met with a group of workers who came to see him. In these days, Don Sergio used to go to eat with the director of the *Fábrica Textiles Morelos*, one of the largest factories here. Each week he would go to eat there with the boss. So the workers, through the school of CEFOSSEM declared a strike and went to talk with the bishop. The bishop said, 'Yes, go ahead. Struggle to get a better salary. But also, do your duties as workers because I know you are lazy and irresponsible. You break the machines'. 'Of course', said a worker, 'That's because each week you speak with the boss, but when do you speak with us? Each week you go to eat at the house of the boss, but you never come to eat with us'. So he said, 'Okay, invite me'. Then he began to go and eat with the poor people and did not go back to eat with the boss. This was in 1973 or 74. He began to solidarise himself with the workers to such a point that he said that 'I am partial. I am not impartial. I am with the people. When there is a struggle, I am with the poor people. Even if they make mistakes. I am not going to say that the people are always right, but even if they are wrong, I am with them. With the peasants, with the workers'.¹¹⁹

The work of union education was closely related to that undertaken in the ecclesiastical base communities (CEBs). The

CEBs began in Morelos with the work of two French priests who had developed this work in Chile. Meeting first in houses, the communities slowly developed their political analysis. The support of the Archbishop was an important factor in the development of the communities, but so too was the ongoing reflection that they undertook. By the mid-1970s, the work turned towards developing closer relations between these church based communities and the popular movement. Gerardo Thijssen, a long-time facilitator in the communities, attributes their continued success to the way in which individuals who are marginalised in society at large come to see their value in relation to their own community.¹²⁰ Further, he argues that over time, this reflection led to an understanding of the common problems shared between members of the popular classes:

Many workers have been directly related to the communities since they live in communities and they are working in a factory. In the meetings of the communities, they spoke a lot about human service, Christian love, help to the sick etcetera. They people went about discovering that to give food to the hungry or helping the sick goes on without end. The poor continue to be poor. Then the people go about learning to think structurally, which is to say that they see the relation between oppression and those who maintain the poor in their poverty. This is what we call doing an analysis of reality. It had to do with people discovering why are the poor, poor? What happens in CIVAC? (Cuernavaca's industrial park)... Why don't salaries increase, what are the different interests? Why, instead of helping farmers, do the farmers become indebted. So the people discover capitalist structures, structures of oppression. Then the obligation is to help the victim of oppression, who is the worker. On the one hand, the people go about discovering the theory and are very happy to find groups that really want to defend the working class. And this is what they find in the unions. In the 1970s, the way

in which the people lived their commitment was especially to help the unions on strike. To help, by bringing food to those on strike, to hand out flyers, to take up collections, to spread information, and visiting, talking to the workers. What is their problem? Why are they on strike? Why choose this form? etcetera. There was a lot of solidarity. ¹²¹

In this context, the struggle of the Nissan workers to secure a representative union was by no means an isolated one.

Similarly, the Nissan workers did not widen the space for democratic participation by themselves, but found support in the struggles of other workers. While the union at Nissan was gaining strength, other union movements seeking greater autonomy from the CTM were also organising in the largest unions of the region. The relatively highly feminised textile and clothing industry had long been a central source of economic activity in the state of Morelos and in this sector as well as in smaller industrial factories, workers became highly mobilised during 1971 and 1972. In *Textiles de los Gallos*, *Hilados Morelos*, *Textiles Morelos* and *Rivetex*, both men and women workers saw their issues as shared ones. This sentiment caused a great deal of alarm amongst the employers and public officials as the actions took on a more coordinated form. At *Rivetex*, for example, 400 women textile workers struck the company and proceeded to occupy the plant once their strike was deemed "nonexistent". In an impressive act of solidarity, workers in all of the major centres in the Valley of Cuernavaca stopped working. At a regional level, the crisis was profound. As labour leader Alfredo Domínguez

describes it, "It was a whole conflict that put almost all the state into crisis, the unions, the society, the government, the official union leaders, everyone."¹²² Supported by working women's struggles such as this one, the Nissan workers voted to leave the CTM.

Manhood and the Making of a Union:

The Nissan union became independent of the CTM but the experience of social unionism was not directly transferred into the new institution. The Nissan workers did not elect to join the FAT. Instead, they affiliated with the UOI. When the General Assembly of Nissan workers voted to leave the CTM and join with the UOI, they were making the decision to join a relatively new organisation. Yet, the UOI had already successfully led the Volkswagen union into its independent labour federation. Under the leadership of its coordinator, lawyer Juan Ortega Arenas, the UOI led a convincing campaign to draw support to itself. It was able to show how union dues had been decreased from two percent to one percent of wages. It could point out that, for the first time, each Volkswagen worker was given a copy of the collective agreement and its own union constitution. It could refer to the reformed union statutes and the creation of departmental representatives within the new independent union at Volkswagen. Workers could see that the UOI organised its own marches on May 1st and appeared to offer a real alternative to the official

unions.¹²³ All of these things were meaningful to workers who had not experienced effective representation within CTM structures.

The Coordinator of the UOI, along with leaders in the Volkswagen union were invited to attend a general assembly of Nissan workers in Cuernavaca in October of 1972. At this assembly, chaired by General Secretary Raymundo Jaimes, the Archbishop was present, as was a CTM representative. Alfredo Domínguez, General Secretary of the FAT and Juan Ortega Arenas, coordinator of the UOI were there as well. In his recollection of the day's events, Juan Ortega Arenas talks about his speech to the Assembly:

So I made my intervention and after 30 minutes I said, '*Compañeros*, there isn't any more time to talk about this. We came to explain and now we are going. So you have to make a decision. Either continue with these gentlemen, as servile, with your heads bowed down, *gachados* (on all fours), as impotent men, and with lack of respect for yourselves. Or you can take your own union into your hands and throw these people out. But that's your problem, it's not mine.'

More people got up on stage and the big man became afraid. One of the brothers said, 'Listen friends, I want to ask the *compañeros* of Volkswagen and *compañero* Ortega not to leave. Right now let's make a resolution to send these gentlemen to the devil. All of them all. Unanimously.' The big man, Domínguez, grabbed the microphone and he said, 'I do not agree with this.' Then people ran up to the stage and began to push him. The one from the CTM ran away. In less than 40 minutes, with the support of the people, we made dust of 5 years of domination. That's how we got into Nissan.¹²⁴

In this recounting of the events leading to the independence vote by the General Assembly of Nissan workers, Juan Ortega Arenas demonstrates the power, at least in his memory of that moment, of hegemonic masculinity and the discourse of the

caudillo. Ortega Arenas was able to solidify support for a union agenda that was highly masculinised and economistic. This option delegitimised the possibility of these male workers identifying with the more broadly constituted movement of women and men organised by the FAT. The Nissan workers may have been leaving the official union movement, but the gendered dimensions of authority continued to hold a central place in the independent union.

All reports indicate that time and time again Ortega Arenas moved thousands of workers in assemblies with his superb oratorical skills. He understood the magnetism of the oral tradition and used it to his advantage on numerous occasions.¹²⁵ In this recounting, what he demonstrates is the utility of hegemonic masculinity for calling male auto workers forward into action. Whether or not Ortega Arenas embellishes the story 25 years later is not really at issue here. What is important is his description of interactions between men which were to typify his involvement with the union members from that point on.

In part, the idea that he had the ability to turn workers into self-respecting men stemmed from the notion that the male subject develops along with the development of the productive forces. This idea is developed in his writings.¹²⁶ The rational male, he argues, emerges along with modernisation and technological development. Under conditions of underdevelopment, new institutional responses must replace

older barriers to development. The UOI, he continues to argue, with its emphasis on productivity increases and labour culture was the vehicle for such a transformation in the Mexican industrial working class.¹²⁷

Because he thinks of male workers as children, Ortega Arenas speaks in a most offensive manner:

So, now you are beginning to understand what the UOI is. We are an organisation that first wants workers to have capacity as workers and then be able to talk of other things. Meanwhile how is anything else possible? It is as if you had a child of two years and you say, 'Now you are the father of a child of mine.' But it is not possible because the boy can't. That's how Mexican workers are. How can you propose other things? It is not possible. It is necessary that you go along with them in proposing the first steps towards their professional development as workers... It is just like with children. You have to respect their decisions. You can't convince them. You can't force things. You need to develop things with a lot of respect. You can't force things or it would be like the old Chinese man who went about pulling up rice stalks to try to make them grow.¹²⁸

Presumably Ortega Arenas also held these views during the period when the UOI was dominant at Nissan. This gendered aspect of Ortega Arenas' relationship to the workers was central to his paternalism. In the words of oppositional leader Jaimes:

The UOI wanted to control the executive committee and the general assemblies. The lawyer was very capable and he had power before the government, including its cooperation. Juan Ortega Arenas controlled the executive. The union was independent of the CTM, but dependent on him. He knew how to manage us.¹²⁹

As the fully formed male subject in the relationship, Ortega Arenas saw himself as central to the formation process by

which less developed, potential male subjects would become full subjects, and be recognised as such.

Solidarity in the Factory:

Plant level Organising and Departmental Delegates

The ability of the Nissan union to represent workers' demands in the factory cannot be understood outside of the battle over what was considered to be "legitimate" trade unionism; i.e. supported by workers, sanctioned by the labour authorities and permitted by management. Strikes were frequent, but Nissan workers faced the same repression as other industrial workers in the region and in the country more generally. Meanwhile the conflict between the two currents continued within the union. After a long strike in 1974, for example, the workers gained only a one percent wage increase.¹³⁰ Later, Jaimes (now out of office) and three other workers were accused of agitation and were fired. But, as a result of rank and file opposition to this move, management reinstated them.¹³¹ A prolonged battle over management's refusal to pay December bonuses erupted. Jaimes was accused of misusing union funds and was jailed. Again, he was supported by the membership that claimed there was no basis for the accusations. Jaimes was released and his opponents suffered the consequences. Quirino Delgado's attempt to have Jaimes expelled from the union was defeated and Delgado's own committee was ejected from office by the

membership only two months after having re-elected. Jaimes was elected to the position of Secretary General in November 1975.¹³²

In April 1976 the union struck the company again in a protracted and bitter conflict over unresolved contract and salary issues. The 1976 strike lasted 46 days and only resulted in a one per cent wage increase.¹³³ Internal dissent over the utility of the lengthy strike and questions about the misappropriation of union funds resulted in the dismissal of Jaimes and the Executive Committee by the general assembly. This time, the FAT side lost. The UOI slate, with Delgado in a minor leadership position, was elected to replace them.

Once the Nissan workers joined the UOI, the system of representation was changed. The executive was not the only significant element within the union. The union statutes were rewritten. The UOI locals instituted a new system of representation in which worker delegates would be elected at the departmental level within the factory. Some have argued that the new union statutes devolved power from the executive committee and allowed for a greater participation of the rank-and-file in the union.¹³⁴ Departmental delegates were closer to shop floor issues than the old union bureaucrats. The delegates had technical knowledge of the changing production process that the CTM labour bureaucrats did not have. This offered the possibility of new demands for

increased control over the production process.¹³⁵ They were directly accountable to a relatively small group of workers and the new structure presented the possibility for conflicts to be resolved quickly.

It cannot be assumed, however, that the delegates automatically increased the democratic participation of workers in the life of their union. The delegates were elected. They were responsible for intervening in daily conflicts and calling departmental meetings to make decisions. They were not autonomous, however. They announced the decisions taken by the executive committee. They acted as a conduit for discussion and information sharing between the executive committee and the members.¹³⁶ At times, the delegates acted as the "eyes and ears" of the executive committee on the shop floor. At other times the delegates became a force for the opposition.

The union statutes of the *Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de Nissan Mexicana* (SITNM) did give departmental delegates an important role in representing workers' interests to the union executive, and they permitted the organisation of general and departmental assemblies, but the union statutes also gave an enormous amount of power to the legal advisor. For instance, the statutes provided that the Secretary General could give the status of "third party" to a representative who would act on behalf of the union and membership.¹³⁷ Under this provision, the legal advisor had great room for

manoeuvre. Despite the union's independent status and the existence of departmental delegates, it was still true in SITNM, as in most unions in Mexico, that there was no ratification vote by the membership upon the termination of contract negotiations. There was a contract revision committee made up of members from all departments of the plant, but the lack of a ratification process diminished the presence of membership in the process.

An example may clarify the relationship between these three elements of union structure. In an inflationary context, 1977 wage controls of 10 per cent were imposed by the federal government.¹³⁸ "Normal" bargaining practices were revoked. At Nissan a strike over contract and salary issues was resolved within a day. Since bargaining issues were taken out of the workplace, and given the intensified pace of work, the opposition was mobilised once again. Workers in three departments began a slow down in order to pressure the company for control over aspects of the production process, including line speed. Production was immediately decreased by sixty percent. About half of the workforce allied itself with the *tortugistas* (turtles). This was not, however, a movement led by the executive committee. It was led by supporters of the FAT. The division within the union, among the supporters of Ortega Arenas and those of Jaimes, was intensified as the autumn progressed and eventually, the activists were defeated.¹³⁹ In the fall elections Jaimes' slate lost to

Quirino Delgado, who was affiliated with the UOI, and the support for the movement was lost within the union. Throughout the autumn, union activists, including four departmental delegates and Jaimes, were fired.¹⁴⁰ Management favoured the leadership of Delgado and his predisposition towards the UOI. In successive elections, the influence of the UOI was felt in the new leadership.¹⁴¹

Institutional contexts condition the limits of trade union action. They do not determine these actions, nor do they determine the quality of representation expressed within the trade union. Trade unions that become independent of official state structures are still enmeshed in the federal labour law that regulates labour relations and union governance. Departmental delegates may become the basis for a strong relationship between the executive and the membership, or they may be used to thwart it. It was not just the institutional, but the political and economic context at the national level that affected the range of possibilities available to the "independent" Nissan union.

From the economic-corporate to class solidarity?

Just as the Nissan union was influenced by external dynamics, so too did the union have an impact on labour relations beyond the walls of the plant. During the 1970s, the UOI held sway but the oppositional movement led by Raymundo Jaimes and supported by the FAT was still active. As

we have seen, Jaimes was elected and deposed a number of times during this decade. During the years when this more radical current was in power, its presence supported the emergence of militant responses on the part of other trade unions in the region surrounding Cuernavaca and in the state of Morelos. When the current was defeated, social unionism was weakened in the region.

As the newly independent Nissan union continued to challenge the regional leadership of the CTM and the PRI through its activism at the level of the workplace, other unions were encouraged to disaffiliate as well. Movements for independence emerged in IACSA, a large auto parts plant, as well as in the union of university workers at the Universidad Autónoma de Morelos. As a result of the sustained pressure, the regional leader of the CTM had to resign.¹⁴²

As part of the same dynamic which built solidarity among trade unions, Nissan workers, led by the movement supporting the FAT, found support and developed relations with urban popular organisations. The union was active in Cuernavaca during the 1970s in a series of alliances between union and community groups long after it gained independence from the CTM. It actively organised around demands for water, transportation, housing, health care and security in the community.

The unions established regional organisations that were independent of the official labour structures as well. During

the textile workers' strike at Rivetex during the fall of 1972, a Coordinating Committee (CoCo) was formed as a way to bring broader based support to the Rivetex workers and to coordinate action amongst the independent unions. CoCo disappeared at the end of 1974 as a result of internal differences, including conflicts and apparent bureaucratisation within the Nissan union. The CoCo disappeared precisely at the time that the UOI slate in support of a more economistic plant-based unionism gained ascendance within the Nissan union.

Not everything depended on the capacity of the independent unions to form alternate organisations. The importance of state opposition to union solidarity ought not to be underplayed. The authorities and employers moved against the CoCo's mobilisations. There were a series of union defeats and state reprisals against the movements in 1974 that made coordinated action very difficult to sustain. An independent march of 10,000 workers rivalling the official parade on May 1st 1974 was severely repressed. During this time hundreds were fired and strikes were broken at Rivetex, Upjohn and IACSA.¹⁴³

Following from the initial experience of coordination among independent trade unions, a more broadly based effort at coordination organised worker, peasant and popular sectors into the *Coalición Obrera Campesina Popular del Estado de Morelos* (COCPEM) in December of 1975. It was precisely at

this point that the leadership of the Nissan union turned again to those most closely aligned with the FAT, after the UOI slate was deposed in the General Assembly. During the early part of 1976, the movements of sugar workers, the Nissan union, textile and clothing unions converged in another attempt to contest the official May 1st parade. Again, repression followed the mobilisation and once again, the coalition was dismantled as the leaders of most of the largest unions, including Nissan, decided to withdraw and form the *Frente Sindical del Valle de Cuernavaca* (FSC). Again, this dismantling coincides with the reentry of the UOI into a leadership position within the union. The FSC tended to be more declarative than oriented towards mobilisations, and somewhat sectarian, but it organised support for the 1977 IACSA strike. This movement was eventually defeated by the authorities and the FSC disappeared soon afterwards.¹⁴⁴

As the presence of the *Frente Sindical del Valle de Cuernavaca* (FSC) was waning, the textile workers struggle was emerging. The textile workers were at the head of a new labour front, a *Coordinadora Sindical del Valle de Cuernavaca* (COSIVAC), formed at the end of 1979. The independent unions, including the university workers union, textile workers, fired Nissan workers and human rights organisations were joined by the teachers in an independent march on May 1st.

In the late 1970s, another organisation grouped together democratic locals of primary and secondary teachers, the

Consejo Central de Lucha del Magisterio Morelense (CCLMM). After a protracted conflict arose when their democratic sections were not recognised by the official union, the 75 elected delegates of the CCLMM conducted a hunger strike in the central square of Cuernavaca in March 1981. 40,000 people marched from the edge of Cuernavaca to the central square in solidarity with the teachers.¹⁴⁵

Such expressions of solidarity are difficult to sustain but these are made even more difficult when they are actively opposed by large labour organisations. The disappearance of the CoCo coincided exactly with the election of the slate supported by the UOI, while the re-emergence of an executive committee linked with the FAT in 1975 corresponded to the creation of the cross sectoral alliance COCPEM. Not surprisingly, the demise of the alliance was accompanied by the return of the UOI slate to a leadership position within the union. Insofar as the UOI could envisage coordinated trade union action, it participated in a narrowly constituted and short-lived union front. These examples lend support to the interpretation of the UOI which suggests that it was not simply uninterested in, but actively opposed to, the building of cross-sectoral and popular coalitions.

The experience was repeated once again at the beginning of the 1980s when the *paro cívicos* (community strikes) were organised. As the national labour movement faced new austerity programs, the UOI supported the organisation of

popular mobilisations involving small business, workers, peasants, urban popular organisations. In a massive national coalition, these groups organised to temporarily withdraw their support for the governing PRI in a series of coordinated actions across the country.¹⁴⁶ The UOI was not the only important organiser of the events, but at a crucial point in building the movement, Ortega Arenas blocked the initiative, arguing that political organisations had coopted the effort and were simply provoking state repression. In defense of his position Ortega Arenas argues:

We are forever proposing unity of action but we do not engage in exhibitionism... Not only are we not sectarian and propose wide fronts, we have proposed them all our lives. We have constructed a front with the Mexican bourgeoisie that exists right now... Every day in the paper you will see the demands of the Mexican bourgeoisie for freedom of association. They are following our political line and we have given this to them in conferences. If we are capable of uniting with the small and medium bourgeoisie do you not think we are capable of uniting ourselves with workers?¹⁴⁷

Ortega Arena offers a defense. Building a counter-hegemonic response to dominant interests, however, depends not only upon a creative process of mobilisation, but upon a vigorous defense by popular movements against "de-formative" assaults, as well as outright opposition from the authorities.

The movements against the UOI gained strength from 1979 onwards. In 1981, the democratically elected executive committee led by Carlos Contreras was fired after the union opposed changes in line speed and working conditions. A new executive committee was registered but not supported by the

majority of the membership. In an overt and fierce show of force, the union applied the exclusion clause and over 200 workers were fired.¹⁴⁸ With this move, the UOI lost all legitimacy within the rank and file and almost immediately lost the union. Although national political and economic concerns certainly contributed to the weakening of the independence movements in general terms, the UOI also faced critical, and in the end, insurmountable issues within the Nissan union. Both the Nissan and Volkswagen unions left the UOI in 1981.¹⁴⁹ Raymundo Jaimes offers this reflection on the experience that was brought to a close as the union left the UOI:

In some ways there were advances.. a greater sense of what class struggle is all about. But they got rid of all of us and it had to be started all over again. With López Portillo it was different, it was the reverse. There was an opening (under Echeverría) and then repression. Brutal repression... In 1977 I left there. I was fired and others were fired. In 1981, there were 203 firings, all the most politicised people. It was a symptom that nothing had changed, in fact it became worse. Now the company controls the union. The movement of the UOI is dissipated."¹⁵⁰

Thwarting social unionism

The UOI was roundly criticised by other independent labour leaders for the obvious contradictions in its political and ideological positions. It offered workers a radical discourse of opposition to capitalism, but immediately denounced other independent working class organisations as traitors and enemies. It promoted a politics of division and

isolation among the working class and sought justification in its radical ideology. It advocated economistic solutions to social problems and thus narrowed the strategic possibilities for its own organisation to command an important political presence during a critical moment in the history of working class movements in Mexico.

The relative ease with which the UOI entered the auto plants was due in part to its explicit campaign against corporatist labour relations. Ortega Arenas argues that managers from Volkswagen, Nissan and DINA were willing to work with a labour central that explicitly advocated economic modernisation and a new and highly productive "labour culture" in Mexico, outside of the CTM-PRI control. In retrospect, Ortega Arenas argues that these relatively new corporations wanted to work with the UOI because they were outside of the dominant sphere represented by the CTM in its relations with the Big Three auto producers. In his view, employers were receptive and supportive of the UOI's independence strategy because they themselves had been harmed by corruption and an unproductive labour relations regime. Both parties could agree that their interests would each be served if state control over labour relations were to be ended. The common argument turned on the importance of reviving a radically anti-statist variant of "freedom of association" in Mexico.

If one considers, however, that DINA was a state owned company, Volkswagen was the largest domestic producer and

Nissan also had a substantial share of the domestic market, evidently these sections of capital were not marginalised in a national auto industry in which production was organised for internal consumption. This justification is incomplete as an explanation.

The contradictory way in which the UOI positioned itself in relation to the state is best explained through the conjuncture of events at the national level which gave rise to the possibility that this independent labour federation would find a coincidence of interests in those of President Luís Echeverría. At its most basic level, the mutual interest existed in their attempts to limit the power of the CTM. Echeverría argued that the government would create a "democratic opening" in Mexican politics and society and so, it would seem, he attempted to recover some legitimacy for the state. By not overtly opposing the UOI, Echeverría gave tacit support to the independent labour federation. At the same time, other federations such as the *Frente Auténtico del Trabajo* (FAT) were not permitted to grow, and democratic tendencies within official unions, such as the *Tendência Democrática* of the Electrical workers, were severely repressed by the government. In playing off less contentious "independent" movements with the CTM, Echeverría gained room for manoeuvre and increased legitimacy for his "democratic opening".

Some argue that the emergence and relative success of the UOI reflected the weakness of the left in Mexico.¹⁵¹ Without strong and independent organisations, it is suggested the general dissatisfaction among workers took shape as relatively spontaneous movements. There is an additional problem, as this analysis demonstrates. In the case of the radical movement of Nissan workers, consciousness of the gendered dimensions of power relations within trade unionism is not apparent. Nor is there much evidence to suggest that the left problematised questions of representation in Mexico through feminist lenses. In the midst the crisis of state authority, the gendered struggle for new structures of representation was not seen by the oppositional labour movements as significant.

The UOI benefitted from this state of affairs. As we have seen in this chapter, the UOI effectively neutralised the FAT in the case of Nissan. This defeat had ramifications in Cuernavaca and in the industrial heart of Mexico as well. The impetus for independent trade unionism and democratic union representation was channelled towards the companies' interests hedged within a "marxian" discourse advocating the development of the productive forces. When the UOI chose to undermine union activities in the "political terrain", a decisive opportunity for the sustained expression counter-hegemonic alternatives to the corporatist model of representation was lost. In the words of Raymundo Jaimes:

Those relations developed from a surge in popular consciousness. In the leadership of the urban popular movement, for example, were advanced people. But this did not last, it was a moment. The companies fired the activists and ended the movements, taking control of the movements. The management began to discuss who would become General Secretary.¹⁵²

The UOI was successful because it developed a very sophisticated argument having to do with freedom of association and the development of the productive forces on the one hand, and, on the other, an affirmation of the limits of trade union action within the confines of what was permitted by the state.

One of the reasons often cited for the lack of labour strength in the auto sector is the failure to create a national union of autoworkers which could act in a coordinated way in the interests of its members. What is often overlooked in this discussion is that national unions of autoworkers have existed according to the provisions of the Federal Labour Law. The UOI created one such union in June 1978 with a reform of the statutes of the *Diesel Nacional* union.¹⁵³ Article One of the statutes reads:

Representing manual, technical and intellectual workers who work in all parts of the Mexican Republic in the automotive industry and related branches, the Union takes the name "National Independent Union of Workers in the Automotive Industry and Related Branches"¹⁵⁴.

Since that time, the UOI, under the direction of its legal advisor, impeded the effective realization of this national union, even to the extent that Ortega Arenas blocked the uniting of UOI unions in the auto sector into one union. The

UOI rejected any suggestion of alliance with other movements for union independence.¹⁵⁵ Because of its sectarianism and the paternalistic power of Ortega Arenas, the UOI was looked upon with a great deal of scepticism by other independent unions and the broader left. In the view of Alfredo Domínguez:

This tendency did a lot of damage to the movement. They declared themselves so independent that they could not introduce themselves into other unions, because they were controlled. It was an experience of another type of corporatism. The union corporatism controlled by the state and by the official party, became controlled by a group of lawyers, self-named "Coordinators" who controlled these unions... They became independent thinking this was the alternative that the workers were looking for. Afterwards they realised that this was not a correct line since they moved from one form of official control to the control of the lawyers, which did not allow them liberty in their union activities.¹⁵⁶

Despite a discourse of militancy, the UOI accepted the limits imposed by the state which led it, in the end, to a defence of the modernisation project advanced by the government.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion:

The crisis of legitimacy that began the decade was widened by the resolute movements of oppositional social forces both from the right as well as the left. Yet the democratic, autonomous and independent labour alternatives were undermined by an exceedingly resilient set of regulatory structures embodied in the state. The option for social unionism was weakened as well by the strength of *caudillismo* that was left unproblematised by labour organisations such as

the FAT. Nevertheless, the level of dissonance indicated that the passive revolution would not be easily reconstituted. Under the terms of the 'democratic opening', the governing PRI increased the level of social spending assured to those employed in the core sectors of the economy, while promoting the prospects of national industrialists within the context of limited opening to the international economy. In order to compensate for the weaknesses in the leading import-substituting sectors, it opened up the *maquiladora* program and encouraged Mexican ownership in the national auto parts industry. It endeavoured to bring the force of state coercion to bear on the working class by exerting its power within the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) and the labour movement more generally.

In this period, the productive mode fell into crisis and was supported by a newly emerging feminised mode. This was significant in the gendered organisation of production because it indicated that the masculinised model of state corporatism could not be maintained without a significant economic rationalisation and state intervention. Dominant groups would not accept this option and did not respond favourably to the requirements that they improve their balance of trade. Production was not rationalised according to the needs of the domestic economy and an export-oriented, feminised mode became increasingly important as the complement to state corporatism.

The paternalistic ideology of Article 123 was mobilised

as President Echeverría justified targeted social spending in the 1970s. Throughout this period, Echeverría attempted to ground his government's legitimacy on paternalistic appeals to Revolutionary ideals of social harmony and compromise, associated with the gendered division of labour in the family. Without a universal discourse of social rights, the left could not support him. As oppositional demands increased, the right rebelled against social reform.

Although the official trade union leadership was discredited, the gendered dimensions of masculine authority in the CTM unions were not made visible in the struggle for an independent trade union at Nissan. The option for the kind of social unionism that would promote solidarity among men and women workers did exist in the tendency promoted by the FAT, but this radical current within the Nissan union was unable to contest the appeal of *caudillismo* within the new independent organisation of the UOI. A highly economistic and productivist form of trade unionism replaced the corporatist bureaucratic unions, and, at the same time, thwarted the solidarity of social unionism.

It is not easy for a group of workers to develop consciousness of its "unity and homogeneity, and of the need to organise"¹⁵⁸ More difficult still is the movement from an obligation to one's own group, to consciousness of the possibilities of class solidarity, or an even broader solidarity with other subordinated groups in society. None of

this proceeds automatically, not even in moments of crisis. The independent labour movement was unable to articulate a set of generalisable and commonly held alternative ideas. While the FAT argued for independence from the CTM, autonomy from the state and democratic representation within the unions, the UOI presented a convincing set of arguments around productivity increases, liberalisation and modernisation. These were also premised upon a rejection of the corporatist state. Within the independence movement at Nissan, the tension between a narrowly constructed economic trade unionism and a more broadly considered social unionism persisted throughout the 1970s.

Despite the many defeats of labour opposition during the 1970s, right-wing pressure against the corporatist state was intense. It increased throughout the decade and contributed to the generalised weakening of the alliance between the state and capital that had been built upon import-substitution industrialisation, agricultural production for domestic consumption and resource extraction. For the country's political leaders, the question remained: Upon what bases might the social compromise be reinvigorated? For the subordinated groups, the struggle for a form of social expression that could surmount and transform this crisis persisted.

ENDNOTES

1. Gilberto Guevera Niebla, "El Movimiento a la ofensiva," en Pensar el 68, 4a ed., coords. Herman Bellinghausen y Hugo Hiriart (México, DF: Cal y Arena, 1993), 62. See also Raul Álvarez Garín, "Las Ondas Expansivas," Pensar el 68, 108.
2. Soledad Loaeza, "La memoria protectora," Pensar el 68, 92. (trans. mine)
3. Douglas Bennett and Kenneth Sharpe, "Agenda Setting and Bargaining Power: the Mexican State versus the Transnational Automobile Corporations," in The Political Economy of the Latin American Motor Vehicle Industry, eds. Rich Kronish and Kenneth Mericle (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984), 200.
4. Roger Hansen, The Politics of Mexican Development (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 85-86. as cited in Bennett and Sharpe, "Agenda Setting and Bargaining Power," 28-9.
5. Government figures report that social security coverage increased from 24 to 36 percent of the population between 1970-1976. Carlos Tello, La política económica en México 1970-1976, 10a ed. (México, DF: Siglo Veintiuno editores, 1990), 186.
6. Tello, La política económica, 145.
7. B. Sepúlveda y A. Chumacero, La inversión extranjera en México (México: Fondo Cultura Economico, 1973), 75. as cited in Tello, La política económica, 39.
8. Douglas Bennett and Kenneth Sharpe, Transnational corporations versus the state: the political economy of the Mexican auto industry (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 158-175; Aguilar García, La política sindical, 23.
9. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, The Deindustrialization of America: plant closings, community abandonment and the dismantling of basic industry (New York: Basic Books, 1982).
10. Folker Frobels, Jürgen Heinrichs and Otto Kreye, The New International Division of Labour: Structural Unemployment in Industrial countries and Industrialisation in developing countries (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

11. Folker Frobels, Jürgen Heinrichs and Otto Kreye, "The World Market for Labor and the World Market for Industrial Sites," Journal of Economic Issues 12, no.4 (December 1978): 843-858.
12. Frobels, Heinrichs and Kreye, "The World Market for Labor," 856.
13. Stephen Hymer, "Internationalization of Capital," Journal of Economic Issues 6, no.1 (March 1972): 92. (91-112.)
14. Hymer, "Internationalization of Capital," 101.
15. Punto Crítico, Problemas y perspectivas del movimiento obrero: 1970-1980 (México DF: Punto Crítico, 1980), 19-20.
16. Alejandro Álvarez, La Crisis Global del Capitalismo en México: 1968-1985 (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1987), 19.
17. Álvarez, La Crisis Global, 21.
18. Álvarez, La Crisis Global, 22.
19. Álvarez, La Crisis Global, 23-28.
20. Álvarez, La Crisis Global, 28.
21. Judith Adler Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), 215.
22. Álvarez, La Crisis Global, 28.
23. Álvarez, La Crisis Global, 29.
24. Punto Crítico, Problemas y perspectivas, 20-22.
25. Hugo Hiriart, "La revuelta antiautoritaria," Pensar el 68, 19.
26. Álvarez, La Crisis Global, 18. (trans.mine)
27. Raúl Álvarez Garín, "Las Ondas Expansivas," Pensar el 68, 107. (trans.mine).
28. Carlos Monsiváis, "¿También las multitudes son históricas?," Pensar el 68, 125.
29. Punto Crítico 1, no.1 (enero 1972): 26-27.
30. Punto Crítico 1, no.1 (enero 1972): 27.

31. Some independent unions of the northern states may exhibit autonomy from official trade union confederations, but are largely controlled by the employers. The federation of independent trade unions of Nuevo León, for example, represents an anti-corporatist current of thought amongst employers that found expression in the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), rather than in the governing PRI. Alfredo Domínguez, Comisión Nacional de Relaciones y Solidaridad, Frente Auténtico del Trabajo, interview by author, México, D.F., April 14, 1993.

32. Dan La Botz, The Crisis of Mexican Labour (New York: Praeger, 1988), 121-143.

33. Hellman, Mexico in Crisis, 189.

34. María Patricia Fernández-Kelly, "Mexican Border Industrialization, Female Labor Force Participation and Migration," in Women, Men and the International Division of Labor, eds. June Nash and Maria Patricia Fernández-Kelly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 209.

35. Jorge Bustamante, "Maquiladoras: A New Face of International Capitalism on Mexico's Northern Frontier," in Women, Men and the International Division of Labour, 232-233.

36. Bustamante gives the example of the 30 industries that closed between 1974-76, leaving 20,000 workers without work. Figures for the early 1970s indicate that only 2.4 percent of migrants to the border regions found maquiladora work. Secretaría de Industria y Comercio, La Frontera Norte (México, D.F.:Government of Mexico, 1974), 48-49, 96. as cited in Bustamante, "Maquiladoras: A New Face of International Capitalism," 248.

37. In 1980, as Fernández-Kelly reported, 85 per cent of the maquila workforce were women between the ages of 17 and 25. This was unusual in the historical context of Latin American industrialisation. 70 percent of these were single and sent more than half of their paycheques to their families. The young women lived with their parents and their wages were turned over to the family. Women who headed households provided the main source of income for their families, yet if they worked in the maquilas, their wages were inadequate to meet the family's needs. Fernández-Kelly found that most 'maquila women' worked in either the electronics or apparel industries. Those recruited for the electronics industries were usually between the ages of 17-25, single, childless and had at least six years of education. Garment workers tended to be older women who were single mothers. Their educational level was lower than the workers in the electronic sector and their position in the labour market, weaker. María Patricia

Fernández-Kelly, "The Maquila Women," Nacla Report on the Americas, 14 no.5 (1980): 15.

38. Arnulfo Arteaga G., Jorge Carrillo V. and Jordy Micheli T., "Transformaciones Tecnológicas y Relaciones Laborales en la Industria Automotriz," Documentos de Trabajo, 19 (México, DF: Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1989), 6.

39. Bustamante, "Maquiladoras: A New Face of International Capitalism," 242.

40. Secretaría de Industria y Comercio, "Decreto que fija las bases para el desarrollo de la industria automotriz," Artículos 10-11, Diario Oficial, martes 24 de octubre de 1972: 4.

41. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational corporations versus the state, 175.

42. "Decreto", Artículos 1-3, 13, 1972: 3,7.

43. "Decreto", Artículo 32, 1972: 6.

44. "Decreto", Artículo 40-45, 1972: 6

45. Alain Lipietz, "New Tendencies in the international division of labour: regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation" in Production, Work, Territory: the geographical anatomy of industrial capitalism, eds. Allen J. Scott and Michael Storper (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 35. (pp.16-40)

46. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational corporations versus the state, 186.

47. Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Automotriz (AMIA), "Indice de Volumen de la Producción Industrial 1970-1981 (1970=100)," Cuadro 1.14, Industria Automotriz en Cifras (México, DF: AMIA, 1982), 8.; AMIA, "Indice de Volumen de la Producción Manufacturera 1970-1981 (1970 = 100)," Cuadro 1.15, Industria Automotriz en Cifras 1982, 9.

48. AMIA, "Indice de Volumen de la Producción Manufacturera 1970-1981 (1970= 100)," Cuadro 1.15, Industria Automotriz en Cifras, 1982, 9.

49. In addition, *Fábricas Nacional de Automóviles* produced automobiles that year but ceased immediately afterwards.

50. AMIA, "Estructura Porcentual de la Producción de Autos y Camiones por Empresa: 1970 y 1981," La Industria Automotriz Mexicana en Cifras 1982, 50.

51. In 1980, Chrysler produced 56,838 automobiles. Ford produced 37,755. General Motors produced 16,999. Nissan produced 35,648. VAM produced 21,168. Volkswagen produced 113,033. Renault produced 21,615. Total automobile production stood at 303,056 units in 1980.

52. Tractor-trailers were produced by *Diesel Nacional (DINA)*, *Fábricas Autocar Mexicana*, *Kenworth Mexicana*, *Trailers de Monterrey*, *Trailers del Norte* and *Victor Patrón* in 1970. *Trailers del Norte* ceased production in 1977, while *Fábricas Autocar Mexicana* closed its operations in 1979, the same year *Fábrica Autotransportes Mexicana* began to produce tractor-trailers. Buses were produced by *Diesel Nacional (DINA)* and *Mexicana de Autobuses*, while *Trailers de Monterrey* shut down production in 1981. AMIA, "Producción Anual de Vehículos Automotores por Empresas: 1970-1981," Cuadro IV.4, La Industria Automotriz en Cifras 1982, 48-49.

53. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational corporations versus the state, 202.

54. Luís Echeverría Álvarez, Sexto Informe Presidencial, 10 de septiembre de 1976 (México, DF: El Gobierno de Mexico, Presidencia de la Republica, Segunda Epoca, 1976), 72.

55. James Cypher, State and Capital in Mexico: Development Policy since 1940 (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1990), 89.

56. Echeverría, Informe, 1976: 87-88.

57. Echeverría, Informe 1973: 205-206.

58. Tello, La política económica, 47-50.

59. Echeverría reported that the government had reduced the general level of spending in his first year in order to contain an internationally generated cycle of inflation. Echeverría, Informe, 1972: 105-106.

60. According to the President's address, authorised federal spending for all of 1972 was forecast to be 30 percent higher than the previous year and would increase by the same amount during the rest of the term. Echeverría, Informe 1972: 111-112.

61. Tello, La política económica, 119.

62. Echeverría, Informe, 1973: 216. (trans.mine)

63. Ley de Seguro Social, "Exposition de motivos de la Ley del Seguro Social de 1973," Diario Oficial de la Federación, 12 de marzo de 1973 (México, DF: Editorial Alco, 1993), 11.

64. The Federal Labour Law is comprised of 16 Chapters and over 1000 Articles. It is 460 pages long. Nueva Ley Federal del Trabajo, Ley del Infonavit: Vista Panorámica y Leyes Complementarias, 16o edición (México, DF: Editorial Olguin, 1992).

65. For an overview of the decline of the Social Solidarity programme during the latter part of Echeverría's term and its transformation during the presidency of López Portillo, see Rose Spaulding, "Corporatism in Mexico," Comparative Political Studies 14, no.2 (July 1982): 139-161.

66. Spaulding, "Corporatism in Mexico," 142-143.

67. Echeverría, Informe, 1976: 54.

68. Echeverría, Informe, 1973: 34; Ley de l Seguro Social, "Exposition de motivos de la Ley del Seguro Social de 1973," 16-17.

69. Echeverría, Informe, 1972: 123

70. Echeverría, Informe, 1976: 55.

71. Echeverría, Informe, 1972: 125.

72. Echeverría, Informe, 1976: 49

73. Echeverría, Informe, 1974: 75-76.

74. Echeverría, Informe 1973: 220-221.

75. Tello, La política económica, 71. The agreement was to increase the minimum wage by 18% in all regions; increase wages by 20 percent for unionised workers earning more than one minimum wage; increase wages by 10-15 percent for public and bank employees; and increase wages by 13 percent for those earning more than 4500/month. With a subsequent increase in the minimum wage of between 12-15 percent and 15 percent in contract negotiations, workers' income levels was restored to that of the beginning of 1972.

76. Echeverría, Informe 1974: 74-77.

77. Echeverría, Informe 1975: 30.

78. Manuel Fuentes, La imposición laboral que nos viene del norte (México, DF: Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, 1994), 133.

79. Punto Crítico 1, no.1 (enero de 1972): 7.

80. Echeverría, Informe 1976: 57-69.
81. Álvarez, La Crisis Global, 35.
82. Punto Crítico, Problemas y perspectivas, 55-58.
83. Secretaría de Patrimonio y Fomento Industrial, "Decreto para el Fomento de la Industria Automotriz," Diario Oficial de la Federación, 20 de junio de 1977, 3.
84. "Decreto", Artículo 2 IX, 1977: 3.
85. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational corporations versus the state, 238.
86. Between 1970 and 1981, significant shifts took place in the international location of vehicle production. In this period, total Canadian and US production fell from 32.10 percent of world totals to 24.67 percent. Asian production increased from 18.36 to 30.52 percent, while Western Europe production dropped from 39.92 to 29.76 percent of total world production. During the same period, Latin America increased from 3.24 to 4.75 percent of world production. Mexico displaced Argentina as the second largest producer in Latin America after Brazil. In 1970, Mexico produced more vehicles than Korea, India, East Germany, Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Holland. By 1981, Mexico also produced more vehicles than South Africa, Belgium and Sweden. AMIA, "Produccion Mundial de Vehículos por Regiones y Países, 1970-1980," Cuadro IX.2, La Industria Automotriz 1982: 187.; AMIA, "Produccion Mundial de Vehículos por Regiones y Países, 1978-1987," Cuadro X-2, La Industria Automotriz Mexicana en Cifras 1988: 191-192.
87. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational corporations versus the state, 238.
88. The level of "national integration" of the industry refers to the percentage national content integrated in the final product. It is calculated according to the cost-parts formula referred to the Decree of June 20, 1977. "Decreto," Artículo 7, 1977: 4.
89. Arturo Bonilla, "La Política Económica Actual," in La Política del Estado Mexicano, comp. Arturo Bonilla (México, DF: Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, UNAM, 1984), 15. as cited in Cypher, State and Capital in Mexico, 108.
90. Cypher, State and Capital in Mexico, 104.

91. Razones, "¿Qué Pasa en Estos Seis Años?," Razones, no. 69 (August 23-September 5 1982), 17. as cited in Cypher, 1990, p.109.
92. Cypher, State and Capital in Mexico, 118.
93. Cypher, State and Capital in Mexico, 117.
94. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational corporations versus the state, 230.
95. Bennett and Sharpe, Transnational corporations versus the state, 230.
96. Cypher, State and Capital in Mexico, 117-118.
97. Celso Garrido, Edmundo Jacobo and Enrique Quintana, "Crisis y Poder en México," Estudios Sociológicos 15 (September-December 1987), 532. as cited in Cypher, State and Capital in Mexico, 126.
98. Alfredo Domínguez, *Frente Auténtico del Trabajo*, interview by author, April 14 1993, México, DF.
99. Kevin Middlebrook, The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State and Authoritarianism in Mexico (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 228; footnote 51, 404.
100. The name of the union was changed to the *Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz, Similares y Conexos Volkswagen de México*. As an independent union, it affiliated to the UOI. Yolanda Montiel, Proceso de Trabajo, Acción Sindical y Nuevas Tecnologías en Volkswagen de México (México, DF: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1991), 158.
101. Aguilar García reports that in 1976 the UOI represented 19,250 workers and employees at *Diesel Nacional, Volkswagen de México* and *Nissan Mexicana*. In contrast, the CTM organised workers in Chrysler of Mexico, Ford Motor and General Motors of Toluca for a total of 12,350 members in the auto assembly sector. The CROC counted 5,000 members from General Motors, D.F. and *Trailers de Monterrey*. The COM organised 2,000 workers at VAM. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 62.
102. Sam Gindin, The Canadian Auto Workers: The Birth and Transformation of a Union (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1995), 266-268.
103. The FAT was affiliated with the Christian Democratic labour federation in Latin America (CLAT), but distanced itself from this international organisation in the 1960s

because of the close ties between the CLAT and the Vatican. The FAT sees itself as a wholly secular trade union federation. Alfredo Domínguez, *Comisión Nacional de Relaciones y Solidaridad, Frente Auténtico del Trabajo*, interview by author, México, DF, 22 April 1992.

104. The union formally disaffiliated the following year and subsequently joined the UOI. Kevin Middlebrook, "The Politics of Industrial Restructuring: Transnational Firms search for Flexible Production in the Mexican Automobile Industry," Comparative Politics 23, no.3 (April 1991): 278. (275-297)

105. In this section I rely heavily on interviews with Alfredo Domínguez FAT, interview by author, Mexico, DF, 14 April 1993; Juan Ortega Arenas UOI, interview with author, Mexico, DF, 13 and 27 May 1993; Raymundo Jaimes ex-General Secretary, Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de Nissan Mexicana (SITNM), interview by author, Cuernavaca, Morelos, 10 June 1993. As well, I have incorporated the perspectives of Gerardo Thijssen, Ecclesiastical Base Communities, interview by author, Cuernavaca, Morelos, June 16, 1993; Gerardo López, Nissan, interview by author, Mexico, DF, 26 August 1993; and Francisco Chávez Samano, General Secretary SITNM, interview by author, Cuernavaca, Morelos, 8 June 1993.

106. In 1969 an elected union executive was not recognised by the local Conciliation and Arbitration board. Dissent within the union challenged the Secretary General, Alfonso Avella and the CTM. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 53.

107. Letter from Lic. Guillermo Ramírez M. *Sub-Gerente de Relaciones Industriales, Nissan Mexicana, S.A. de C.V. al Comité Ejecutivo del Sindicato General de Trabajadores de Nissan Mexicana, S.A. de C.V.*, 21 de Octubre de 1971. (trans. mine.) From the archives of Javier Aguilar García.

108. Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico: the case of the automobile industry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 99.

109. Domínguez, interview, 14 April 1993.

110. Domínguez, interview, April 14 1993.

111. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 61.

112. Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico, 99.

113. By 1979, industrial production contributed to 51.1 per cent of production in the state of Morelos. Industry employed 17.6 per cent of the labour force. Agriculture contributed to 8.9 per cent of state production and employed 43.4 per cent of

the labour force. 28.6 per cent of industrial production derived from the auto industry in 1979, 22.4 per cent from the long established textile industry and 7.3 per cent from the production of chemicals and pharmaceuticals. José Martínez Cruz, "Quince años de lucha proletaria en Morelos (1969-1983)," La Batalla Num. 5 (agosto-septiembre 1983), 35.

114. Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico, 100.

115. Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico, 100.

116. CENCOS, "Laborales: Panorama Nacional, Trabajadores de Nissan Mexican Desmienten a Fidel Velázquez," México, DF (Febrero de 1972). From the archives of Javier Aguilar García.

117. "El FAT con Punto Crítico: entrevista con Alfredo Domínguez" Punto Crítico 1, no.6 (junio de 1972): 34. (trans.mine)

118. Gerardo Thijssen, interview with author, Cuernavaca, Morelos, 16 June 1993.

119. Thijssen, interview, 16 June 1993. (trans. mine.)

120. "One of the reasons that the work is fruitful.. is because they take the person into account. The people here feel like a mass. No one believes the poor, less the indigenous, less the woman. They are not important. What is important are the opinions of the rich, the studied, the government, the poor are not important. So, the communities are very small. Never are they big groups, at the most they have 20 members. It is a group of individuals. All have names and all have histories. All talk about their lives and work for all. No one directs the group. The tasks are shifted around. So, the same system favours the interests of each one, but is realised in community. I think this is one of the reasons that the communities grow." Thijssen, interview, 16 June 1993. Thijssen estimates that in 1993 approximately 10,000 people participated in the CEBs in the state of Morelos and about 5,000 within Cuernavaca itself. Many of these people are local councillors and almost all are active in many dimensions of local politics.

121. Thijssen, interview, 16 June 1993.

122. Domínguez, interview, 14 April 1993.

123. Huberto Juárez, Facultad de Economía, Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, interview by author, Puebla, Morelos, August 1993.

124. Juan Ortega Arenas, interview by author, Mexico, DF, 13 May 1993.

125. Those who did not, suffered his derision. "Fidel Velázquez doesn't know anything, not how to speak or anything. He is an imbecile but he has the shoulder of the state behind him. That is his strength." Ortega Arenas, interview, 13 May 1993. (trans.mine.)

126. Juan Ortega Arenas, Procesos de Cambio: Dialéctica Materialista (Mexico D.F.: Editorial Claridad, 1992).

127. "They will spontaneously initiate their violent struggle and our role is to be an instrument of the Mexican people to offer them what we know: organisation, discipline, work systems etcetera... It is possible and we will see the end of (capitalist exploitation), but not with simple declarations or by clowning around. Not with "Homosexuals for Socialism," nor with (slogans such as) "This Little Fist, Can Be Seen," but with the organisation of the whole people. When will this occur? When we no longer act as provocateurs, and do not look for sterile confrontations. When we let the process develop as it should, along with the development of the working class." Juan Ortega Arenas, "Ortega Arenas, el ayatola de las huelgas," interview by Estela Osorio, Contenido, Septiembre 1980, 88. (trans. mine).

128. Juan Ortega Arenas, interview, 13 May 1993. (trans.mine).

129. Raymundo Jaimes, interview by author, Cuernavaca Morelos, 10 June 1993.

130. Eduardo Navarro Delgado, "La defensa del reglamento interior del trabajo frente a la ofensiva de los círculos de calidad," en Reconversión Industrial y Lucha Sindical, coord. Esthela Gutiérrez Garza (México, DF: Fundación Friedrich Ebert-México, 1989), 85.

131. Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico, 100.

132. Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico, 101.

133. Navarro Delgado, "La defensa del reglamento interior del trabajo," 85.

134. Lucía Bazán, "El Sindicato Independiente de Nissan Mexicana," Memorias Del Encuentro sobre Historia del Movimiento Obrero, Tomo III (Puebla, Pue: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1980), 339.

135. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 65.

136. Bazán, "El Sindicato Independiente de Nissan Mexicana," 339.

137. Juárez, interview, August 1993.

138. Bazán, "El Sindicato Independiente de Nissan Mexicana," 340.

139. Bazán, "El Sindicato Independiente de Nissan Mexicana," 337-343.

140. The relatively low turn out for these elections may indicate that discontent was widespread in the plant. Membership had grown from less than 600 voting members in 1970 to 2,750 members in the plant in Cuernavaca in 1976, yet less than 1500 participated in the elections of 1977. Roxborough, Unions and Politics in Mexico, 99 and 101; Aguilar García, La política sindical, 64.

141. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 56-7.

142. Aguilar García, La política sindical, 60.

143. Martínez Cruz, "Quince años de lucha," 38.

144. Martínez Cruz, "Quince años de lucha," 40.

145. On May Day 1982, the mobilisation in Cuernavaca turned to the national issues of the austerity policies of the government and the economic crisis in the country. This march was not permitted to enter into Cuernavaca's central square. Martínez Cruz, "Quince años de lucha," 40-42.

146. Barry Carr, "The Mexican Left, the Popular Movements and the Politics of Austerity 1982-1985," in The Mexican Left, the Popular Movements, and the Politics of Austerity, eds. B. Carr, and Ricardo A. Montoya, Monograph Series 18 (Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies University of California, San Diego, 1986): 1-18.

147. Ortega Arenas, interview. May 13 1993.

148. Martínez Cruz, "Quince años de lucha," 40.

149. The company's pressure against the union did not end with the departure of the UOI. In 1983 a further 320 workers were fired. Martínez Cruz, "Quince años de lucha," 42.

150. Raymundo Jaimes, interview, 10 June 1993.

151. Sergio Guadalupe Sánchez Díaz, "Sobre la Unidad Obrera Independiente," Memoria del Encuentro Sobre Historia del Movimiento Obrero Tomo III (Puebla, Pue.: Universidad Autonomy de Puebla, 1980), 212.

152. Jaimes, interview, 10 June 1993.

153. According to 1993 union statutes, the *Sindicato Nacional Independiente de Trabajadores de Diesel Nacional S.A* became the *Sindicato Nacional Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz, Similares y Conexos* on the 6th of June 1978. The official letter was signed by the subdirector of the Registry of Associations and issued its official approval of the change. Estatutos del Sindicato Nacional Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz, Similares y Conexos, (1991-1993), 00125.

154. Estatutos, (1991-1993), 00092

155. All of the above from Claridad (mayo 1978). as cited at length in Blanca Acedo Angulo, Filemon Pérez Ruiz, Juan Manuel Ramos y Solares, Tomás Martínez Sánchez, "Unidad Obrera Independiente (UOI)," in 2o Coloquio Regional de Historia Obrero, Tomo I (Mérida Yuc: CEHSMO, 1979), 1369-1375.

156. Domínguez, interview, 14 April 1993.

157. Francisco Zapata, "Labor and Politics: The Mexican Paradox," in Labor Autonomy and the State in Latin America, ed. Edward C. Epstein (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 189. ft.26. (173-193)

158. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, Q.Hoare and G.Nowell Smith trans. eds. (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 181.

Chapter Five
Second moment in the Crisis:
The Maquilization of Ford de México

Introduction

As the state turned increasingly towards processes of internationalisation, the degradation in working class representation held a central place in the restructuring of Mexican society during the 1980s. The internationalisation of production and transformations in the organisation of work were undertaken by authoritarian means by both the state and capital. Demanding increased competitiveness, employers were able to dismantle many of the gains won by labour during the passive revolution. In part, this was due to labour's inability to contest the gendered terms of the economic transformation despite the highly attuned class consciousness and comprehensive outlook of the most successful oppositional labour movements in the industrial core. The transformation of the state corporatist productive mode had a gendered dimension to it that went unnoticed by the labour movements most actively contesting restructuring. Indeed, this second period of crisis may be characterised by the feminisation or "maquilization" of the industrial heartland.

In this chapter, I will discuss the conflict which arose within the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) union at Ford-Cuautitlán in the late 1980s. Of all of the cases under review here, the Ford union is the only one to remain

within the CTM, and thus, the best one to illustrate the role of official trade unionism in the restructuring process. I will begin the story of this workers' movement with the company's decision to close the plant and reopen it under a new flexible collective agreement in 1987. Workers immediately resisted the imposition of the reorganisation of work in the plant and the new working conditions which followed changes to their collective agreement. Since the national union leadership restrained the local union's attempts to contest the terms of these new conditions, the local found itself in direct conflict with the company and the national union leadership at the same time.

The conflict at Ford-Cuautitlán centred around the character of working class representation within state corporatism as this productive mode, already in crisis, was brought into contact with neoliberal restructuring. The state could no longer guarantee the minimal concessions from which the *caudillismo* of the worker-father had been constructed. In this period, the CTM attempted to reassert its presence as a legitimate organisation within the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), as the state was restructured. Increasingly, the CTM turned towards authoritarianism to hold on to its membership, thus indicating that institutions of corporatist representation could no longer depend upon their traditional bases. Unlike the previous period in which oppositional movements were sometimes able to take their

unions out of the official labour bodies, during the 1980s this option remained closed as the state became increasingly authoritarian.

For the most part, the state supported the CTM against other reform movements within their ranks and heavily repressed oppositional labour and social movements. Lower salaries were one of the results, although the expansion of management rights went beyond this. It was not just low salaries, or state support that was of benefit to the corporations in the restructuring process. A debilitated form of labour representation unable to contest the reorganisation of work, including the team concept, just-in-time production, quality circles, Total Quality Management and zero error programmes was also sought. Employers prized the "flexible" character of these new labour relations above all else. As Mexican academics Arnulfo Arteaga, Jorge Carrillo and Jordy Micheli argue, this social dimension is indispensable for understanding the reasons for creating new export-oriented plants in Mexico. It is also significant for understanding the demands that competition in the US market imposed on them.¹

I. Continuing the Crisis: Restructuring, Representation and Resistance in the shadow of North American integration

In this section I will examine the changes at the level of restructuring, representation and resistance in more

detail. First, I will consider economic restructuring in terms of the decline of state corporatism.

There were three main dynamics that contributed to the decline of state corporatism as the favoured productive mode within Mexico. First, as it became clear that economic crisis within *Pax Americana* would not be resolved for US producers without a thoroughgoing restructuring of production, the *maquila* option provided US auto manufacturers with low wage facilities for a share of Big Three parts production. The *maquilas* also pressured workers in the United States and Canada to consider the implications of widespread shifts in production. As the United Auto Workers (UAW) confronted Big Three employers in the early 1980s on this and related issues around technological change and work reorganisation, the threat of plant closures was a powerful incentive for the union to accept concessions in contract negotiations. The Canadian section of the UAW split from the union on precisely the issue of concessions. What is also true is that Mexican auto workers felt the same pressure. As Mexico became the site for Big Three investments in engine and auto assembly plants in the non-industrial northern states, established workers in auto plants of central Mexico were threatened by the relocation of production facilities to new 'greenfield' sites.

State corporatism was also challenged by the restructuring of the Mexican state in light of the ideals of

neoliberalism. In the southern debtor countries, International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity plans became efficient mechanisms for breaking the stalemates that wage and price controls under the developmental state could not. In the United States, monetarists argued that it was necessary to improve the supply of factors which would increase the economy's ability to produce goods and services. At first, it was argued that tax reductions would encourage capital investment, but a much broader argument emerged compelling states to introduce incentives meant to encourage increased private investment in capital and technological change. While pushing for increased autonomy vis a vis the demands of society, owners of capital pressured states to alter their regulatory efforts in the economy to this end. In the process, not just the role, but the form of state was restructured in countries of the centre and in the periphery of world order.

Along with the threat of the relocation of production, and the restructuring in the form of state, the reorganisation of work may be seen as a third challenge to state corporatism in the 1980s. Partly through state efforts to change the regulations governing labour relations but primarily by employers' attacks against labour's acquired rights, the reorganisation of work emerged as the linchpin of the neoliberal process of restructuring. The success of the Japanese producers in the US market stimulated interest in

experiments with the reorganisation of work. Toyota, for example, developed its Just-in-Time (JIT) system of production during a period of recession in the mid-1970s. Ten years later one of Toyota's chief intellectuals argued that it would be preferable for US companies to adopt the practices of "Toyotism", rather than lobby against free trading relationships between the two countries.²

The refrain became widely echoed in the United States. As employers found it increasingly difficult to wrest higher productivity levels out of the labour process, it was argued that the once highly productive Fordist model of development had exhausted itself. The rigidities of its institutions, labour relations and ideas, argued employers, had reduced the vitality of the world's industrial heartland. Auto manufacturers were among the first to demand that collective agreements be made more "flexible" to achieve increased productivity increases. This solution to the productivity problem was dubbed "Lean Production" by the organisers of the International Motor Vehicle Program (IMVP) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Their five year, five million dollar international project was explicitly concerned with the ideological problem of convincing North Americans to accept lean production as the solution to the lack of competitiveness of the North American auto industry.³ It was not simply technological change that characterised the restructuring of production. Work reorganisation, with its

attendant ideology, played a crucial role in the restructuring of North American industry during the 1980s.

Lean production has been much debated in North America since its central tenets became popularised by a concerted effort of knowledge diffusion led by the MIT team in the 1980s.⁴ Some have described this new combination of technology and work reorganisation as a potentially liberating development for both workers and employers. Seeing a crisis of mass production and ongoing instability in the world economy, Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, for example, advocated a return to the principals of craft production within what they called "flexible specialisation". With great optimism, they suggested that the craft form could be translated into the organisation of small production sites, skilled workers, non-dedicated machinery and consultative labour-management relations.⁵

The optimistic view advanced by Piore and Sabel was one that converged most often with the tenor of employers' presentations to workers concerning the suitability of lean production for mutual gain in a global context of ruthless competition.⁶ Insofar as Piore and Sabel did not consider the authoritarian "potential" of these new ways of organising production, however, their prescriptions could not comprehend the contradictory implications for labour.

The contradictions emerge, first of all, because such technologies are never simply dropped onto already existing

social relations. A new mode can only emerge through the mediation of social relations. Capital's prerogative to restructure the production process may appear self-evident, but the class and gendered structures in each national social formation will bear dialectically on the way in which restructuring occurs. Anna Pollert argues that the search for flexibility within lean production has always been a characteristic of capitalist production and a matter of social struggle. What is new is that "the 'discovery' of the 'flexible-workforce' is part of an ideological offensive which celebrates pliability and casualisation and *makes them seem inevitable.*"⁷

We may identify four key pillars of lean production including continuous flow production; defect control; flexibility in the workforce; and continuous improvement.⁸ As described by Karen Hadley, management's goals for lean production are "to reduce costs, increase overall productivity, accelerate the rate of capital utilization by "squeezing time" out of manufacturing processes, eliminate all waste, including surplus workers, and standardize and intensify manufacturing operations."⁹

Lean production is based on a "pull-system" which responds to the needs of the "paternal manufacturer" (final assembler) and works backwards through the part suppliers.¹⁰ No inventory is accumulated so there is pressure to avoid conveying defective parts to the next process; thus the

emphasis on "quality control". However, "the meaning of defective is expanded to include defective operations. A defective operation is a job for which standardization is not fully attained and inefficiencies then exist in manual operations, routines and labor hours."¹¹ The use of standard operations is meant to achieve high productivity using a minimum number of workers.¹² Through job rotation, workers become trained in a number of functions. Volkswagen's training manual for workers claims job rotation is meant to prevent boredom and increase motivation, but Toyota's Japanese originators of this system link it to the need to attain flexibility in production as the number of workers is altered to respond to shifts in demand.¹³ Similarly, while overtime might meet the individual needs of a worker with financial responsibilities, it is written into the lean production process as one of the key methods of achieving flexibility.

Monden points out that "the ultimate purpose of the Toyota production system is to increase profit by reducing costs. Cost reduction is made possible by eliminating waste."¹⁴ Continuous improvement is explicitly meant to serve this end. It reduces traditional buffers, waste and down-time. As it seeks to eliminate all non-value added activities in a plant, lean production eliminates jobs and intensifies those that remain.¹⁵

At its core, argues Hadley, lean production is about work intensification and "does not result in a recombination of

execution and conception within workers' jobs (ie. upskilling), nor does it provide for a democratic, non-authoritarian workplace."¹⁶ From a worker's point of view, lean production intensifies work and increases the rigidity of the workplace. This, Hadley asserts, is not a new departure. Because lean production is designed to eliminate the number of workers and standardize and fragment the production process, it could be considered a "hyper-Taylorization" of the labour process.¹⁷

In sum, as competitiveness was identified as the crucial problem for the United States economy in the 1980s, this became the refrain in Canada and Mexico as well. Restructuring entailed a more extensive organisation of production on a continental basis, a transformation towards the neoliberal form of state, and the reorganisation of work. As we shall see below, these three aspects of restructuring had a profound impact on the character of labour relations in Mexico. During the 1980s, the subordination of trade unions to the restructuring of production was a crucial aspect of the process.

Representation, Resistance and the Decline of State Corporatism

Neither the decline in real wages during the 1980s nor six years of austerity reestablished the balance of class forces in Mexico. In the context of North American

integration, labour movements responded to attacks on acquired rights with militant demands that the formalities of constitutional guarantees, labour law and corporatist trade unionism give way to authentic forms of representation. Given that substantive responses to their complaints were not forthcoming within the context of neoliberalism, labour's resistance was subdued only as the forms of representation through which labour had made some gains during the passive revolution were weakened. The virulence with which labour authorities and employers pursued this goal eliminated the paternalism from state corporatism. As the basis for a new hegemony crumbled before neoliberal restructuring, authoritarianism emerged out of the ashes of passive revolution.

Throughout 1980s, the governing *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) became alienated from its base as technocratic solutions to economic crisis were thought to be more appropriate than 'political' ones. The government moved closer to the demands of the employers' associations and farther away from even the most minimal guarantees demanded by labour. Less and less did the government endeavour to draw the mass organisations of labour into the governing project with the result that the Labour Congress (CT), as well as the CTM, were increasingly marginalised to the new national project of modernisation. The institutions of official labour did not become less autonomous from the state during this

period of liberalisation. They continued to represent official government policy to the working class. No longer struggling against the contradictions of limited inclusion, the working class found itself quite comprehensively excluded in the transition to the new model.

In 1985, a catastrophic natural disaster in the centre of Mexico together with deteriorating international economic conditions and an incompetent state response, provoked outrage in the urban population in the centre of the country. When the earthquake struck Mexico City on the 19th of September, the country was already reeling from the effects of continuing economic crisis. As the natural disaster of the earthquake intersected with the lack of effective representation in the de la Madrid administration, the urban popular movements saw their issues linked to the broader questions of citizenship and the need to strengthen civil society. This became one of the most important political mobilisations in Mexico in the 1980s. Whereas previously there had been no room to assert legal rights, the popular movement politicised the administration of municipal affairs in a new way, by demanding that the government respond to the urban crisis.¹⁸

As a result of these developments, the cross sectoral alliances of the early 1980s, having identified austerity and debt as the major problems facing the country, were strengthened by the inclusion of democracy as a central demand. As the urban movements continued to work with other

movements in popular fronts to fight economic crisis and political repression, they seriously challenged the legitimacy of the state. The state could not contain the urban popular movement which rose in the shadow of a disintegrating economic model. Nor was it completely successful in making its claims appear to be in the general interest. In part, the inability of dominant groups to make the neoliberal model hegemonic was due to the fact that the oppositional movements continued to confront the state through new forms of politics. They took on the battle over ideas.¹⁹ In terms of the active mobilisation of opposition movements, the urban popular movements marked the 1980s in the way that the independent trade union movement had done in the previous decade.

During the 1980s, the line between international and national spheres of politics and economics became increasingly blurred. Each downturn in the international economy was felt in Mexico and thus became an aspect of domestic politics. The international financial disorder of October 1987 caused the peso to be reduced in relation to the dollar and Mexicans felt its drastic effects on wages and living conditions.²⁰ In response to the ensuing national economic crisis, the government declared the *Pacto de Solidaridad Económica* (PASE) in December 1987, three days before a general strike called by the Labour Congress was to begin. This anti-inflation agreement was imposed by the government on the CTM. CTM Secretary-General Fidel Velázquez signed the pact, but trade

union support was exceedingly low. The program entered into the governing platform of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and remained in effect until November 1988.²¹

The Pact indicated that corporatist political arrangements continued to be at the heart of the form of state in Mexico. It was this reality, as much as the terms agreed to, that caused the oppositional forces to join together within the *Frente Nacional Contra el Pacto de Solidaridad Económica* (FNCPSE) to oppose it. The years of austerity and resistance had their impact in many different sectors and well-seasoned activists continued to raise the problem of the corporatist state in their analyses of Mexican capitalist social relations. By the end of the De la Madrid administration, there was a broad consensus within the left that state power had to be recuperated if social needs were ever to be met. As the 1988 election drew near, popular sectors, including the urban popular movement, began to think seriously of electoral politics as a viable option for the opposition.

Similar expressions of discontent became apparent in official PRIista circles as well. It was not so much the fact that the state responded with authoritarianism to economic crisis that caused a serious conflict within the governing PRI. But it was that the bases of the party were completely passed over when President Miguel De la Madrid chose the official candidate for the 1988 Presidential elections.

Carlos Salinas de Gortari was named by the President as the PRI's official candidate despite prior understanding that the Party's constitutive groups would have a say in the process. Some of the Party's most recognised leaders who had comprised the Democratic Current within the Party, among them Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas son of the ex-president General Lázaro Cárdenas, left the party in protest. With the split in the PRI, the prospect of a high profile oppositional candidate emerged.

The question of whether to support a serious oppositional candidate was widely debated among all sectors critical of the PRI and very quickly, a broad coalition formed behind the Cárdenas candidacy. For the opposition, Cárdenas represented the hope for democratic change in Mexico. A coalition of centre-left organisations created the *Frente Democrático Nacional* (FDN) in an unprecedented show of unity behind his campaign in 1988.

With the elections following from the De la Madrid administration, the united opposition was battling economic liberalisation as well as the abject deterioration in democratic practices that had accompanied the economic crisis. While De la Madrid left Salinas a legacy of dramatically lower rates of inflation, high international reserves, successful renegotiation of the external debt and lower interest rates,²² the population in general had paid the price in terms of state 'concertation' with the bourgeoisie and an

absolute decline in living standards due to the level of domination exercised over the working class and peasants.

II. State Strategy and Industrial "Reconversion"

After 1982, the Mexican state was remarkably vigorous in advancing economic restructuring along neoliberal lines. Nevertheless, as Karl Polanyi so brilliantly showed us, the process by which economies are liberalised generally requires a great deal of state support.²³ Consequently it should not surprise us to see that Mexico took on the mantle of neoliberalism with the active intervention of the state. Mexican state managers shifted their attention and public resources towards the new conditions. President Miguel De la Madrid (1982-1988) submitted a series of Constitutional reforms to Congress asserting the state's right to intervene in economic development. The government introduced a National Development Plan which included austerity measures in the area of social programmes, together with policies aimed at developing the most highly internationalised economic sectors linked to the international economy.²⁴ The government announced its intention to expand the development of the northern border regions as sites for international investment, and to provide the opportunity for domestic capital to develop its export capabilities. Increasingly, government policy shifted away from the development of the internal market and moved towards external markets as the new focus for

accumulation. Part of this outward turn involved industrial development in the north of the country as part of a strategy to help balance the country's national payments, but the problem of low prices for primary goods, especially oil, continued to cause serious problems for public finances. It was not only the state, however, that oversaw the process. Given the new levers available to international financial institutions, economic restructuring closely followed the edicts proclaimed by the country's creditors. In late 1985, in a move which assured its orientation towards the priorities of the international economy, Mexico applied for membership to the GATT.

In this period of "modernisation" and "industrial reconversion", the state and those sectors of capital most closely linked to the international economy accepted the precepts of international financial institutions as regards the imperatives of structural adjustment. Proponents argued that economic uncertainty justified a further weakening of the social security system. They argued that the resolution of the crisis would mean sacrifices for the Mexican people. And sacrifice they did. As a result of the financial crisis, the cost of the US dollar rose from 26.2 pesos at the end of 1981 to 148.5 at the end of 1982.²⁵ Between the crisis of 1982 and February 1988, a 50 percent drop in real wages was reported, and tens of thousands of jobs were lost in plant closures.²⁶ In this context, the government declined to

decree increases in the minimum wage. Indeed, employers argued that wages had not fallen sufficiently from their high levels prior to the crisis. The wage issue therefore, became one which was battled over in individual workplaces through contract negotiations and strikes. Successive agreements between the Mexican government and the International Monetary Fund continued to press for an end to public subsidies in the form of social services and low priced staple goods from which the working class benefitted. During the 1980s, radical reforms were made to the structure of the economy and this had dramatically negative implications for the distribution of income in the country. Indices marking poverty levels, nutrition, wage levels and employment all deteriorated. The expression of social rights diminished along with the decline in the social wage and, in the transition to a more liberal economic order, liberal individual political rights were also stifled.

Export-orientation in the Auto Sector

Beginning with the De la Madrid administration in 1982, the "renovation" of the auto sector was deemed to be of central importance in the state's new development strategy, a strategy in which export-oriented production was given priority. Previous efforts to continue both import-substitution industrialisation as well as export-oriented production were at odds with the concern of transnational

employers to rationalise production along continental lines. Consequently, the 1983 Automotive Decree affirmed the state's objective to move the industry toward an export-oriented strategy and a positive commercial balance. The state lowered its demands for national content levels. Whereas the 1962 Decree set targets of 60 percent national integration for the auto assemblers, the Decree of 1983 established new levels of national integration at only 50 percent for autos.²⁷ New models did not have to comply with content requirements if 50 percent were exported. The manufacture of eight cylinder engines was prohibited.²⁸

Rather than impose punitive measures intended to decrease the amount of imported inputs for the industry, the government began to offer companies incentives to invest in production for export.²⁹ When Ford and Mazda indicated their interest in considering Hermosillo as the site for a new auto assembly plant, the joint venture was granted a public credit of \$US 108 million, representing half of its investment in machinery and equipment. The company had three years of grace and seven to pay it back. This sum of money was equal to that spent by the government of the state of Sonora that year. The state provided water, electricity, gas lines, and a four-lane highway for the company's use. These sorts of enticements for company 100% owned by foreign investors were previously unheard of, not to mention contrary to the stated priorities of reductions in government spending.³⁰

In 1989, the new administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari introduced a Decree for the auto industry replacing the 50 percent "national integration" level with a minimum "national aggregate value" of 36 percent. Whereas the Decree of 1972 aimed to structure supply according to patterns of national demand, the objective of the 1989 Decree was to increase industry's participation in the international economy.³¹ In accordance with the priority given to the auto industry as a source of foreign exchange, the state permitted the closure of some plants, the relocation of others, decreases in employment and radical changes to collective agreements.³² In this period we see the virtual disappearance of national auto producers.³³

The transnational auto producers were concerned to promote the continental integration of the industry. They perceived an incentive to invest in productive facilities for the export of four and six cylinder engines and autos to the rest of North America.³⁴ General Motors built an engine plant as well as an assembly plant in Ramos Arízpe. Ford constructed a new engine plant in Chihuahua and the assembly plant in Hermosillo.³⁵ Nissan built an engine plant in Aguascalientes and Renault established an engine plant in Gomez Palacios. From no exports at the beginning of the 1980s, Mexico became an exporter of 1,600,000 engines between 1985-1987.³⁶ Between 1982 and 1986, auto parts exports to the US increased from \$550 million to \$1.79 billion. In 1986,

the trade balance in auto was \$900 million in Mexico's favour.³⁷ Mexico's export capacity increased to approximately 1.5 million engines in 1988. Between 1982-1987, the industry became the second largest exporter after oil.³⁸ This spatial reorganisation of production at the continental level, was experienced in Mexico as a relocation of production from the centre to the northern periphery of the country. Yet, it was the spatial restructuring in relation to other changes in production that marks this period as a transformative one.

Maquilizadized Men in the Mexican auto industry.

Although the *maquilas* correspond to a productive mode quite unlike that of auto assembly, they are not unimportant for our analysis. In the 1980s, the *maquilas* began to lose their enclave status within the economy, not because they increased their backwards and forwards linkages, not because they provided a solution to the country's employment problem, and certainly not because of the value they added to the Mexican economy. In this period, the *maquilas* were no longer restricted to the border areas.³⁹ Yet, even the physical relocation of the *maquilas* to the industrial centre of the country really is not the most significant transformation. It is the ideological power of the transformation that we must acknowledge. The fact that these *maquilas* came to exist alongside the old industries in the centre of the country

bolstered the determination with which labour rights were dismantled in Mexico.

The *maquilas* became the threat to the established industrial worker who did not think of the opportunity for gendered solidarity when he saw economic restructuring with a feminised face in his workplace. The *maquilas* are critical to our analysis because theirs is the image in which labour relations were remade in Mexico. It was a gendered image and it one that continues to divide workers within Mexico and across in North America more generally. As they came to represent the defining processes of the emerging model of development, the *maquiladoras* were moved from the periphery to the centre.

In the assembly plants in the centre of the country, a sector oriented to production for the domestic market, the old plants were compelled to increase their productivity levels with the relatively minimal addition of new technologies.⁴⁰ The old centre of auto production did not simply disappear as a result of the transformations in the industry. It too was reshaped. It seems that the assembly and parts industries became more and more like one another. In fact, some observers had come to speak of the "maquilization" of the auto Mexican industry:

In general, we could say that as the auto industry is restructured, and becomes more automated and flexible, it becomes ever more like a *maquiladora* in its social meaning. That is, we are witnessing a process of "maquilization" in the auto industry. Here we define a *maquiladora* as an industry in its social form and not as

a tariff regime. Its central characteristics are as follows: feminine labour force, highly segmented skill levels, majority of workers in unskilled categories, relatively low wages and with an orientation towards deunionisation.⁴¹

The reclassification of jobs and skill, the intensification of work and the reduction of wages have become the basis for international competitiveness.⁴² Together, these elements have been successful in bringing about higher levels of productivity in the industry at high costs to workers.

Although our main argument rests with the events taking place at the centre of the country at this time, we need consider this argument about *maquilization* more fully. To do that I will briefly discuss the impact of the restructuring process on the *maquilas* in the north of the country. There are three important characteristics of this expanding sector including the character of the labour market, increasing productivity rates, and the deteriorating quality of labour representation.

As seen in the last chapter, one of the ways in which the Big Three auto producers first shifted their competitiveness problem to Mexico, was by taking advantage of the *maquiladora* program that had created export processing zones along the northern border region in Mexico. By the late 1980s, this form of production had become a significant component in the Mexican auto industry. Of the 400,000 workers in Mexico employed in the auto industry in 1990, 120,000 were located in the auto *maquilas*.⁴³ Twenty percent of those employed in

the *maquilas* worked in auto production. 80.5% of General Motors 34 thousand workers were found in the *maquilas*. For Ford, the percentage was 55.2% of approximately 12 thousand workers. Of Chrysler's 16 thousand workers, 80.5 percent were *maquila* workers.⁴⁴ As a percentage of total employment in the auto industry, the *maquilas* became more significant during this decade.

By the late 1980s, the *maquiladora* industries grew at rates far exceeding national averages for industrial growth. Even so, the fact that the growth of employment in the *maquiladora* industries rose from 315,069 workers in 1988 to 452,000 workers in July 1990 was by no means an adequate solution to the employment problem in a country where one million young people became old enough to enter the labour market each year.⁴⁵ Furthermore, employment in the *maquila* industries remained susceptible to expansions and contractions in the US economy.

The expansion in the *maquila* industries depended upon a large surplus pool of labour. In the Mexican *maquiladora* industries, the labour force continued to be made up of workers that were both young and female, although the rate of female employment decreased in the 1980s as a broader range of manufacturers entered the *maquila* program.⁴⁶ In the auto parts sector, traditionally a sector where women do not work, the percentage of women *maquila* workers continued to be significant. Jorge Carrillo reports that 52.1 percent of all

workers in the auto *maquiladoras* are women. Arteaga, Carillo and Micheli found an average of 51.8 percent female workforce in the GM *maquilas* they visited. Herrera Lima indicates that 37.5 percent of all Ford *maquila* workers are women, while 58.5 percent of General Motor *maquila* workers are women.⁴⁷

Apart from relying upon a marginalised labour market, expansion of the *maquila* sector depended upon the combination of low wages and rising productivity rates.⁴⁸ In general, workers in the *maquila* auto parts industries made 60% less in wages than autoworkers in the assembly plants in the centre of the country. In 1986, for example, an unskilled worker in Ford Cuautitlán earned the equivalent of \$US 1.4 per hour. In Hermosillo, a Ford worker in the same category earned \$US 0.56, while a Ford worker in a *maquila* in Ciudad Juárez earned \$US 0.36 per hour.⁴⁹ As regards benefits, the *maquila* contracts are not better than that which is already provided for in the federal labour law.

By the end of the 1980s, the restructuring of work along the lines of lean production were visible in the *maquiladora* industries. Many of the *maquiladora* industries exhibited changed characteristics in their technological and organisational development. Together with a process of capital intensification, some *maquilas* were reorganised according to the demands of just-in-time processes, zero inventories, statistical process control and work teams. Neoliberal arguments suggest that wage increases accompany

productivity increases achieved by these new developments. But wage rates in Mexico are not determined by the operation of the free market. Apart from the dramatic decline in real wage rates following from structural adjustment, state coercion and the repression of labour rights also exert downward pressure on wages. Wages do not directly reflect productivity rates.⁵⁰

As well as being characterised by a de-regulated labour market, and increasing productivity levels, the *maquiladora* industries were noted for having no effective union representation in the 1980s. Even though many of the auto workers were organised into unions, those unions which did exist preferred to increase membership than fight for better working conditions and wages. In the *maquiladoras*, unionisation was not an obstacle for companies wishing to increase productivity levels. In the high-tech *maquiladoras*, 60 percent of the companies had signed collective agreements, while in the low-tech *maquiladoras*, only 22.6 percent did so.⁵¹ Observers note that most trade unions in the *maquilas* were oriented towards the objectives of the employer, rather than the workers' interests. Official unions offered employers collective agreements protecting them against democratic labour movements. In turn, these agreements offered the unions an important regional presence which they otherwise would not have had.⁵² In sum, the low quality of labour representation in the *maquiladora* industries

contributed to the maintenance of unilateral managerial control over the production process and provided for increased managerial prerogatives in this sector.⁵³

III. Labour Conflict at Ford Motor Company - Cuautitlán

The restructuring of the North American auto industry was undertaken between countries and regions of widely divergent social and economic indicators. One of the most significant was the asymmetry in productivity levels that arose between national industries in the same sector. High growth rates accompanied by an increasingly unequal distribution of national income and low productivity rates characterised manufacturing under import-substitution industrialisation.⁵⁴ The disparity in productivity levels among the countries of North America became one of the most serious problems facing Mexican producers as trade liberalisation occurred in North America. There is, however, a curious, but not so surprising twist to all of this. If productivity levels are disaggregated, certain internationalised sectors of the economy, such as auto assembly, matched those of Europe, Canada and the United States.⁵⁵ In these leading sectors, productivity increments did not depend only upon massive capital investments. Competitiveness rested on a combination of transformations in work reorganisation and technological change. As a result, there was not only one version of a competitive auto plant. As Jordy Micheli shows, auto

assemblers reorganised the fit between technological and organisational factors in a variety of ways.⁵⁶ This would suggest a range of possible implications for representation in labour relations.

In both the new and old assembly plants, the restructuring process meant that work was reorganised according to the central precepts of lean production practices known elsewhere. In the new northern plants, international levels of automation and robotization were introduced along with reorganisation of Fordist labour practices. When Ford's Hermosillo plant was first built, for example, it was the most automated of any Ford plant in the world. The high level of capital investment was accompanied by a labour force and organisation of work that differentiated it quite significantly from the older Ford plant in Cuautitlán.⁵⁷ As we shall see in the account that follows, the reorganisation of work followed upon the imposition of forms of labour representation that depended much more upon the authoritarian dimension of hegemonic masculinity than on the paternalism intrinsic to the masculinised production relations of state corporatism.

The Restructuring of Ford

The Ford Motor Company undertook to restructure its Mexican operations within this context. Ford closed down the La Villa plant in 1982, except for two departments. The

Tlalnepantla plant was closed as well. While the Cuautitlán plant was modernised, the bulk of new investments were directed towards an engine plant in Chihuahua, Chihuahua, and an assembly plant in Hermosillo, Sonora. When they were completed, these became the most highly automated plants in the country. Ford began production at the engine plant in Chihuahua in 1983. With an initial investment of \$US 500 million, the new engine plant had the capacity to produce 440 thousand units annually. In 1986, Ford began production at its new joint venture with Mazda in Hermosillo. Initially, this new plant had the capacity to produce 130 thousand Mercury Tracers each year, but new investments increased the productive capacity to 170,000 by 1990 and introduced the production of Ford Escorts as well. Together these investments in Hermosillo represented \$US 800 million.⁵⁸

The company's plans for restructuring production were not restricted to new investments in the northern states. Nor were the downsizing and closure of the two plants on the outskirts of the Federal District the only indication of the company's changing productive strategy in the centre of Mexico. At the heart of Ford's restructuring process was the dismantling of the labour relations regime that had been constructed within state corporatism. This had implications for all three of Ford's Mexican assembly plants, as well as Ford's parts suppliers and *maquilas*. Before the new northern plants were opened, *Ford de México* signed collective

agreements with the *Comité Ejecutivo Nacional* (CEN) of the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Ford Motor Company*. The National Union of Ford workers, an affiliate of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM), now represented workers organised into local unions at Ford-Cuautitlán, located in the central State of Mexico, Ford-Hermosillo, Sonora and Ford-Chihuahua, Chihuahua.

The two new contracts protected Ford from the instability of union drives at the new plants and settled the conditions under which work would be carried out in the new plants. These plants were opened under conditions of maximum flexibility. In signing these collective agreements, the National Union gave up rights acquired over years of struggle in the industrial centre of the country and undermined the strongest collective agreement in the auto industry, that of the Cuautitlán plant in the State of Mexico. Only the collective agreement in Cuautitlán stood in the way of a completely flexible production system in Ford's Mexican operations. Consequently, from the perspective of the Ford Motor Company, it was imperative that a new collective agreement be written for the Cuautitlán plant.⁵⁹ The means by which Ford realised this effort and the extent to which working conditions and labour relations were altered in the process, mark the spring of 1987 as a crucial moment in explaining the emergence of the Democratic Movement of Ford-Cuautitlán workers.

In the 1980s, productivity increases did not emerge from changes in machinery and equipment only, but a new flexibility in labour relations as well. This flexibility was institutionalised in new collective agreements. First of all, there was a steep reduction in job categories. For example, at Ford Hermosillo, there is only one category. After the conflict at Ford Cuautitlán, skill levels were reduced from 32 to 6, and job classifications from 303 to 160.⁶⁰ Seniority rights were taken away and replaced by management prerogatives in individual cases regarding remuneration and job changes.⁶¹ The 'bilateral' relationship of labour unions and management was replaced with one rewarding individual performance and productivity. This suggests a crucial difference from state corporatism. Currently, in the new plants, the company has complete rights to establish levels of productivity and efficiency contributing to the intensification of work. Where productivity levels were once negotiated by the union at Cuautitlán this no longer is the case. As in Hermosillo, as well, management has the right to impose whatever programs it deems necessary in the area of productivity, quality and training.⁶²

Although workers in all three plants were represented by the same union, they all had different contracts with different negotiating dates. The fact that higher wages were paid to workers in the older plant in the state of Mexico was cause for discontent and labour mobilisation in the newer

northern operations. Even in comparison with other auto plants, the average wage in the Cuautitlán plant was 12 percent higher than the oldest plants in the auto industry that were built in the 1950s or before. It was 28.2 percent higher than the average wage of those auto assembly plants built in the 1960s and 53.5% higher than the new assembly plants built in the 1980s. Within *Ford de México*, wages were significantly higher. At an average rate of 8,305.90 pesos per day, wages at Cuautitlán were 103.5% higher than the average wage paid to workers in Ford-Chihuahua (4,376.01 pesos) and 126.5% higher than the average wage paid to workers in Ford-Hermosillo (3,932.79 pesos).⁶³

In part, the strong collective agreement at Ford Cuautitlán reflected the age of the labour force. These were established workers who had years of seniority built up within the model of rights acquired by the worker-father. In *Ford de México*, as well as in other auto companies, managers sought to enhance their control over the production process by changing the composition of the labour force in the auto plants. In the old factories, the labour force was virtually all male. Most auto workers had low levels of education and were urban dwellers with previous industrial experience. In the new northern plants, the labour force had much less industrial experience. Even in the non-*maquila* factories, there were early indications of a feminisation of the labour force. The

new engine plant at GM Ramos Arizpe, for example, employed a work force of 20 percent women.⁶⁴

There was evidence of higher educational levels among workers in the new industries. On average, northern auto workers had eight years of schooling, but those in the centre averaged only six. In the new plants, workers tended to be younger. On average, northern auto workers were twenty years of age while the average age of auto workers in the centre was between 30-35. In the new plants, workers had an average of less than two years previous work experience in new plants, while in the centre, the average was fifteen.⁶⁵ The preferred workers in the new auto plants in the north of the country, whether they found employment in the *maquilas*, the auto parts plants, or in one of the new assembly plants, are quite unlike the employees in the old industrial core of the country. This was quite significant insofar as the costs to an employer of an experienced work force is not simply reflected in the monetary aspects of the contract. Increased trade union militancy is one liability that management was concerned to limit during this period of deep restructuring.

The new union contracts are an indication of the extent to which the old social compromise built around state corporatism in Mexico, had been undermined in the 1980s. Ford workers had been the epitome of working class representation within the PRI-CTM institutional relationship. In earlier times, the CTM could deliver its membership in support of the

PRI but as the social basis for this relationship came apart, the CTM lost legitimacy among its base and resorted to authoritarianism to maintain its leadership position. It was not the case that the CTM became irrelevant in the new flexible environment, but its role shifted away from an institution which offered workers benefits organised by the state, to one which exerted control over the workers as they confronted lean production.

Strike, Closing and Severance: Cuautitlán in 1987

The existence of a strong contract at Ford Cuautitlán was the central issue to emerge in a protracted conflict between management and the local union during the 1987 contract negotiations.⁶⁶ The conflict at Cuautitlán began when, during the summer of 1987, the Mexican government decreed emergency minimum wage increases for non-union workers and announced that increases in unionised workplaces would be negotiated between the employers and workers. Generally, companies paying more than the minimum wage increase wages according to the percentage rise in the minimum wage, but in this case, Ford refused. With the National Union Executive pressing for the increases of 53 per cent, the Ford-Cuautitlán workers went out on strike on July 21. Workers at Ford Hermosillo and Ford Chihuahua were granted the increase but went out on strike in solidarity with the Cuautitlán workers nonetheless. With the local leadership refusing to concede on

this point, and the strike moving into its second month, the company gave notice that it was about to close the plant and terminate the contracts of all workers. The company chose to sever all personnel at the Cuautitlán plant and close operations down. This was not a layoff, nor even a lockout. The company closed the plant.

Some argued that this conflict was provoked by the national union leadership and the company, to move the situation to an impasse.⁶⁷ At this point, the general feeling among the workers was that they should accept the severance pay instead of budging on the wage demand.⁶⁸ The Secretary General of the National Executive Committee was publicly in favour of the outcome and signed an agreement on September 19 whereupon the company began the process of dismissing all 3,200 workers. Surprisingly, the Federal Arbitration and Conciliation Committee rejected the agreement, arguing that it did not guarantee the rights of workers. There may have been other reasons for this statement, including the precedent that it set for other cases of workers demanding high settlements after plant closures. Still, the agreement provided more money than most workers had ever received and they accepted the settlement, knowing that they would have no job to return to.

Although all workers received severance packages when the company closed its doors, the financial instability of the October 1987 stock market crash led to a period of economic

insecurity throughout the autumn. Incredulous, the fired workers watched as the money that was to provide some future protection brought the instability of the international economy to their doorsteps:

When we received the severance pay we thought we would invest it. At that time the interest rate paid by the banks was 160 per cent annually. As well, the banks came to the doors of the plant offering us advice on how to invest our resources that in total were millions of pesos. They offered us credit cards and I don't know what all... But, what happened? 20 or 30 days after having received the severance pay, in the beginning of December of 1987, there was a devaluation of the peso of nearly 60 percent. As well, the stock market crashed and many of the brothers attracted by the high interest rates had invested there... So many people that made investments when all this happened, well, they were out on the street.⁶⁹

Contracts and working conditions in the "New Ford"

Although the severances had been paid out, Fidel Velázquez and John Ogdin, Director of Ford, continued to hold talks throughout the autumn regarding the conditions of a new contract which would precede the re-opening Ford Cuautitlán. In the meantime, the Secretary General of the National Union of Ford workers was removed from his position by Fidel Velázquez who replaced him with Héctor Uriarte as interim leader. Uriarte joined the negotiating talks. Within weeks, the company opened the Cuautitlán operations again, and rehired many of its old employees under a completely new contract. On November 9, the plant resumed operations with 2,500 re-hired employees. As it turned out, the negotiations

between the CTM and Ford which led to the reopening of the plant, also opened up a new phase in labour relations.

By severing the workers and reopening the plant under a new contract, management was able to break with the character of labour relations as they had developed since 1964 when the plant was first opened. As a result, the collective agreement immediately went from being the best contract with respect to labour rights in the automobile industry in the country, to being the worst.⁷⁰ The collective agreement at Ford-Cuautitlán now conformed to the model of lean production that had been introduced into the north of Mexico. It would be a mistake to suggest that Ford de Mexico had now 'caught up' to the level of modernisation in its other North American plants because lean production in practice does not correspond exactly to the idealised model. This is the case partly because of the different ways in which trade unions have resisted or engaged with the process of restructuring. There are significant differences between the Canadian Auto Workers and the United Auto Workers for example.⁷¹ In the Mexican case, however, neither the National Union of Ford workers nor the CTM represented a serious obstacle to the company's efforts to restructure labour relations.

When the workers returned to Ford, they were told that a "New Ford" now existed, with a new contract and new working conditions.⁷² Although the national leadership argued that it was able to retain transportation benefits, meals and the

company's payment of social security benefits, the most important elements of the contract were eliminated. All acquired years of seniority were lost to the workers who were recontracted when the company reopened its doors. The new collective agreement indicated that management could move workers wherever they were required, but omitted clauses which provided for the financial security of workers who were transferred. Management was permitted to expand the role of temporary workers in the plant and overtime benefits were reduced. Where movement up the job ladder was once based on seniority rights, management acquired the right to move workers both up and down the ladder, according to "competence, efficiency, conduct, attendance, punctuality and discipline". Under the new agreement, each worker was to be evaluated every three months according to these criteria. The union lost the right to dispute management's decisions against workers who wished to move to vacant jobs. In this way, the new collective agreement diminished the union's role in conflict resolution and emphasised the responsibility of the individual worker to uphold quality and productivity standards. So too did the new contract increase the subordination of the local union to the control of the National leadership. Rather than leaving hiring decisions up to the local leadership, for example, the approval of the Secretary General of the National Union was required before workers were contracted by the company.⁷³

Not by retooling and technological change, higher productivity levels were introduced by changes in the organisation of work and working conditions in the reopened plant. So that all workers would keep up with the faster pace on the line, only uninjured workers were hired back. The buses that brought workers to the plant were instructed to arrive 30 minutes before the shift started and once the shift started there were no breaks.⁷⁴ The organisation of the meal was changed so that the line would be stopped for one 30 minute period only, instead of the previous system in which each department had its own scheduled break. The longer line-ups resulted in a reduced eating period and the fact that workers were forbidden to sit down during the eight hour shifts caused a considerable amount of discontent.⁷⁵ Even with these simple changes, conditions in the plant had deteriorated with respect to workers' daily experience and high stress levels became evident early on. One worker describes the effect on the men in the plant:

All of the sudden we find ourselves working quicker, quicker, until everyone on the line begins to hiss and boo, sshh, sshh, sshh, everyone punching the boxes and already at the limit, at the edge of hysteria, because we couldn't take it; throwing tools, already going about enraged, a rage that the company takes advantage of and since everyone is furious, everyone enraged, everyone wants to tell them to go fuck their mother, to tear them to pieces, and so the company uses all this fury to get us to work harder, because then they raise the speed on the production line...

The anguish of living on the line was daily and on Sunday afternoons, I would disconnect from the world because on Monday I had to go back to work, it was the anguish of the stress of only thinking that I would be running back

and forth for 8 hours, in which you can't sit down, in which you can't drink water, can't even go to piss.⁷⁶

Ford was able to alter the working conditions in the plant by unilaterally reasserting its control over the production process but, as a result, the stability of labour relations under the old conditions disappeared. The company imposed the conditions it desired with respect to its flexibility program on the workers, but it could not compel workers to welcome it. In the words of an ex-Ford worker:

All this obviously increased productivity and with it, an exaggerated work-over load. In principal, over-time was eliminated; we were very accustomed to working over-time, but with the new company this was the slogan they used, over-time is eliminated for everything, productivity is increased to the limit and with the most miserable salaries ever seen. That's when people began to realise where they were leading us. Then people began to protest, to complain, to show it in low quality, in blocking up the production line, in producing defective materials, people began to do things to show their non-conformity.⁷⁷

The company responded to the dissent on two levels. First, in the spirit of authoritarianism, it began selective firings and was able to do so easily since all workers were still on temporary contracts.⁷⁸ Secondly, in a more paternalistic way, the company instituted weekly meetings of Quality Circles in the plant in order to impress upon workers, their self-interest in improving the plant's competitiveness. A worker recounts the impact of the Quality programme:

Before, we used to say, "What I am selling is my labour power, and if the operation ends up badly, it is because the material is bad, things are going badly because the environment doesn't allow things to be produced well, it's not my problem". But now, with the new philosophy, we are the ones at fault. That is the difference. So, a

worker, does his job and puts on the stamp of auto-certification, but it is his own conscience that becomes the police and it is telling you, "Know what? Either you fix the operation, or take off the stamp", and so this new philosophy is taking us back to medieval times because there is a supreme being watching you, that is watching us, and even worse, its our own conscience that we have inside of us. And this is what we talk about every Wednesday in the Active Circles.⁷⁹

Despite management assertions that the new Ford would be based on more egalitarian relations of production, this was not borne out in the workday. In effect, any "flattening" of labour relations which occurred devolved more responsibilities to workers without increasing their level of control over the process. Workers in the "*Movimiento Democrático*" (democratic movement) reported that management's search for flexibility increased the brittleness in workers' relations with each other. According to one worker:

The 'Guiding Principles' are no more than a series of rules that regulate this whole philosophy, that is 'the client is the most important and here all of us are clients and all are suppliers', because the *compañero* behind me is my supplier and I am his client. So, the *compañero* has to bring me the panel on time, because I cannot do his work, because if I don't provide (my piece) on time, how can the client be satisfied? But, moreover, I am the supplier for the *compañero* ahead, and if I don't finish my job then how can he put on the windscreen? So, we are all clients and all suppliers where we say to our supplier, "Hey, how come you're sending me bad work?" How is this possible? So, now it is not the boss, the supervisor, or the manager who comes to tell you- listen bastard, why did you do this badly? No, its the worker himself down the line who tells you '*Compañero*, there's a rod loose' because he is my client.⁸⁰

Here we have an example of the serious problems involved in the shift to lean production. One of the new contradictions of flexible labour relations arises from the fact that a

worker knows the person beside him is a "*compañero*" (a companion, the one with whom he shares bread), as well as a "client" who holds him responsible for the quality of the product he is given. With this shift in discourse came a message from management about the increased weight of responsibility that individual workers were expected to bear. The way in which this undermined a sense of common experience among workers was well expressed by a Cuautitlán worker:

(T)he philosophy is pure hypocrisy, because the employer tells us that they are going to give us better working conditions, but they pass on the mistakes of their productive planning to the worker. So now, the company is not responsible if something goes wrong. Now the guilty one is the worker, because he did his work badly and they can't accept that a unit could be produced badly for any number of reasons. 'What do you mean the tools are bad? The original material is bad? Impossible.' They wouldn't admit that there wasn't enough time to do the job or that the *compañero* wasn't in the proper physical or mental state to do the job.

They speak of a new philosophy, of new guiding principles and moral values, that sound very nice but this all has to do with getting rid of the collectivity of the worker. They try to make it become an individual model instead. This is what they want us to get into our heads: 'Who do you think wins if you defend the rights of everyone? You look after yourself.'⁸¹

Lean production involves a move towards individualisation, despite the extent to which the ideology of teamwork pervades the discourse. As we see in the Cuautitlán case, workers took on more and more responsibility during the workday without a corresponding increase in decision-making power. Indeed, labour's collective rights over the production process were dramatically reduced.

Transformations in Representation and the Struggle to Democratise the National Union

Although Fidel Velázquez appointed a new National Executive Committee for the national union of Ford workers, the local union leadership at Cuautitlán was chosen in a democratic election after the plant reopened. With relative speed, this democratically elected Local Executive Committee (LEC) began to mount a campaign to challenge the unrepresentative character of the National Union. With the March 1989 contract negotiations approaching, the LEC convened a general assembly at which the workers elected representatives from each of the different plants in Cuautitlán to represent workers in negotiations.

Ordinarily, collective agreements were negotiated by a committee comprised of the members of the National Executive Committee only. Thus, by forming a negotiating committee, the local leadership issued a direct challenge to the national leadership as well as to the company. Neither the employer nor the National Executive recognised the locally elected negotiating committee. The company argued that the negotiating committee was to be formed by members of the union. In contract language, 'members of the union', according to Ford, referred to the National Executive Committee.⁸²

This definitional question struck right to the heart of representation in the union. Who had the authority to speak

on behalf of the members; the unelected national executive, or the elected members of a local committee? According to the local committee, all workers are union 'members' and thus, eligible to serve on the negotiating committee. When this dispute was brought to the labour courts, it was the employer's definition that was upheld.⁸³

The conflict between the local and national committees became irreconcilable as the local executive at Cuautitlán continued to press its demands for democratic representation at the national level. The local union held an Assembly on 17 June 1989 at which time it declared its intention to promote the direct election of a new National Committee at the upcoming Union Congress of delegates from the three Ford Plants. A week later the entire LEC was fired.⁸⁴ Workers responded to this affront to their democratic rights by shutting down the plant. This immediate response was short lived.

Freed from the need to deal with the complaints from Cuautitlán, the Congress of Ford unions went ahead in July 1989 under the control of the national union and the CTM. In the lead up to the Congress, Héctor Uriarte, the General Secretary of the National Union, presented workers with an advance on their of the profit share, normally due at the end of December. Although the advance had been distributed outside of the legal provisions for the distribution of profits, Uriarte's "gift" was helpful in legitimising the

continuation of his position as Secretary General of the national executive committee.⁸⁵ At the same time, the company found a method of reducing dissent during a highly conflictual moment.

During the Congress, the Assembly approved modifications to the statutes governing the activities and role of the union. These had significant implications for representation at the local level. One of the most significant changes altered the definition of union member. Previously, members of the union were defined as "those workers who offered their services to the Ford Motor Company in the auto industry, in present installations or any that would be established in the Mexican Republic".⁸⁶ In the July 1989 revision, a sentence was added which blurred the meaning of "member". Along with *miembro* (member), the union statutes created the additional category of *socio*, a word which conveys the notion of partnership as well as membership. In the language of lean production, *socio* is translated as 'associate' and is a term used by management to represent the multi-skilled individual who works for the company. The inference is that an associate, being neither a worker nor an employee, participates in a milieu in which unequal social relations have been banished. In fact the change in terminology reflects management's attempt to eliminate any distinctions between workers based on skill and experience. The importance of this shift is not felt only in the workplace. The Ford

workers' union accommodated its own union statutes to the identity constructed by management within the ambit of restructured production relations.

Moreover, the modified statute indicated that associates could be either temporary (*temporal*) or permanent (*base*). As a result, the new article entrenched the union's acceptance of temporary workers and created a two-tiered structure of more and less entitled members of the union. Other reformed statutes make the meaning of this change more apparent. For instance, previous delegates to the National Union Congress were elected on the basis of one per 100 workers. The reformed statutes declared that the number of delegates would be based on one per one hundred *permanent* workers in the plant (art.86). If the number of temporary workers increased, then there would be fewer delegates elected to the National Union Congress. Furthermore, quorum would now be based upon 50 percent plus one of permanent workers (art.93). Again, with the ratio of temporary to permanent workers increasing, this would make it more difficult to reach quorum. Similarly only permanent workers could be elected to union leadership positions (art.109).

Given the uncertainty provoked by management's decision to increase the proportion of temporary jobs, it is not surprising that a union would try to protect the interests of the permanent workforce. This keeps the issue of job security as well as its own reproduction at the heart of the union

agenda. But, these statutes accepted the category of temporary workers, where previously they did not.

By accepting the language of lean production within its own organisation, the union accepted management's rights to impose conditions fostering insecurity among workers. By entrenching this new distinction, the CTM permanently entrenched the notion of a hierarchy of members within the union. This was a significant departure for a CTM union, given its history of strenuous objections to alterations in the contractual obligation of employers to turn temporary positions into permanent ones and to maintain a low percentage of temporary workers in the workforce.

It is also important to recognise the fact that the union's statutes were reformed in the middle of a battle over the undemocratic character of the union as well as the restructuring process itself. It is helpful to see the redefinition of "membership" in relation to the company's earlier arguments on this question when the local Cuautitlán union tried to elect a contract negotiating committee. This redefinition is closely linked to the conflict which the CTM was trying to control at Cuautitlán. If the union's own statutes indicated that different meanings could be ascribed to the category of "member" then this weakened the local committee's argument over who was and was not entitled to sit as a "member" of the contract Negotiating Committee in particular, and to represent workers more generally.

The redefinition of membership is an indication of the way in which the CTM attempted to recuperate control over representation through the use of sanction and exclusion. Another example of changes to the statutes illustrates this point. Article 97 was rewritten to reaffirm the right of the National Union to control the activities of the Local Executives and their activities. The new article asserts that Assemblies would be "presided over by a National Secretary, if one was in attendance". Given that the "president of debates" was charged with "directing the discussion" and "preserving the order" of such meetings, this was indeed a powerful incursion into the life of the local union.

The fact that these changes were made during a Congress at which the opposition was eliminated revealed clearly that the issue was not simply about who was a union member, but about who would determine what the definition of membership would be.

The 1989 Conflict at Cuautitlán and the search for a negotiated resolution

While most of the fired local executive at Cuautitlán accepted their severance pay, some the members of the committee refused and began a campaign to demand their reinstatement. They organised a "Dignity Camp" outside the plant gates from which they distributed flyers and a weekly newspaper to the Cuautitlán workers. Two members maintained

a hunger strike for 35 days at the Angel of Independence, a large monument in a public intersection directly outside Ford's main offices in Mexico D.F. In the middle of one night, they and their supporters were beaten and taken away by thugs to the outskirts of the city. The next day they returned to the square in front of the National Palace in the centre of the city. As far as the fired workers were concerned, the problem was not one restricted to the company but one which called for a political solution.⁸⁷

The hunger strike was unsuccessful but the conflict intensified in December of 1989 when the company paid a very low profit-share to the workers at Cuautitlán. The company argued that its financial situation was weakened due to poor performance during the year. Management argued that the workers had already received a portion of their share earlier in the year when Héctor Uriarte, the General Secretary of the National Union, advanced all Ford workers a proportion of profits at the time of the Congress. Although this decision was made to quell dissent, in the end, it generated an enormous amount of conflict among the workers. Given the fact that workers were not taxed on this money at the time, the company rectified the situation in December by taking the taxes off the Christmas bonus. As a result the bonus was also reduced significantly.⁸⁸ Because the workers depend upon this money at the end of the year, especially since they were

now earning so much less than under the old contract, they were infuriated and initiated a wildcat strike.

By the end of 1989, there were a series of unresolved conflicts in the Cuautitlán plant which made the labour relations situation quite unstable. Not only were workers resentful because of the modifications to the collective agreement and working conditions, but they were angered by the decline in their wages. This resistance to the employer's strategies around the restructuring of production was intertwined with a general rejection of the CTM's role in the firing of the local committee and discontent about the violence faced by the fired workers outside of the plant. The grievances were manifested in resistance on the line as well as in solidarity actions with the fired workers. On two occasions, for example, the workers in the plant went on a one day collective fast. But it was the wage issue that brought the situation to a head. When the company refused to pay the workers the profits to which they felt entitled, workers immediately elected a Negotiating Committee comprised of 17 workers and five of the fired local executive members. The Committee demanded an increased payment of profit shares and threatened to change centrals if the CTM did not take a harder line with the company. As well, they demanded that Fidel Velázquez conduct a referendum on the legitimacy of the National Executive Committee.⁸⁹

In response to this development, the company called a technical shutdown and the plant was closed for longer than usual during the Christmas holidays. During the shutdown, the leadership of the Negotiating Committee met with Fidel Velázquez and signed an agreement to hold a January referendum on the legitimacy of the National Union leadership. If the result was to repudiate the leadership, new elections would be held. But, no sooner was the agreement signed than the dissidents had second thoughts. They realised that nothing had been clarified by this discussion. No one knew how the vote would be held, where it would be held, who would be able to vote, and what date had actually been set.⁹⁰

The conflict moved quickly to a very violent confrontation. On January 4th, the company circulated a letter in which it indicated that "outsiders had been attempting to destabilise production in the plant and distort information". The letter indicated that anyone who had complaints about profit sharing and taxes ought to bring them to the "National Executive committee, the only body recognised by the labour authorities, and consequently, by the Company".⁹¹ The next day, the General Secretary of the National Union arrived at the plant with a group of 60 thugs, and for the second time, fired workers were severely beaten up at the Dignity Camp. These workers were taken away by the thugs and brought to the police in the municipality of Cuautitlán Izcalli, where they were to be charged with

damaging property and blocking the highways. That day there was no work done in the plant, since the workers refused to go in. Management argued that they had nothing to do with the conflict and that it was an intra-union matter in which they would not involve themselves. Later, the company was compelled to intervene since the workers refused to work until those who had been taken away, reappeared. Those detained were released and immediately brought their demands to the Human Rights Commission in Mexico City.⁹²

The next day of work was Monday January 8th. By the time workers began arriving for work, thugs were waiting in greater number. They beat the workers with pistols, tubes, sticks and began shooting on the workers. One worker, Cleto Nigmo Urbina, was killed and approximately ten workers were wounded. Workers reported that the band of goons entered the plant, armed, in company uniforms and with credentials identifying them as Ford workers. Later, the workers used some of these credentials to show that they lacked a federal registration number which appears on all workers' badges. They argued that no one but the Ford Motor Co. could have provided them with identification and the older used uniforms which they wore during the assault on the Cuautitlán workers.⁹³ Although the workers captured three men involved in the assault, a police investigation never brought anyone to trial. The company announced that work would be stopped until it could guarantee secure working conditions. At this point, the workers

occupied the factory until the 22nd of January, when they were removed forcibly by a security force of over three thousand. Up to that point, the workers argued that they would not leave the premises because after four days the Company could argue that they had abandoned their jobs, justifying their dismissal.

Before the conflict was settled, a protracted set of negotiations had taken place between the CTM, the national union, elected representatives of the workers, the company and labour authorities. It took over two years to resolve the immediate issues that the conflict raised and, in the process, the Ford Workers Democratic Movement challenged not only the authoritarianism of the company but the lack of democracy in the state itself.

After the events of January 8th, the Negotiating Committee was seen by the Cuautitlán workers as their only legitimate representative, despite the fact that it existed outside of the formal union structure.⁹⁴ The National Union of Ford workers offered no legitimate leadership. Uriarte left his post for 'personal reasons', and Juan José Sosa was immediately appointed General Secretary of the National Union.⁹⁵ As the events of Cuautitlán became widely known, the Negotiating Committee (CN) was recognised in Mexico as the leadership of the Ford workers movement. In the United States and Canada, they became known as the Ford Workers Democratic Movement (FWDM). Because trade unionists recognised that

elected union leaders who were illegally deposed remained in the leadership of the movement, the FWDM were seen as the legitimate representatives of the Ford workers at Cuautitlán. The Committee fought a long legal battle during which time it contested the lack of representation within the union and the state. It fought for the reincorporation of fired workers, a political solution to the conflict and a new definition of solidarity within the context of North American integration. Their battle and culminated in a referendum within the plant over union affiliation.

At first, the Negotiating Committee demanded immediate union elections at the national and local level, as well as the full payment of lost wages and benefits as conditions for the return to work. The CTM demanded an unconditional return to work before negotiations were concluded, while Ford demanded an immediate end to what it called an "inter-union conflict". It refused to talk with the Negotiating Committee until it was officially recognised by the CTM. Finally, the company demanded that all individual contracts be rescinded since the workers had illegally occupied the plant. In defense, the Negotiating Committee argued that the Company had unilaterally abandoned the factory and decided to close it without the intervention of the labour authorities.⁹⁶

Evidently, the concerted strategy was to wear the workers out; first of all, with a long shut down and then by delegitimising the Negotiating Committee with intervention of

the CTM. Apart from the discussions that went on behind closed doors, early negotiations included an audience with the Federal Labour Board (*Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje*) and a scheduled meeting with the company which the union declined to attend.⁹⁷ Still refusing to recognise the Committee as a legitimate interlocutor, Ford argued that the union was not interested in talks and sent dismissal notices to the each worker's home. Almost immediately, the company began to hire back 300 workers each day to a total of only 1,500.⁹⁸ With this mass dismissal, the focus of the negotiations turned to the problem of recontracting. In a partial resolution, the CTM required workers to reaffirm their loyalty to it as a condition of being hired back and the company proceeded to recontract 3,900 workers, leaving 750 workers with neither a contract nor a severance agreement.⁹⁹

The workers who were not recontracted tried to regain their jobs in a protracted battle under the leadership of the Negotiating Committee. The Committee decided to take the legal-institutional avenues open to them and found themselves in battle with the CTM, the National Executive Committee and the Secretary of Labour (STyPS). They sought and attained meetings with Fidel Velázquez as well as the Secretary of Labour. Although the Negotiating Committee mobilised the workers in mass demonstrations, they did so in support of their legal struggle. For instance, they marched the 36 km from Cuautitlán to the National Palace in order to gain a

meeting with the President of the Republic. They were unsuccessful. On another occasion, while the leadership of the movement went into the offices of the Secretary of Labour, the workers maintained a large and noisy demonstration outside. While the leaders negotiated in the Federal District, the fired workers organised a blockade of the major highway outside the plant at Cuautitlán. As the weeks stretched into months, the resistance continued to take place largely within the labour law regime and through a public campaign which affirmed the need for a defense of individual rights. They kept other relationships open and linked their struggle with those of other democratic movements. But acts of civil disobedience accompanied their legal battle. They occupied the Ford offices in Mexico City and were ejected from the adjacent hotel in the course of a meeting there. Fed up with the slow process, approximately one hundred fired workers appeared naked at the Federal Labour Board to protest the lack of results of their legal battle.

So, we showed our nakedness in such a large group in order to express the unprotected state in which we, the Ford workers, found ourselves in. We wanted to let everyone see the beastly transnational for what it was, a company which tramples over the labour laws of our country with impunity.¹⁰⁰

Eventually, the Negotiating Committee and the corporation sat for direct talks. In July, the company offered a severance package that had two conditions attached to it. First of all, workers were required to desist from demanding changes in union centrals. Secondly, the company demanded

that all remaining workers accept the severance package.¹⁰¹ The Negotiating Committee considered these conditions to be anti-constitutional. They objected to the first condition because it was a demand made of the workers who were back working, as well as those workers offered the severance package. They also objected to this condition because it was a direct intervention by the company in union affairs. The Negotiating Committee objected to the second condition because, in their view, the decision to accept or reject the termination offer would be up to each fired worker. The offer consisted a 62.5% of lost wages from January to July, with the 22 percent increase gained in salary negotiations of March 31; three months wages; 20 days of salary for each year of seniority, all benefits lost during the same period, and 200,000 pesos as compensation. More than 600 workers accepted the offer.¹⁰² Still, the conflict was not resolved and 140 fired workers refused to accept the package. They continued their legal battle with the company and the labour authorities. For these workers, the issues had become fundamentally political ones. They continued to raise three central demands in the name of the Democratic Movement of Ford Workers. The first was to demand that those responsible for the attack on January 8th be brought to justice. Héctor Uriarte remained a free man, even though there was an outstanding order for his arrest. The leaders of the movement argued that the "intellectual authors" had not yet been

identified. Secondly, they refused to accept the legality of the company's refusal to hire them back. They wanted to be reinstated as Ford workers. Thirdly, they demanded that their petition to the Labour Board be heard.¹⁰³ With this petition, the Negotiating Committee contested the entitlement of the CTM to the collective agreement. The petition asked that the *Sindicato Revolucionario de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz y Similares de la República Mexicana* be considered the legitimate representative of the Ford workers. In effect, this demand was the means by which the movement would try to take the Ford Union out of the CTM.

The Labour Board finally heard the movement's petition. At the request of Ford, the Board rejected the workers arguments and closed the file. In response, the Ford Workers sought the intervention of the government's official National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) in order to protest the lack of impartiality in the treatment of their case. At the same time, they appealed the decision of the Labour Board to the Supreme Court of Justice. In May of 1991, the Supreme Court ruled in their favour and the Secretary of Labour was required to set a date for a vote which would determine whether the CTM or the COR had the right to represent the Ford workers. This was a great victory for the movement and cause for great celebration in the wider democratic labour movement. Once the date was set, the FWDM called for national and international

observers at the referendum. The movement gathered support from many sectors.¹⁰⁴

On June 3 1991 the vote was held inside the heavily guarded factory. Representatives from the CTM, the company and the labour authorities watched each worker vote and asked each worker to call out which central they supported. Each decision was recorded on a list of employees and the proceedings were filmed by the authorities. The Negotiating Committee argued that non-union employees as well some individuals who were not Ford workers voted, while other workers were prevented from voting. The CTM won the referendum by a vote of 1,325 to 1,110. The Committee of Independent Observers, arguing that the vote was not a secret one, denounced the violence and declared the vote null and void.¹⁰⁵

Reprisals against those who voted for the COR were swift. The Secretary General of the national union demanded that all those who had voted in favour of the COR had 20 days to reincorporate into the CTM or they would be fired by means of the "exclusion clause". Facing the threat of massive firings and having lost once again at the hearing into their appeal, the leadership of the Democratic movement faced the end of their struggle.

Regional, National and International Solidarity

During the course of the Cuautitlán conflict the issues raised by the Movement were seen to have wide significance for labour and popular movements within Mexico and elsewhere. As the Negotiating Committee fought their battles with the major players and engaged in a broad array of issues, all other labour movements for democracy in the country watched with great interest. The movement strengthened its solidarity with other democratic trade union movements at the national level by joining in the creation of the *Frente Sindical Unitario* (FSU) early in 1990. Together with workers from Tornel, Modelo Breweries, as well as the democratic section of the Teachers Union, Ford Workers were able to increase their public presence while sharing information and supporting one another's struggles for democratic representation. At times, they supported broader movements by participating in marches such as the one organised for the International Day against the Debt. Because they were part of the CTM, each member of the movement was also an official member of the PRI. Consequently, they were in a complicated position as far as party militancy was concerned. Their political opposition to the governing party took a non-partisan form, but they were supported by the broad centre-left coalition of the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD), and by the *Partido de la Revolución de los Trabajadores* (PRT), among others. In the Chamber of Deputies, federal representatives debated the

treatment that the Movement had received during the vote on union affiliation. The oppositional deputies raised the question of a reform to the Labour Law in order to establish the right to a secret ballot. The initiative was not approved.

The support of the popular movement was crucial but it did not result in a speedy resolution of the conflict. The process was interminable. The "worker-fathers" paid heavy costs:

We never spoke very much about what was happening in terms of morale and economic hardship, so things wouldn't be seen in that way. We have always believed that those are the costs of the struggle and the truth is that the costs were very high. Like, the compañeros sold their things. They sold their cars, those that had one. They sold their televisions. Many compañeros were abandoned by their families. One day a compañero came and said:

-They cleaned out the house.

Well, you have to go and lodge a complaint then.

-No, *hombre*, my woman left a note and took off, taking my kids too. She left me a note in which she told me to go live with the movement, and if I couldn't, then bring them to live in the house.

All of us who lived in the movement had to pay very high costs. These are invisible costs because we didn't want to make public all that the Ford movement had cost us. At the end we had to find a way out because the people were abandoning the struggle, even without getting any money at all.¹⁰⁶

Faced with delay after delay and limited resources, the Negotiating Committee organised a "Kilo Campaign", during which it asked housewives from the Cuautitlán area to support their struggle by donating staple goods to the movement. The members of the Committee engaged with every legal avenue available to them and they became experts in Mexican labour law. While waiting for their next court date, they continued

to leaflet the workers at the plant, but despite the endless activism, the stress of living for so long without a job and without income caused problems for many families. As one Committee member described it:

Every day, I would come home and the wife would ask: - When will it be over? Well, it's just that we have an audience. -But the audience was yesterday. No, now we have another. -Okay, so until when? Well, its only the Labour Board decision now. And then when the decision was announced, -Okay, now what? No, it's just that we have the appeal and the constitutional audience as well. -Well that's just fine, but I don't give a damn. You have to bring us something to eat.¹⁰⁷

Over the course of the conflict at Cuautitlán, what was once only the spectre of free trade began to take on more substance. The regional and national issues developed an international character as the abstract notion of economic restructuring was made concrete by both the conflict at Cuautitlán and the free trade negotiations. In their meetings with national union and labour authorities the Negotiating Committee argued that:

We could not tolerate what is now a reality, this free trade, and the opening of borders. Even Salinas de Gortari was wandering around in foreign countries offering big capital everything so that they would come and invest in Mexico. (We pointed out) that we had already taken the transnational plant (and) it was not acceptable for everyone to see Mexico as a country where it was possible to tramples all over the rights of workers in order to make the economy grow. We said that we were ready to produce with high levels of quality and productivity but only when there was social justice for us. And, as our supreme leader Fidel Velázquez said, we were not going to permit our national sovereignty to be violated.¹⁰⁸

Although the attacks on the labour rights of the Cuautitlán workers were severe indeed, the Mexican workers had no illusions about the possible benefits of US-style labour relations regime. Indeed, there was a general apprehension that NAFTA would open the door to an even more restrictive notion of labour rights in Mexico, where US legal norms would be imported.¹⁰⁹ One of the Ford workers who travelled to the US on a solidarity tour commented on the restrictions facing US trade unionists:

So, people go to offer their services to the company even when there is a strike. Some continue working while the workers cannot even block the doors, nor put up the red and black banners as we do in Mexico and in Latin America. They can't put their tents up in the factory permanently. The only thing they can do is put up a picket of people to try to keep the scabs out. Yes they do slow things down a bit, but nothing more... So, I have the impression that with all these changes that they are thinking of making to the Federal Labour Law, they are trying to make us adjust to something similar to what they suffer there.¹¹⁰

There was wide support for the Ford workers at the international level, but this became a sensitive issue for unions affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and its regional body in the Americas, the *Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores* (ORIT). At every opportunity, and using the most eloquent discourse from the Revolutionary Nationalist tradition, the CTM declared its opposition to any internationalism that would represent an incursion into the sovereign affairs of Mexico. The official international labour bodies were not the ones

that the Ford workers found most useful in their struggle. Only when the battle was all but over, did the FWDM attempt to use the established institutions of international labour. The results of the final referendum, together with the information given by the international observers, were sent to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In the petition, the leaders of the Democratic Movement asked the ILO to oblige the Mexican government to ensure the right to a secret ballot in labour matters. This minimalist approach contrasts with the optimism of less formal relationships developed on the basis of labour solidarity in North America during the early days of the Cuautitlán labour struggle.

With the beginning of free trade discussions, the leadership of this movement encountered an unprecedented level of interest in Mexican labour issues among their counterparts in Canada and the United States. Many of these trade unionists had long deplored the *maquiladoras* and the fact that much of the labour intensive work had been moved there, but this general uneasiness became more specific as the Big Three threatened workers with more plant closures and the movement of product lines. Because lean production demands that plants compete with one another for contracts, Ford workers in Canada and the United States felt threatened by the company's restructuring plans for Mexico.

To the extent that union activists and the some unions were able to circumvent formal international labour protocols,

links were formed between the three labour movements. The Cuautitlán Negotiating Committee, with the support of Transnational Information Exchange and Labour Notes in Detroit, developed an information network among North American auto workers. The Canadian Auto Workers supported the Ford Workers, as did the New Directions Movement of the United Auto Workers. Representatives of the FWDM were invited to speak in at union gatherings in the United States and in Canada and they developed a network of contacts in Argentina, Brazil, Spain and England.¹¹¹ The national and regional coalitions which organised in against the NAFTA, including the Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC), the Action Canada Network (ACN), the Coalition for Fair Trade (CFT), as well as the MODTLE, all took up the Cuautitlán story in their debates with the result that it became widely known in Canada and the United States.

The new internationalism of the Ford workers was based on a search for "education, support, solidarity and interchange of experiences".¹¹² As the struggle continued, international solidarity became a important force that sustained the Committee, in financial terms and in terms of morale. For example, on the first anniversary of the attack, January 8 1991, the Democratic Movement of Ford workers brought together both national and international expressions of solidarity with the struggle and in memory of Cleto Nigmo. The "International Day of the Ford Worker" was commemorated by

trade unionists in Canada and the United States as Ford workers wore black arm bands on the job. Both CAW and UAW members went to Cuautitlán as an expression of solidarity and locals sent their support in the form of declarations as well as through financial donations to the Democratic Movement.

When the Negotiating Committee finally won the right to hold a vote in the plant, it asked for international solidarity. Although the a free election was stolen from them with violence and intimidation, the fact that it happened at all was a testament to the perseverance of the movement and its allies. Moreover, because they were present at the vote, these same allies, both national and international, were able to testify to the fundamentally antidemocratic character of labour relations which defeated the movement in the end. In the words of a member of the Negotiating Committee:

(This) vote ... emerged from the society in general, because of national and international pressure and as a result of mobilisation and organisation. This came from organisation among the workers and by the solidarity of the Committee of Independent Observers ... made up of national and international people. These have been called the "observers from afar". They named a Commission to come to watch the vote and all who were a part of this International Committee were supported by the opinion of the trade unionists, religious, defenders of human rights, that came from the United States. The presence of the observers made evident all the mechanisms of fraud that the *charros* and the PRIistas used in this vote. These are mechanisms that not only are used in the labour terrain but in federal elections as well.¹¹³

In the context of the free trade debate, the FWDM offered trade unionists from Canada and the United States the

opportunity to understand the dynamics of continental restructuring from the perspective of Mexican workers engaged in a serious conflict. With the Cuautitlán struggle, workers found the basis for solidarity around labour rights at the continental level. This solidarity was based on the argument that the defense of labour rights had to be carried out at the international level, as well as within the plant and in the national arena, or workers would not be able to effectively contest the restructuring of production. Put more succinctly, from the perspective of one Canadian labour solidarity network: "When they win, we win".

Cuautitlán was an important case in the free trade debate, because it deflated US presidential candidate Ross Perot's simple argument that jobs would be sucked into Mexico as a result of NAFTA. The struggle deepened the meaning of slogans such as "\$4 a day, No Way" which the MEXUSCAN solidarity group first meant as a repudiation of the corporate search for cheap labour in the *maquiladora* industries. MEXUSCAN, a trinational organisation of Ford workers, developed a very thoughtful educational campaign in support of those workers from the industrial core of Mexico whose struggles had also been undermined by the "maquilization" of the Mexican economy. The Ford case demonstrated that the integration of Mexico into the North American economy involved a dynamic that was much more complex than the shifting of

production to *maquiladora* assembly operations. As a Committee member reported:

We explained that the transnational company in Canada, in Mexico, in the United States and in whatever part of the world violates the rights of workers. It is not us as workers from another country that take their jobs. We are not acting as scabs. On the contrary. This is a struggle of all workers in the auto industry and that struggle has to be for a guaranteed wage paid to all workers in the auto industry across the globe.¹¹⁴

Conclusion:

Auto producers in the United States explained economic crisis in terms of the crisis of international competitiveness. They sought to lower the costs of production by pushing for concessions from US and Canadian workers, introducing new technologies, closing plants and undertaking investments in joint ventures. As companies sought increased efficiency and cost-reductions, they also invested in new export-oriented facilities in the north and border regions of Mexico.

The struggle of Ford workers shows however, a different experience may be identified. For workers, this phase of the crisis may be characterised as the "maquilization" of the industrial heartland of Mexico. In the case of Ford workers, 'maquilization' followed the general pattern. The labour force became younger, although there was no noticeable increase in the number of women who went to work in Cuautitlán. Rather, the labour force became "feminised" to the extent that its working conditions and quality of labour

representation converged with the experiences of women in workplaces previously marginalised within state corporatism. Productivity increases depended upon a much intensified production process, while labour representation deteriorated proportionally with the insertion of norms associated with lean production.

In this context, the restructuring of representation did not lead to cooperative labour relations, but more conflictual ones. Given the rigidity in wage levels and instability of employment, there was no stable resolution to the economic crisis.¹¹⁵ The older unions resisted the process of restructuring and acted in defense of their acquired rights, while unions in new assembly plants tried to improve their contracts, sometimes with devastating consequences. At General Motors in Ramos Arizpe and in Ford Chihuahua, for example, the company dismissed local executive committees. At Ford Hermosillo, management fired all departmental representatives and the members of the local executive committee.¹¹⁶ This repression of labour rights became a defining characteristic of the process of seeking a new labour flexibility in Mexico. Under these circumstances, it seems more appropriate to think of "flexibility" as a code word for increased control by management over workers. Workers were given more responsibility for the production process, but their power to negotiate the conditions within which they engage in production was weakened substantially.¹¹⁷

If, in the earlier period, the limits of passive revolution enlivened oppositional movements within the unions, economic restructuring in the 1980s took shape as an attack on acquired rights. In these circumstances, the CTM leadership did not defend workers rights, even though the *raison d'être* of the trade union was bound up with the state corporatist productive mode. Instead, the official union leadership presided over the dissolution of the masculine mode and the incorporation of the feminised characteristics of the *maquila* mode into the industrial centre. The movement of Ford workers, as it resisted the restructuring of production relations, was also a movement of resistance against the authoritarian *caudillismo* of the official trade union leadership. The Ford workers' movement was remarkable for its ability to analyse and organise on a number of levels over a relatively long period. The workers of this movement demonstrated a highly developed class consciousness in which they problematised questions of representation in relation to the need for a transformation in the form of state. Their internationalism was in the service of this goal. Their direct challenge to the CTM was not an "inter-union" dispute, but a contestation of internationalised production relations within the terrain of the state itself.

ENDNOTES

1. Arnulfo Arteaga G., Jorge Carrillo V. and Jordy Micheli T., "Transformaciones Tecnológicas y Relaciones Laborales en la Industria Automotriz," Documentos de Trabajo, 19 (México, DF: Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1989), 3.
2. Yasuhiro Monden, Toyota Production System: Practical Approach to Production Management, (Norcross, Georgia: Industrial Engineering and Management Press and Institute of Industrial Engineers, 1983), i-ix.
3. James Womack, Daniel Jones, Daniel Roos, The Machine that Changed the World (New York: Rawson Associates, 1990), 3-4. See also, Alan Altshuler, Martin Anderson, Daniel Jones, Daniel Roos and James Womack, The Future of the Automobile (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).
4. Lean production is referred to variously as Total Quality Management, Synchronous Manufacturing, Toyotism, Flexible Specialisation, Japanese Production Methods and Management-by-Stress.
5. Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
6. See for example: Administración de Salarios Volkswagen de México, S.A. de C.V., "Grupos de Trabajo", (training manual on teamwork), 1992; General Motors Mechanical Components Division, "Synchronous Manufacturing Definition and Scope," Synchronous Manufacturing Training Course notes, as reproduced in "Synchronous Manufacturing," CAW-Research Department Presentation, 1992, 5.; Monden, Toyota Production System.
7. Anna Pollert, "Dismantling flexibility," Capital and Class, 34 (Spring 1988): 70,72.
8. Karen Hadley, "Working Lean and Mean: A Gendered Experience of Restructuring in an Electronics Manufacturing Plant," (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1994), 117.
9. Hadley, "Working Lean and Mean: A Gendered Experience of Restructuring in an Electronics Manufacturing Plant," (Ph.D diss., University of Toronto, 1994), 98.
10. Just in Time production (Kanban) "is an information system that harmoniously controls the production of the necessary products in the necessary quantities at the necessary time in every process of a factory and also among companies." Monden, Toyota Production System, 13, 51.

11. Monden, Toyota Production System, 25. (emphasis added)
12. Monden, Toyota Production System, 85.
13. Monden, Toyota Production System, 99-100.
14. Monden, Toyota Production System, 55.
15. Monden Toyota Production System, 85 as cited in Hadley, "Working Lean and Mean," 119.
16. Hadley, "Working Lean and Mean," 99.
17. Hadley affirms Brenner and Glick's use of the term "hyper-Taylorization" as the extreme fragmentation and deskilling of jobs leading to increased productivity. Robert Brenner and Mark Glick, "The Regulation School and the West's Economic Impasse" New Left Review 188 (July-August 1991) as cited in Hadley, "Working Lean and Mean", 110.
18. We see an example of this in the successes of the campaign organised an urban popular movement to expropriate abandoned damaged properties in the Distrito Federal. The *Regional de Mujeres de la Coordinadora Nacional del Movimiento Urbano Popular* (the Women's Regional Organisation of the CONAMUP) proposed that these properties should be turned into public housing and cooperatives for the 'damnificados'. The *Regional* mobilised communities of women to fight for deeds for the new properties and it was successful in its organising and educational work. Viky Villanueva, *Regional de Mujeres*, CONAMUP. interview by author, Mexico DF, February 1992, and personal communication with author, Toronto, August 1996.
19. For example, one of the largest of the urban movements, the *Asemblea de Barrios* (assembly of neighbourhoods), added a symbolic level to its struggles with the government. It offered the public an image of a male all-star Wrestler who would embody their demands and draw attention to their political project. Superbarrio Gómez, a wrestler in green tights and cape, was created to appear as a sort of gentle giant who was prepared to stand and fight on behalf of the people. This he often did as a passionate speaker at political rallies. He quickly became a thorn in the side of the government. Superbarrio Gómez was an effective supporter of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' campaign for the presidency in 1988. His public image complemented the reserved intellectual candidate of the Frente Democratico Nacional. Afterwards, Superbarrio's career continued to be linked to Cárdenas. For example, they both attended a rally in support of the hundreds of people who walked for days to the capital in protest over fraudulent elections in the state of Tabasco in August of 1991. The elections were overturned. SB marched in support of Cuba in

the spring of 1992, and, in 1993 appeared in front of the Russian/CIS embassy sending a message of support to the comrades who were then stuck in space. He is an advocate of the Zapatistas and has journeyed to national and international meetings called on EZLN territories during 1994 and 1996. Last but not least, he does a little writing on the side. His column "*En e...sta esquina... Superba...rrio Gómez* (In th...is corner... Superba...rrio Gómez) appears weekly in a small newspaper around Mexico City. *Corre la Voz* (Spread the Word) is distributed in the subway cars each Tuesday. The newspaper sellers enter the car, call everyone's attention to the main issue, ask for a donation, quickly make the rounds and move to another car at the next stop. The paper is a project of people previously involved with Punto Crítico, who are now associated with UNAM, the *Asemblea de Barrios* and Cárdenas' party, the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution).

20. Once again, the country faced the problem of capital flight. Between two and three billion US dollars was taken out of the economy immediately. The annual rate of inflation ran up to 160% and for the month of December reached 14.8%. The peso lost approximately 35% of its value in the last two months of the year and the population was faced with dramatic increases in domestic interest rates. Alejandro Álvarez, Mexico 1988-1991: ¿Un ajuste economico exitoso? (México DF: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1991), 6.

21. The Pact was announced on December 15th 1987. With this pact, the state agreed to increase prices for goods and services provided by the state, maintain its austerity program and divest itself of interests in the parastatal sector. The unions agreed to minimal increases in wages across the board and the employers' associations agreed to increase the supply of basic goods, increase productivity levels and moderate prices. The agreement on wage increases was a matter of moral suasion. Employers were not obliged but were exhorted to comply with fifteen percent increase in wages under collective agreements. The minimum wage was also increased by fifteen percent initially and twenty percent again for January. *The Pacto de Solidaridad Economica* (PASE) was replaced by the *Pacto para la Estabilidad y el Crecimiento Economico* (PECE) in December 1988. Augusto Bolívar Espinosa, "El periodo de la transición a la modernidad," in México en la Década de los Ochenta: La modernización en cifras coords. Rosa Albina Garavito Elías y Augusto Bolívar Espinoza (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Azcapotzalco, El Cotidiano: México, 1990) 55-56.

22. Bolívar Espinoza, "El periodo de la transición," 63.

23. Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).

24. Bolívar Espinoza, "El periodo de la transición," 27.

25. Banco de México, Dirección de Operaciones Internacionales, Oficina de Cambios Nacionales, as cited by Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial, La Industria Maquiladora de Exportación Figure 15, (Mexico DF: Gobierno de México, 1989).

26. Paul Knox, "Mexican workers show the strain," Globe and Mail, 27 February 1988.

27. Arnulfo Arteaga, "Nacido Ford, Crecido Flexible," Trabajo 2 (primavera 1990): 65 (n.1).

28. Jorge Carrillo V., "Maquilización de la industria automotriz en Mexico: De la industria terminal a la industria de ensamble," en La Nueva Era de la Industria Automotriz en México: Cambio tecnológico, organizacional y en las estructuras de control, coord. Jorge Carrillo V. (Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 1990) 75.

29. Arteaga notes that the "Decreto Para la Racionalización de la Industria Automotriz," was declared on 15 September 1983, while the "Decreto Para el Fomento y Modernización de la Industria Automotriz" was announced on 11 December 1989. Arnulfo Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," Negociación y Conflicto Laboral en México, coord. Graciela Bensusán y Samuel León (México, DF: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1990), 141.

30. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz en México", 79.

31. Arteaga, "Nacido Ford, crecido flexible," 65 n.2.

32. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 75.

33. Fernando Fco. Herrera Lima, "Reestructuración de la industria automotriz en Mexico y respuesta sindical," El Cotidiano 46, (marzo-abril 1992): 28.

34. Arteaga, Carrillo y Micheli, "Transformaciones Tecnológicas," 7.

35. Arnulfo Arteaga, "Reestructuración y periodización en la industria automotriz" en Reconversión industrial y lucha sindical, coord. Esthela Gutiérrez Garza (México, DF: Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1989), 77.

36. Arteaga, "Reestructuración y periodización," 76.

37. Harley Shaiken, "Nuevas Estrategias de Modernización en la Industria Automovilística," en La inserción de México en la Cuenca del Pacífico, vol.II coords. Alejandro Álvarez Béjar y John Borrego (México, DF: Facultad de Economía, Universidad Autónoma de México, 1990), 29.

38. Arteaga, Carrillo y Micheli, "Transformaciones Tecnológicas," 8.

39. The highest growth rate in *maquilas* occurred in the interior of the country during the years 1980-1988. In 1980 there were 620 *maquilas* in Mexico. 551 of these were located in border municipalities. 69 were located in other regions. In 1988, there were 1,396 *maquiladoras* in Mexico. 1,140 were located in border municipalities while 256 were located in other regions. Non-border *maquiladoras* increased from 11.1 percent to 18.3 percent of all *maquiladoras*.

Employment figures confirm this trend. In 1980 there were 119,546 people employed in the *maquiladoras*. By 1988 there were 369,489. During these years, the number of people employed in non-border region *maquiladoras* increased from 12.2 percent to 23.6 percent of total *maquiladora* employment. Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, "Principales Características de la Industria Maquiladora de Exportación, por Entidad Federativa y Municipio: 1979-1989," Cuadro No.1 Estadística de la Industria Maquiladora de Exportación: 1979-1989 (México, DF, 1991), 1-4.

40. Arteaga, Carrillo y Micheli, "Transformaciones tecnológicas," 8.

41. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 110. Carrillo credits José Carlos Ramírez with the term "maquilización". See José Carlos Ramírez coord., La nueva industrialización en Sonora: el caso de los sectores de alta tecnología (Hermosillo, El Colegio de Sonora, 1988), no page.

42. Researchers report that General Motors began *maquiladora* production in 1977. In 1989, it had approximately 28 plants engaged in export production. Between 1987-1988, General Motors employment increased by 30 percent in Mexico. Approximately 35% of the workers (13,500) earned minimum wage (less than US \$4.00 a day) and only 47 percent of GM workers were organised into unions. In the new assembly plants in the north, workers' wages were much lower than those in the centre. There were fewer contract clauses and poorer benefits. There were fewer union representatives. Whereas, for example, General Motors workers had 11 representatives at the plant in Mexico City, workers had only two in Ramoz Arizpe. Each plant had a different collective agreement, a different executive committee and different dates for contract revisions. The length of the working day was 40 hours in the

GM plant Mexico City, and 48 hours in the new plants in Ramos Arizpe. Arteaga, Carrillo and Micheli, "Transformaciones Tecnológicas," 4, 33, 39-42; Carrillo, Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 93-94.

43. SECOFI figures report that 10 percent of those employed in industry in Mexico are located in the auto industry. Of these 400,000 employees, approximately 60,000 were located in auto assembly; 140,000 in auto parts; 120,000 in the auto maquilas and 80,000 in auto distribution. Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial (SECOFI), "Sector Automotriz," Monografía 10 Tratado de Libre Comercio en América del Norte, 1991 (México, DF): 9.

44. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 92.

45. Alejandro Álvarez Béjar, Faculty of Economics, UNAM, México. "Economic Integration, Social Dislocation and Political Challenges in North America", Paper presented at the 34th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Acapulco, Guerrero, México, March 23-27, 1993, p.15.

46. In 1979, the maquiladora industry employed 76.6 percent women. By 1984, the percentage of men had increased from 23.4 to over 30 percent. The International Labour Organisation suggested that, in part, this change might have been due to prolonged recession compelling men to accept "women's work". Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, "Encuesta Nacional de Plantas Maquiladoras," 1979, as cited in Mercedes Pedrero Nieto and Norma Saavedra, La industria maquiladora en México, Programa de Empresas Multinacionales, Documento de trabajo núm. 49. (Ginebra: Oficina Internacional del Trabajo, 1987), 42.

By 1988 women were still disproportionately employed, comprising 63.2 percent of those employed in maquiladora plants. In the Border regions this figure dropped to 60.2 percent, but in the non-border regions, women's employment reached 75.9 percent of the total. SECOFI, "Maquiladora Export Industry," (México, DF) 1989.

47. Arteaga, Carrillo y Micheli, "Transformaciones Tecnológicas,"; 34. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 94-5. Herrera Lima, "Reestructuración de la industria automotriz en México," 30.

48. The continued devaluation of the peso, which made the US dollar 100 times more valuable in Mexico between 1981 and 1988, resulted in lower wage rates in the maquiladora industries than those in export processing zones of South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. John Spelich, "Mexico imports jobs to boost exports," ISLA, June 29 1988, JC 3731.

49. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 101.

50. Ricardo Grinspun lists a large labour surplus and the cooptation of union leaders as two additional reasons for low wages that do not rise according to productivity levels in Mexico. Ricardo Grinspun, "The Economics of Free Trade in Canada," in The Political Economy of North American Free Trade, Ricardo Grinspun and Max Cameron eds. (McGill Queen's University Press, 1993), 114.

51. Jorge Carrillo V. y María Eugenia de la O. "La reestructuración en la industria maquiladora," El Cotidiano 46 (1992 marzo-abril): 58.

52. Carrillo y De la O, "La reestructuración en la industria maquiladora," 58-59.

53. Arteaga, Carrillo y Micheli, "Transformaciones tecnológicas," 3.

54. In 1960, productivity in Mexican manufacturing was 70 percent of the United States and by 1985, this figure had dropped to 53 percent. Edur Velásco Arregui, "Industrial Restructuring in Mexico during the 1980s," The Political Economy of North American Free Trade, eds. Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell Cameron (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 164.

55. Harley Shaiken,...

56. Disputing arguments which locate the comparative advantage of Mexican auto producers in low wage and high technology strategies, Micheli, suggests that the key factor in arriving at an international level of competitiveness is in the construction of a new social model of manufacturing (nuevo modelo social de manufactura) in which flexible labour relations is of utmost importance. Jordy Micheli, Nueva Manufactura, Globalización y Producción de Automóviles en México (México, DF: Universidad Autónoma de México, Facultad de Economía, 1994).

57. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 72.

58. Arteaga, "Nacido Ford, crecido flexible," 66-67.

59. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 146.

60. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 92.

61. Arteaga, Carrillo y Micheli, "Transformaciones Tecnológicas," 13.

62. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 103.

63. These figures do not include the amounts workers receive for benefits, which included: punctuality bonuses, holidays, Christmas bonus, savings plan, meal tickets, profit sharing, and social security. When these benefits were added up, Ford-Chihuahua workers received the equivalent of 146 days wage per year in benefits, while the equivalent value for all other assembly plants, except the General Motors-DF was 89.1. At General Motors-DF, the average was 149.4 days wage. If these figures are combined, wages and benefits increase to 12,533.33 pesos per day at Cuautitlán. In comparison with the three different categories of assembly plants, the Cuautitlán workers earned 19.4 percent more than the oldest, 32.5 percent more than the middle and 62.4 percent more than the youngest group of auto assembly plants. In comparison to other Ford workers, they earned 121.5 percent more than the average worker at Chihuahua and 168.6 percent more on average than a worker at the Hermosillo plant. Arnulfo Arteaga, "Nacido Ford, crecido flexible," 69.

64. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 94.

65. Herrera Lima, "Reestructuración de la industria automotriz," 30.

66. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 141-174.

67. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 153.

68. "Unfortunately, when they coughed up this kind of money for the liquidation that was due us, we fell for it. We all fell although we used to try to organise some kind of union response, but, from the point of view of the Ford workers, we were the best paid in the region, in the industry and in the country, and nobody wanted to get themselves into problems. Everybody used to say "Am I going to risk my salary, my benefits and my seniority, no, no, no, no... Better we fall in line and look for other means." Never, never did we have a struggle and more than anything, what hit us were the very high percentages they would pay for the liquidation, so that's the route the people took." El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, (1987-1991) "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Fernando Talavera y Francisco Muñoz, Taller de Economía del Trabajo, Facultad de Economía Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Síntesis de Coyuntura 8, Segunda ed. (1993): 33.

69. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 33-34.

70. Arteaga notes three important changes in the conditions facing workers upon their return to the factory. First of all, wages and benefits were substantially reduced. Secondly, there was a definite shift away from the concept of *bilateralidad*, that is, a diminishing of the local union's legitimate role in determining working conditions in the plant. Finally, the local committee lost autonomy in its relationship with the national union. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 155.

71. Sam Gindin "Breaking Away: The Formation of the Canadian Auto Workers," Studies in Political Economy, 29 (Summer 1989), 63-89.

72. Arteaga, "Nacido Ford, crecido flexible," 64-74.

73. Arteaga, "Nacido Ford, crecido flexible," 71-74.

74. We couldn't go to the bathroom to urinate and honestly, so that we wouldn't lose time, they put urinals on the other side of the line. From our work station, we could see them, but to be able to go, you had to stock up your work on the line for an hour working like hell and shout to the others, "hey bastards, I'm going to piss" and everyone had to make way for you, because you had to do two operations which meant one hour fucked to be able to go and piss and when you got back, your operation was behind and they you had to run like hell for the next half hour to be able to catch up to the level of production. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 20.

75. The people on the second shift have to be here at 2 pm, and gentlemen, from this moment on, it is forbidden to sit down, and if for any reason, the line stops, as the cleaning of your area is now your task, because now there will be no cleaners, the cleaning department is gone, the workers in the cafeteria are gone, the gardeners are gone, and the labour is now contracted-out because these are now services that are bought, since these departments don't have any reason to be here anymore. This is what they told us in that talk.

Ok, so in principle, we accepted it, but for the old habits, when we came to work and we sat down a minute, the supervisor used to come by and say, "you know what, get up, get to work". But the line is down, "prepare materials", they are already prepared. "okay, get yourself a broom and get sweeping". It was forbidden to sit down and as a result, the productivity was increased enormously and to such an extent that before the conflict, we were producing 480 units each day with around 3,800 workers and the truth is that not even when we were 5,000 workers did we produce that amount of units, and that was with 3 shifts. Fernando Talavera and Francisco Muñoz,

"Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford," (1987-1991), interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 37-38.

76. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 19-20.

77. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 39.

78. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 39.

79. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 27.

80. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 27.

81. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 30.

82. "The National Executive Committee is comprised of ELEVEN Secretaries in the following manner: General Secretary, Secretary of Labour and Conflicts, Secretary of Internal Organisation, Secretary of Worker Relations, Secretary of Cooperative Development, Secretary of Political Action, Secretary of Technical Matters, Secretary of Organisation and Propaganda, Secretary of Finance and Statistics, Secretary of Education and Social Communication, Secretary of Social Provision. For each Secretary, the Congress will elect one adjunct." Article 13, "Estatutos, Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Ford Motor Company, CTM," Revised 1989. Article 18 states that the National executive of the union would be elected to six year terms. Article 19 states that the Local executive would be elected to three year terms.

83. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 158 n.30.

84. Gabriel Abogado, Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, interview by author, Mexico, DF, May 12 1992.

85. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 161, n.32.

86. Artículo 51, "Estatutos, Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Ford Motor Company, CTM," 1977.

87. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 159.

88. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 42.

89. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 161-162, n.34.
90. Negotiating Committee, Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, interview by author, Mexico, DF. May 12 1992.
91. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 51-53.
92. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," n.39.
93. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 55-56.
94. Arteaga, Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto, 163-4.
95. Negotiating Committee, Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, interview by author, Mexico, DF, May 12 1992.
96. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 165-166.
97. Although Fidel Velázquez and the Ford Motor Company signed an agreement on the 23 of January, in which the company agreed to guarantee the security of the workers and to pay lost wages, the agreement was not made public until it became apparent that the Negotiating Committee was gathering support in its campaign against the CTM. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 165.
98. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 167.
99. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 168.
100. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 73.
101. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 170.
102. Arteaga, "Ford: un largo y sinuoso conflicto," 170-1.
103. Negotiating Committee, Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, interview by author, Mexico DF, 12 May 1992.
104. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 81-83.
105. The Observation Committee was comprised of national human rights activists, labour lawyers, union activists in Mexico, as well as UAW and CAW members, among others. Negotiating

Committee, El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, interview by author, México, DF, May 12 1992; El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 85-109.

106. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 110.

107. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 109.

108. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 71.

109. Manuel Fuentes, La imposición laboral que nos viene del norte (México DF: Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, 1994).

110. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 123.

111. Negotiating Committee, Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, interview by author, México, May 12 1992.

112. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 120.

113. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 105.

114. El Movimiento Democrático de los Trabajadores de la Ford, "Testimonios de Ford," interview by Talavera y Muñoz, 108.

115. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 106.

116. Alejandro Covarrubias V., La Flexibilidad Laboral en Sonora (México, DF: El Colegio de Sonora y Fundación Friedrich Ebert, 1992); Sergio Sandoval Godoy, "Los equipos de trabajo en la planta Ford," Revista de El Colegio de Sonora, 2 (Diciembre de 1990): 106-125; Sergio Sandoval Godoy, "Equipos de Trabajo: La Experiencia de Ford Motor Company en Hermosillo Sonora," Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo, Hermosillo, Sonora, 1-40; Sergio Sandoval Godoy, "Conflictos laborales y relaciones capital-trabajo en la planta Ford de Hermosillo (1986-1989)," Estudios Sociales 1, no.1 (junio de 1990), 117-140.

117. Carrillo, "Maquilización de la industria automotriz," 90.

Chapter Six
Third Moment in the Crisis:
NAFTA and the dis-integration of labour rights in Mexico,
The Case of Volkswagen Puebla

Introduction:

In the Nissan workers' struggle we saw hegemonic masculinity in the ideology of *caudillismo* within trade union leadership that advanced paternalistic economism over social unionism. In the case of Ford, I argued that the feminisation of the productive mode underpinning the auto industry had disrupted the *caudillismo* of the worker-father, depended upon the repression of workers' rights, and provoked increased coercion within labour relations. In this chapter, I will show how the struggle at Volkswagen, Puebla reveals a new moment in the crisis. In the 1990s, the attempt was made to institutionalise a new productive mode by means of the paternalism, as well as the authoritarianism, of *caudillismo* located in the state executive. The crisis was not, however, resolved.

The period of institutionalisation began with the Reform of the State announced by President Salinas at the end of 1989 and gathered steam with the onset of NAFTA negotiations in 1991. The institutionalisation of neoliberalism also took place in collective agreements and in changes to labour's institutions.

Despite its significance for anchoring the central tenets of neoliberalism within the state, I shall argue that this institutionalisation had no basis in a stable social structure. State reform strengthened oppositional movements' claims that a thorough transformation of the state was required but not

forthcoming under the prevailing regime. Neoliberal reforms were made secure by NAFTA after a decade in which they proved themselves to be failures.¹ In labour relations, participation defined the dominant ideology within new "modernising" labour organisations after lean production favoured executive privilege over cooperation between labour and management.

The struggle of Volkswagen workers to contest the institutionalisation of neoliberal restructuring was thwarted by "concertation" on the part of the state, the employer and a new union federation fully in support of the *salinista* agenda. From the Volkswagen story we see how a new productive mode may be emerging from the ashes of state corporatism in the era of NAFTA. It bears a resemblance to the enterprise corporatism of the early part of the century, but because of the highly internationalised, and "maquilised" conditions at the end of the twentieth century, I refer to this emerging mode as "global corporatism".

It is unlikely that global corporatism will be able to offer the basis for a renewed passive revolution, much less a hegemonic order. In the 1930s, institutionalisation was the precursor to stabilisation in Mexico. In the 1990s, however, state managers have not been so successful. Instead of a passive revolution, deepening crisis marked the final years of the Salinas de Gortari presidency (1988-1994). Although the *caudillismo* of the presidency was indispensable for the institutionalisation of neoliberalism, Salinas' reforms offered inadequate responses to the contradictions

facing Mexico. Salinas left office disgraced and retreated to a self-imposed exile in Ireland soon afterwards.

The Volkswagen story contributes one important lesson for our understanding of counter-hegemony: It suggests that plant based struggles against global corporatism need to be linked with more broadly based struggles for a new form of state in which *caudillismo* is seen to be a central problem. Otherwise, the "political" question will be resolved by making labour's demands appear defensive and local, while the executive power within corporations and the state present themselves as serving the general interests by promoting participation in the newly modernised "labour" terrain.

I. Deepening the Crisis through the Institutionalisation of Global Corporatism

In this section I will examine the institutionalisation of global corporatism under conditions of crisis. This discussion will review some of the general implications of institutionalisation in the 1990s in terms of economic restructuring, representation and resistance.

NAFTA and the Institutionalisation of Economic Restructuring

In June 1990, the United States and Mexico announced they would begin discussions leading towards a free trade agreement. They were joined by Canada in October 1990. After the US Congress approved "Fast Track" negotiations, formal negotiations began in

June 1991.² An agreement was reached on 12 August 1992 and signed on 17 December 1992.³ Immediately afterwards, a new President took power in the United States. In the context of widespread and highly organised oppositional campaigns, President Clinton was held to a campaign promise that he would not bring any deal to Congress to be ratified if it threatened labour or environmental standards.⁴ During the first half of 1993, negotiators in Canada, the US and Mexico worked to conclude side-deals on labour and the environment. These were announced on August 13, 1993 and the Agreement was ratified in the legislatures of each country. The Agreement came into force on January 1, 1994.⁵

Recalling the legitimating power of Constitutional discourse, Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari announced that Mexico's objectives in participating in North American Free Trade Agreement (TLC) negotiations were compatible with the goals of Revolutionary Nationalism. In a promotional booklet published during the negotiations, SECOFI stated:

For Mexico, the objective is to reach an Agreement that corresponds to the interests of its society. The Treaty will respect inherently the text of our Constitution and our laws, permitting us to fulfil the great objectives that Mexicans have entrusted us with: consolidate sovereignty, promote development and attain justice.⁶

For its part, Canada argued that the government's objectives were simply to increase exports and jobs. In the words of Michael Wilson, finance minister, "Nations and peoples have resoundingly said no to the policies of the past, so discredited in eastern Europe and elsewhere: closed economies, central planning, policies which are anti-business and policies which undermine the incentive

to work are recipes for economic and environmental hardship."⁷ As much as they affirmed the benefits of free trade, Wilson's remarks were directed against his critics. Moreover, government discourse consistently obscured the link between trade and investment that had become a defining characteristic of North American negotiations since the onset of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement.⁸

In the United States, the North American free trade negotiations were linked with a broader hemispheric agenda set out in President Bush's "Enterprise for the Americas Initiative" in which free trade from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego was the goal.⁹ In proposing that neoliberal reforms be 'locked in' through a series of Free Trade Agreements throughout the hemisphere, through its Trade Representative the Clinton Administration declared that any country wishing to be considered for NAFTA membership must demonstrate that they had already undertaken substantive economic restructuring. As the US Trade Representative stated: "While political considerations would play a role in the selection process- eg. a democratic government would probably be a necessity- they should not override economic 'readiness'."¹⁰ As a template for agreements throughout the Americas, it was agreed that NAFTA would be expanded if other countries accept the basic formula already negotiated between Canada, USA and Mexico.

In the auto industry, the NAFTA liberalised trade but also entrenched the terms of North American production patterns.¹¹ After a transition period of ten years, goods produced in Canada, US or Mexico may be traded duty-free within the region. The

definition of authorised goods depends upon the "rules of origin.

According to SECOFI:

The rules of origin designate goods "originating" in the region when they are produced completely in North America. Goods containing materials from outside this zone are also considered originating, if foreign materials are transformed in one of the countries party to the agreement. Said transformation must be enough to modify the tariff classification according to the provisions of the Agreement."¹²

In some cases, including the auto sector, goods incorporating a designated level of "regional content" may be considered originating, even when the final product maintains the same tariff classification as its component parts. Based on the method of "net costs", auto producers may gain preferential market treatment if they incorporate 62.5 percent regional content for passenger cars and light trucks, engines, and transmissions for these same vehicles. 60 percent regional content is required for duty-free access for all other vehicles and auto parts.¹³ Tariffs will be lifted on goods produced in the auto industry over a period of ten years. After 10 years, restrictions on new auto imports will be lifted. After 16 years, used cars may be imported on a graduated basis.¹⁴

The *Decreto para el fomento y modernización de la industria automotriz* will be modified and phased out over the transition period. Over time, the obligations to maintain a "trade balance" are to be lifted for auto producers located in Mexico. So too did the NAFTA lift restrictions preventing auto producers not located in Mexico from selling vehicles in the Mexican market. The level of "aggregate national value" (VAN) requiring auto assemblers to

incorporate auto parts produced by Mexican companies into their terminal product will be reduced in the course of the transition period. Changes permitted certain *maquila* products to be incorporated into the VAN for the transition period.¹⁵

Furthermore, Mexico agreed to permit foreign investors 100 percent ownership in companies deemed to be "national suppliers" of autoparts. As per other trade-related investment measures, the auto sector will be governed by the Investment Chapter of NAFTA.¹⁶ After the phase-in period, US regulations on fuel efficiency (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency CAFE) will consider Mexican exports on the same terms as Canadian and US products.¹⁷

These provisions reflect, not a weakened state, so much as a state in which the executive power retains for itself a vital role in privatising the character of economic decision-making.¹⁸ No longer will North American governments be able to negotiate commitments from corporations to provide jobs and fixed investment in exchange for access to a national market, without violating the terms of the agreement.¹⁹ While neoliberalism reduces governmental role in managing foreign investment and trade, the state becomes active in managing the relations of production. The clearest example of this is exhibited in Salinas' own plans for state reform.

Representation and the Reform of the State:

The turn towards economic integration in North America has been constructed in Mexico by an active state relying heavily upon

a renewed form of corporatism as part of the reorientation of politics and society towards economic modernisation. In this effort we see the attempt to reconstruct a new historic bloc advancing both neoliberal restructuring at the regional level and lean production within the workplace. But this new historic bloc also promoted a restructured state.

In this third moment of crisis, the Mexican state, through the Presidency, institutionalised a National Development Plan concerned with sovereignty, democratisation, non-inflationary growth and improvements in the general standard of living.²⁰ In particular, the reform of the state took a central place in this Plan. Salinas's objectives were made clear to Mexicans as well as to interested observers in Canada and the United States.²¹ The President argued that modernisation required increasing levels of efficiency within the state given the changing global conditions and internal pressures. Further:

Not only because of the complexity of demand and the poorly regulated growth of the State apparatus, but because the concept of the State as an exclusive provider in itself inhibits the organized forces of society. There are two consequences: rigidity in the face of change (paralysis when confronted with urgency), and a scant capacity for collective convocation toward a single goal in the national interest.²²

Salinas called for a change in the meaning of the national objectives contained in the Constitution. National programmes, nationalisation, public enterprises, federal authority and protectionism in the areas of "industry and trade, urban and social services, labor and ownership relations, both in the countryside and in the field of industry" would be altered. Instead, he argued

in favour of programmes that would strengthen the state by enhancing:

coordination, democratic exercise of authority, rationalization and encouragement of autonomy, stimulation of popular participation and organization in social programs, privatization of non-strategic public enterprises with workers having a share in their ownership and the product of their sales being channelled into social programs, and transparency in the State's relations with all those active in the social sectors and with all its citizens.²³

One of the most significant changes that came from Salinas' reforms concerned the National Solidarity Programme (PRONASOL). Using funds derived from the privatisation of parastatal enterprises, PRONASOL was organised as a poverty alleviation programme in which targeted communities participated in the organisation and fundraising for the programmes directed towards work projects and social services provision.²⁴ The rule of law and the democratic exercise of authority were also taken up as central themes and reflected in the Electoral Law reform of 18 October 1989.²⁵

Neoliberal reforms in Mexico did not preclude policies constructed within the ambit of "concertation", the sealing of alliances with major social forces through national agreements. For example, the administration extended its neoliberal agenda by removing wage bargaining from collective negotiations and imposing an incomes policy within the national pacts, or *Pactos*. As a result, the national leadership of labour organisations signed agreements with the government that were tremendously unpopular with the membership.²⁶ Whereas labour once played a role, albeit a constrained one, in adjustments and negotiations over the setting

of priorities within the government, in the 1990s official labour became, not only a rubber stamp for agreements formulated at other levels in the state, but the mechanism through which economic restructuring was imposed on the working class.

Under Salinas' reforms, the powerful official trade union leaders were obliged to yield to a new cadre of technocratic foreign educated leadership within state-party institutions. The struggle between "dinosaurs" and "modernisers" within the PRI is captured in the emergence of the new labour federation during Salinas' term. The *Federación de Sindicatos de Empresas de Bienes y Servicios* (FESEBES) replaced the CTM as the embodiment of the favoured model of labour relations. FESEBES was a labour federation composed of six organisations with more than 100 thousand members in the early 1990s. Membership derives from many of those state companies and parastatal corporations that were privatised. Among its founding membership was the *Sindicato de Telefonistas* (Telephone Workers), the *Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas* (Electrical Workers), *Sindicato Técnicos y Manuales de la Producción Cinematográfica* (Film technicians), *Alianza de Tranviarios de México* (Transportation workers), and the *Asociación de Sobrecargos y Pilotos de Aviación* (Airline workers). Fully supportive of the neoliberal policies of the Salinista government, FESEBES emerged in direct opposition to the CTM on the national political scene and was prohibited from joining the *Congreso del Trabajo* (CT).²⁷

Salinas' view of a modern labour sector is elaborated in his May 1st 1990 speech. Here Salinas indicated that he was prepared to support the restructuring of the labour movement in support of economic modernisation. He rejected confrontational trade unionism and called for labour's affirmation of the need for increased productivity, realised in alliance with a reformed and strengthened state. Along with recommendations in favour of reformed trade unionism, Salinas also referred to the need for a reform of the administration of labour relations. Finally, he emphasised the importance of developing a new labour culture in which participation and dialogue characterise labour relations.²⁸

The kind of trade unionism Salinas had in mind was embodied in FESEBES and the President made this abundantly clear in his support for the new Federation. For instance, as part of the effort to broaden support for state reform, certain distinguished people were invited by the Presidency to contribute to the production of a series of books reflecting on the modernisation project. Francisco Hernández Juárez was the only labour leader invited to participate in the project.²⁹ The invitation was extended one month after the end of the conflict at Volkswagen. Hernández Juárez stated his position on the crisis of labour relations in Mexico:

In essence, the labour conflict within the crisis is an eminently political conflict. It puts into question those exhausted labour systems that generate less production, less human well-being, concentrating it in the hands of fewer and fewer groups and individuals. It also limits the social capacity for the transformation of unions and workers, limiting their participation within social and labour structures that are hierarchical, centralised and inflexible. They project themselves intensely into the political and

social structure, and remain also within ideology and culture.³⁰

Hernández Juárez appreciation of the virtues of Salinas' initiatives in the areas of free trade in particular and neoliberalism more generally was apparent throughout, but it was his discussion of the new unionism that was most illuminating. For Hernández Juárez, labour must participate in the reform of the state, but its participation must be based upon a redefinition of its own internal structure in order to permit increased "participation", "consensus" and "commitment" with respect to the modernization project.³¹ Hernández Juárez suggested:

Even if the Labour Congress continues to forbid itself from becoming the foundation and the catalyst for this restructuring, this does not mean unionism cannot, or should not, change by other means.³²

Newly anointed by the power of the federal executive, Hernández Juárez was speaking the new "official" line to the labour sector. If the official labour movement would not reform itself according to the demands of lean production, state reform and free trade, Salinas indicated, through Hernández Juárez, that he would support the creation of new labour institutions.

Resistance: NAFTA as Corporate Constitution for the Americas

I will comment briefly on the opposition to NAFTA in order to show how an emphasis on gender on the part of feminist activists revealed the link between economic restructuring at the level of world order, and the restructuring of the state.

With NAFTA, a particular form of restructuring has been institutionalised that has implications for political as well as economic structures. Opponents and supporters of the NAFTA argued that neoliberalism was "constitutionalised" within this trilateral agreement.³³ While pro-free trade forces argue that the NAFTA "locks-in" economic reforms, opponents counter with the charge that the institutionalisation of one dominant or "corporate" agenda, precludes the possibilities for democratic participation in future social reforms.³⁴ The RMALC argued, for example, that matters previously considered to be within the public domain were being taken over by the executive power of governments and corporations. Citizens and workers, much less indigenous people having a long history of dis-enfranchisement, were excluded from shaping the priorities under negotiation by the three governments. In a letter to the Minister for SECOFI, Jaime Serra Puche, RMALC argued:

We are concerned, as you know, with the lack of recognition of the asymmetries in the negotiation and, consequently, with the absence of the compensatory mechanisms and social safety nets that would lessen the effects of the NAFTA. Above all, we are concerned with the inability to establish different premises concerned with the social agenda and the autonomous and plural participation of organisations representing society. Such participation would be directed to achieving an agreement able to respond to a sustainable model of development and not merely to economic growth at any cost.³⁵

Canadian and US social movements and coalitions made similar statements. In a widely publicised letter to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Robert White, President of the Canadian Labour Congress urged the Canadian Government to withdraw from the negotiations. He argued:

Expanded trade has a significant role to play in development. But governments in all countries must retain the ability to manage trade and to regulate investment if they are to build stable and productive economies. The FTA/NAFTA is wrong because it sacrifices the sovereignty of governments to so called market freedoms, which in reality amount to the freedom of transnational corporations to operate just as they please. ... The NAFTA would have profound impacts upon our economy and our society, adding to the major changes of the recent past. Yet the process of negotiation has been shrouded in secrecy. There has been no meaningful opportunity for public participation in the drafting of what has been called "a new economic constitution for North America", and no meaningful public debate.³⁶

In fact, opponents quite accurately pointed out that some of the items under negotiation were intended to impose strict limitations on future political developments in each of the three countries. For example, NAFTA's promotion of "national treatment clauses" limits the ability of the state to support national economic development in the face of asymmetrical foreign investment flows. Under NAFTA, governments face restrictions on their already weakened ability to control foreign investment. Intellectual property rights were strengthened, which had the effect of making it more difficult to counter-act the tendency towards monopolization with efforts to socialise the transfer of technology.

The concern expressed by social movements in North America identifies, in national terms, the problems with what Janine Brodie discusses as the expansion and re-regulation of the private sphere that accompanies the contraction of the public sphere ³⁷ In Brodie's view:

Critical governing instruments of the KWS [Keynesian welfare state] such as public corporations and social welfare programmes are said to be 're'-privatized to the market or the

home, thereby creating the illusion that they are being returned to some place they naturally belong. This reprivatization has been enforced through two other 'res' - the 're-commodification' of claims and the 're-constitution' of domestic enclaves.³⁸

As coalitions of social movements organised trilateral meetings to consider the implications of NAFTA during the negotiations, they were very concerned with effects of 're-privatization' on national state structures.

During the negotiations, the strongest expressions of resistance to neoliberalism on the part of oppositional social forces emerged from, and referred back to, a critique at the level of the nation state. Far from being seen as irrelevant in the context of globalisation, social movements called on the state to be democratically accountable in virtually every fora where national social movements issue joint demands and alternative propositions at the international level. The anti-free trade movements in Canada, the US and Mexico did not, as some have suggested, direct their local organising efforts to the "global" sphere.³⁹ During the NAFTA debate, "internationalism" emerged from ongoing sharing of information about specific national and local and workplace experiences.⁴⁰ In this sharing of common experiences of the effects of neoliberalism on their communities, working lives, national political economies, the trinational work, when it was most effective, was able to integrate these different sites or spheres in their analysis and action proposals.

The first trinational *Encuentro* was followed by a conference which took place in Mexico in the Fall of 1991, while the trade

ministers of the Canada the United States and Mexico met in an official NAFTA negotiation session in Mexico. This parallel conference was called "Public Opinion and the Free Trade Agreement Negotiations: Citizens Alternatives". The Zacatecas Declaration stated that what was lacking in the NAFTA negotiations was a commitment to "development with democracy favouring the participation of society in national decisions, in which the right of peoples to freely elect their representatives and governors is respected". The Declaration demanded that the governments of the three countries respond to their fifteen proposals for a "Continental Development Agreement". The proposals ranged from the protection of existing and acquired social rights within the context of national sovereignty to new mechanisms for the management of economic integration at the regional and continental level. Under the general assumption that "interdependence has to be determined according to national necessities and strategies", the proposals called for activist states which would not only preserve acquired rights but also to extend their areas of responsibility so as to manage economic integration according to the needs of the majority of their populations.⁴¹

Specifically, the coalitions proposed that level of wages in Mexico be raised and that social security programs not be considered "unfair competition". They sought a prohibition on any undermining of Constitutional guarantees through the NAFTA, and supported calls for the recognition of collective labour rights, protective legislation for women, self-determination over natural

resources, and agricultural policies which attended to the satisfaction of basic needs of each nation's population. They demanded that NAFTA expressly exclude any requirements for liberalisation in the area of culture, education or communications.⁴²

Despite an excellent analysis of the gendered dimensions of economic restructuring presented by *Mujeres en Acción Sindical* and *Mujer a Mujer* and found in the text of Conference proceedings, the final Declaration did not reflect a feminist analysis. This reference to enhanced protective legislation for women emerged in the spirit of Mexican Constitutional guarantees in Article 123, "Of Labour and Social Provision".

All of these proposals were raised in response to the effects of continental integration, and thus embodied a "continental" dimension to them. Yet, each required active state intervention to manage this integration and so were directed towards national levels of contestation in particular. Clearly, these provisions could not emerge without the efforts of representative states responding to the needs of the majority of their populations.

This insight was most clearly articulated in the "Trinational Working Women's Conference on Economic Integration and Free Trade" held in Valle de Bravo in February 1992. Over 100 women representatives of unions and other labour organisations from Canada, the United States and Mexico participated. The conference was divided between a sharing of information and experiences of neoliberal economic restructuring on the lives of working women, as

well as a concern to advance mutually supportive strategies of contestation.

The consensus of participants in this conference was that economic integration would be challenged by making demands on each national government as regards their domestic responsibilities to guarantee social rights as well through its role as negotiator of international trade agreements:

Because economic integration is based explicitly on women's exploitation in the paid labor force, we - women of Mexico, Canada and the United States - demand that our respective governments guarantee basic rights to adequate education, health care, food, nutrition, housing, stability of employment, living salaries and training, voluntary maternity, and peace (that is the ability to live free from violence) within any trilateral agreement.⁴³

Insofar as social inequality between nations promoted the increased exploitation of women workers, participants argued for the upward harmonization of wages and working conditions as well as the maintenance of social services provided by the state.⁴⁴ Throughout this discussion, conference participants raised the issue of democracy, at the national and international level and within unions as well.⁴⁵

Despite the differences in union histories in each of the three countries, each delegation reflected on women's working lives by analysing the gendered division of labour in the household, as well as the similarities and differences of experiences in the marginal workplaces where women tend to be located. In general, participants shared the view that unions must move beyond the workplace to effectively represent working women's issues.⁴⁶ Participants called on popular sector organisations to advance "new

and creative collective organizing initiatives and solidarity" so that women would not bear the brunt of economic restructuring. These principles, as set down in the "Women's Plan of Action" included calls to organise the unorganised, strengthen existing unions, promote women's research and create trinationl links among women and women's organisations. These calls came out of successful prior experiences of new working relationships across national borders. On the issue of international alliances and information exchange between unions, participants reflected on the success of past experiences of sectoral meetings.⁴⁷ It was suggested that ongoing communication might be facilitated through electronic communication. Educational campaigns and worker exchanges were also encouraged. The conference was evaluated as having been a very useful opportunity for discussions among women workers.⁴⁸

Although the North American Free Trade Agreement was promoted within the discourse of economic restructuring, oppositional social movements, and women workers in particular, 're-politicised' it. Not only did they reject the narrowness of the liberal assumption that economic restructuring could be separated from questions of power and representation. They also made the 're-constitution' of the domestic sphere a central problem for contestation in a way that the other coalitions, meeting at the trinationl level, could not. This would suggest that social movements will be unlikely to advance an analysis of this central site of restructuring without

a strong feminist movement in which relations of gender are contemplated.

II. Institutionalising State Response to Crisis: Concertation, Productivity and Quality Agreements

Throughout its six year tenure, the government of Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) actively promoted the neoliberal restructuring the Mexican economy. It privatised most of the state owned corporations, followed International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank directives on reductions in public spending, deregulated key sectors of the economy, reformed central Constitutional articles and unilaterally decreased tariffs on trade before the negotiations for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) were completed.⁴⁹

In order to facilitate liberalism's new presence in Mexico, the Salinas government undertook to alter the regulatory framework governing economic relations. It deregulated almost every sector of the Mexican economy including agriculture, where it rescinded the central tenets of the much beloved Constitutional Article 27 on common agricultural lands. The changes promoted under the PRI were preceded by a decade of moves toward economic liberalisation, but in no other six-year presidential term since General Lázaro Cárdenas established corporatist institutions in the 1930s has the relationship between state institutions and the economy been so dramatically restructured.

Nevertheless, corporatist institutional relationships were not laid entirely to rest in the process of neoliberal restructuring. National sectoral associations were brought to participate in national agreements on the implementation of modernising strategies in the country. Although the top leadership in the official labour body of the governing party, the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) opposed the process by which their preferential location in the labour movement and within the state was eroded, the CTM acquiesced to most of the significant governmental policies. In the Volkswagen conflict of 1992 discussed below, we have an example of how the Salinas government was able to obtain relative compliance within the labour sector, even with a union that had maintained its independence from the official labour movement for over twenty years.

From the beginning of its term, the Salinas administration promoted a series of national agreements in which key organisations from the business, union and peasant sectors agreed to work with the state and each other to promote economic growth and modernisation in preparation for a new phase of continental integration. The umbrella agreement in the economic sphere was the *Pacto para la Estabilidad y el Crecimiento Económico* (PECE). This "Pact for Economic Stability and Growth" was signed immediately after Salinas took office in 1988 and was renewed during the years of his presidency (1988-1994). The goals of the PECE were to reduce inflation while increasing productivity, savings and competitiveness. The signatories agreed to a program which limited

public spending, reduced the value-added tax from 15 percent to 10 percent and brought fuel prices closer to market levels. The government agreed to an ongoing but slight devaluation of the peso (.20 daily) and to end exchange controls. The minimum wage was increased by twelve percent for all workers except those with a collective agreement. All parties to the agreement made a general commitment to economic deregulation with the aim of promoting increases in quality and productivity levels.⁵⁰

Under the terms of these arrangements, another agreement dealt specifically with labour relations. *The Acuerdo Nacional para la Elevación de la Calidad y Productividad* (ANECP). This "National Agreement on the Increase in Quality and Productivity" was an agreement for wages and price controls but it was much more than that.⁵¹ The ANECP articulated the dominant ideas of lean production centred in the goals of increased productivity and quality levels. It states categorically that "Productivity cannot be imposed; its essence stems from the will of all parties contributing to the productive process and depends upon a highly participatory process."⁵²

The Agreement referred to the importance of technological modernisation, research, training and human resource development. It included a declaration that each of the parties to the agreement would promote a new "culture of work" in the country. Labour organisations agreed to promote educational programs in order to educate members about the imperatives of new economic conditions. These educational programs were meant to diffuse information about

new forms of production and the changing role of labour organisations in the new context. The government agreed to link macroeconomic policy to the promotion of productivity and quality while the national business organisations agreed to establish support programs for companies and to work with unions and peasant organisations to develop human resources programmes.⁵³ The ANECP framed the solution to the productivity problem in the language of lean production and international competitiveness.

Apart from the ideological importance of this agreement, there were two other aspects that became significant. First of all, the state, together with the national associations of labour and business, agreed to modernise the organisational structures within the labour relations regime. This was what opened the door to the national debate on labour law reform and its foundations in Constitutional Article 123 and the Federal Labour Law of 1931. This part of the agreement also brought into question the internal representational structure of trade unions as they had developed over time. This was certainly a contentious issue since the terms of the debate were dominated by concerns with productivity not democracy.

Secondly, and no less important was the fact that national labour and business organisations agreed that unions and employers would sign productivity and quality agreements in each unionised workplace:

The labour and business sectors promise to conclude agreements and productivity clauses in collective agreements in which the measure of productivity and economic stimuli derived from these increases will be precisely determined. These will

become normalised through an ongoing process of concertation and evaluation by the parties. The government assumes the commitment to contribute to the creation of the necessary conditions for the concertation of such agreements and clauses.⁵⁴

This mandate framed the context within which the Volkswagen conflict originated.

III. The Volkswagen Conflict:

At the heart of the 1992 conflict at Volkswagen was the question of whether a transnational corporation with a very minor presence in North America would be able to shift from a popular, standardised, relatively inexpensive, polluting and simple product, to a product that could compete in the low-end of the North American market in terms of both price and quality. This shift depended upon whether or not the company would be able to meet regional standards on quality, productivity and price. With the imposition of the ANECP, Salinas made it clear that the state would play an important role in this transformation. This was not an abstract commitment. As I argue here, the Volkswagen story indicates that free trade and economic restructuring would be built upon the assumptions of lean production and legitimised by the executive authority of both the Presidency and corporate headquarters. For the third time in the twentieth century, Mexico incorporated the tenets of the dominant productive mode in the United States into its own state structure and state-labour relations. This new productive mode is based on the idealist paternalism, and underlying authoritarianism, of lean production.

The struggle at Volkswagen arose out of the contradictions of the emerging mode.

Management strategies may be identified in the abstract and here is no necessary reason that lean production would take place in the Volkswagen plant exactly as the architects of Lean Production envisaged. An analysis of the political dynamics of "flexibility" is offered by Rianne Mahon who argues that the industrial relations system of a country will have an impact on how these new technologies and work reorganisation programmes are introduced.⁵⁵ In the German case, the union representing Volkswagen workers bargained income-security guarantees in exchange for flexibility in work organisation, work groups, multi-skilling, reliance on overtime, and the de-linking of wages from job-classification. In this case, lean production was not introduced by management without their making some concessions. Legislation prohibiting mass layoffs strengthened the union's hand in concluding this agreement. As legislation was changed permitting the company to move towards plant-by-plant contract negotiations, however, threats to workers' income levels were introduced.⁵⁶

Contradictions also emerge as the authoritarian dimension of lean production is experienced simultaneously with the paternalism that management espouses in this newly emerging mode. This is a significant problem for workers who may respond favourably to a 'new labour culture' in which the lack of motivation, loss of skill, bad quality, wage inequalities, rigidities, individualistic and narrowly defined job descriptions, numerous repairs and lack of

training is said to be exchanged for the elimination of labour conflicts, job enrichment, motivation, meritocracy, increase in quality, elimination of wage differences, useful training, broader job requirements, reduction in repairs and work organised according to group objectives.⁵⁷ The benefits seem clear enough. Training manuals do not, however, fully disclose management's view of the benefits of lean production. Nor do they reflect on workers' experiences as these ideals are enacted in the workplace.

As it is presented to workers, nevertheless, the ideology of lean production is important because it builds upon the general acceptance of the family as being something "good" in workers' lives. As demonstrated in a management publication, a discourse of family life and moral regulation outside the plant infuses Volkswagen's version of global corporatism:

This social development must not be focussed only on the work going on inside of VW. We cannot expect a positive attitude from workers regarding their work and not their family life. To achieve this change in attitude, it must be part of one's personal values to do things well the first time, to work with quality, to improve everyday, to work in teams, to cooperate, etcetera... "May it become a way of life".⁵⁸

In Mexico in 1992, there was, moreover, the highly masculinised power of *caudillismo* compelling unions to accept the insertion of lean production into their collective agreement. So too was there a history of struggle between capital and labour informing the Volkswagen union's response to these new conditions. In the case of VW in Mexico, as we will see below, lean production was institutionalised without any guarantees to labour whatsoever.

Historical Weaknesses in the Volkswagen Union

Despite its longstanding status as an independent trade union, the Volkswagen union, *Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz, Similares y Conexos "Volkswagen de México"* (SITIAVW) was not able to respond to the opposition of workers who, in 1992, contested the modernising agenda of the company and the Salinas administration. In the conflict at Volkswagen the union faced enormous pressures but it did have some room to manoeuvre, make strategic decisions, call upon its resources, including its membership, as well as the wider labour and social movements. Yet, the Volkswagen union did not. Although "independent" from the governing party and the official trade union bodies, it did not exhibit autonomy from the government or the company in this case.

In part, the explanation is an historical one. When the Volkswagen union left the CTM in 1972, it was considered independent in formal terms, but it entered into a dependent relationship with the UOI and its advisor Juan Ortega Arenas, much like that seen in the case of Nissan in the 1970s.⁵⁹ The union left the UOI in 1981, but *caudillismo* in the form of trade unionism persisted.⁶⁰ Even before the conflict at Volkswagen erupted in 1992, analysts identified a crisis in unionism at Volkswagen based upon the unevenness with which struggles were mounted throughout the period of restructuring in the 1980s. The union fought five strikes during the 1980s in which impressive gains were made in the areas of wages and benefits. It protected its collective agreement

and defended jobs. It increased links with other unions at the national and internationally, with other Volkswagen unions.⁶¹

The union demonstrated serious weaknesses nonetheless. As Yolanda Montiel argues, in its very structure "it has included forms of clientalism, paternalism and authoritarianism in relations between the base and the leadership."⁶² For example, out of the Revolutionary cry of "No reelection" came the UOI practice prohibiting executive committee members from running again for office.⁶³ This practice was maintained after SITIAVW left the UOI. Union statutes forbade the re-election of union executive committees. Every three years, with a new executive committee coming into office, the legal advisor was the only one left to carry the institutional memory of previous negotiations and union business. Outgoing executives took their documentation, files and experience with them and the new executive committees were faced with the choice of looking for a new legal advisor, or contracting the services of the previous lawyer. Instead of the union itself developing confidence and independent strategies that reflected its previous successes, the union leadership tended to defer to the advice and strategies advocated by its legal advisor.⁶⁴ This practice contributed to the incorporation of *caudillismo* within the Volkswagen union, in a manner similar to that seen in Nissan.

Contributing to this general weakening of relations between the membership and the union executive was the understanding that the members of the outgoing executive would not return to work after their term. Rather than being set down in the collective

agreement, their severance package depended upon the negotiations concluded with the company at the end of three years. With no unemployment insurance, no chance of being rehired as a worker in the factory, and little chance of being hired in any other factory in the region, it was important for the executive to negotiate a severance agreement under good terms with the company. In the same process, the leadership tended to have less and less invested in responding to membership demands. They were not returning to their co-workers on the shop floor, nor were they facing re-election and as a result, they had a great deal of autonomy with respect to how they conducted their representative role. Conflict between the union and management did not disappear under these conditions, but the structural dependence in the relationship tended to discipline the individual members of the executive committees and weaken their relationship with union members.

Although the practice of "no re-election" promotes the formation of new leadership and hinders the development of dynasties, the experience of the Volkswagen union suggests that along with provisions for institutional renewal, democratic representation also depends upon the reflection of past experience within the institution.

When faced with an unresponsive executive, the membership did have recourse under the union's governing statutes. The membership could call upon the Committee of Honour and Justice to investigate the behaviour of the executive, but the Committee itself was composed of executive members. After a long and complicated

process, the sectional delegates could call an assembly of workers to dismiss the union executive, but workers might demonstrate their desire to replace the union executive without gaining legal recognition by state labour authorities. As we shall see below, whether or not the labour board "took note", was a discretionary matter, heavily influenced by the prevailing labour policies pursued by the government.

In accordance with the Federal Labour Law, there was no ratification vote by the membership upon the termination of contract negotiations between SITIAVW and Volkswagen. The lack of a ratification process, coupled with the fact that the union executive could sign agreements with management outside of the formal structure of the collective agreement, diminished the presence of membership in debates over the organisation of production and permitted the union to represent the demands of management back to workers, instead of compelling it to represent workers' demands to management.

Despite its financial resources, the Volkswagen union did not develop an educational program.⁶⁵ With no internal research or analytical resources, secondary leadership was left weakened and debate among the workers was limited. Despite sporadic interventions from sectional delegates, the union executive continued to rely heavily upon its legal and academic advisors to provide the necessary information and analysis for its dealings with the employer.⁶⁶ This is perhaps one of the more crucial points with respect to the 1992 conflict. At no time did the union

indicate that it had developed a perspective on work teams, modernisation or free trade that was different from the one advocated by the company and the government.

Another debilitating legacy of Juan Ortega Arenas was the repeated splitting of the "labour terrain" from the "political terrain". Although the union made some advances in promoting relations with other unions, its central focus remained on wage issue, despite the "industrial reconversion" of the 1980s. For example, SITIAVW gave only formal support to the development of the *Coalición Autónoma de Sindicatos de la Industria Automotriz* (CASIA), a trade union coordinating group of relatively independent unions in the auto sector including DINA, GM (DF), Nissan (Mor.) and Volkswagen.⁶⁷ By 1992, Volkswagen union was ill-prepared to look to the support of critical elements in the independent labour movement in Mexico.

Volkswagen's search for flexibility:

The conflict which erupted in Puebla in 1992 has its antecedents in the strategy taken by Volkswagen to restructure its organisation of production in North America during the 1980s. The company closed its plants in the United States in 1987 and began to prepare Volkswagen Puebla, its only remaining North American facility, for its new export-orientation.

With the onset of wage negotiations in 1987, the company argued that the union would have to accept a 15 percent wage decrease and the severance of 700 workers as part of the costs of

restructuring. Volkswagen warned that production would have to be radically altered or the plant would close. The company was prepared for a long strike but after 57 days, the union won a 78 per cent wage increase and was able to stave off alterations to the collective agreement.⁶⁸ It was able to do so, in part, because of a massive mobilising campaign that included the participation of the rank and file and international solidarity among other VW workers. Yet, since the company's demands were inconsistent with the settlements achieved at the same time in other auto plants and together with the fact that the company had stockpiled vehicles, there was speculation that this strike suited the company's interests, giving it time to install the newly imported capital equipment and attain some respite from declining sales and weak markets.⁶⁹

It was apparent that the company intended to institute a new level of flexibility in its labour relations and it was willing to go to extraordinary lengths to achieve this goal. In 1989, Volkswagen revisited the issue of the reorganisation of production outside of the normal process of contract revisions. The union and management negotiated changes to Clause 16 in the collective agreement, allowing it to contract out parts of the production process to non-union suppliers and permitting either the severance or the relocation of the affected workers.⁷⁰ The modified article of the collective agreement permitted the non-union workers to do service and maintenance work in the plant. Volkswagen attempted to increase sub-contracting by entering into discussions with the

Mexican government on the development of a *maquiladora* zone for parts suppliers in the area surrounding its Puebla installations.⁷¹

Unlike the restructuring process of the big three auto producers which opened new assembly plants in the north of the country, all of Volkswagen's North American operations were located in Puebla. Volkswagen introduced subcontracting and new supplier relations to deepen its restructuring process.⁷² This strategy indicated that Volkswagen's preparations for NAFTA and the export of the Golf to the United States and Canada were an immediate and direct challenge to the union's acquired rights to representation in an integrated production process.⁷³ The company was able to take advantage of the context offered by the NAFTA negotiations, by presenting the union with workplace restructuring in an argument based on necessity and constraint. The position was enunciated publicly by Francisco Bada Sanz, Director of Human Resources. He argued that Volkswagen needed to modify its present systems of production, to look for lower costs and higher quality, because of the new challenges it faced in trying to penetrate the large North American market. The strategy included a five year plan to alter labour relations throughout the company.⁷⁴

The Anatomy of a Conflict: Summer of 1992

The conflict at Volkswagen, which took place over the summer of 1992, may be divided into three stages. These will be discussed in detail below, but here I will give a short overview of the conflict. The first stage began with the negotiations for the 1992-1993 collective agreement. During negotiations, the union signed a side agreement with the company to restructure labour relations in the Puebla installations, within the parameters established by the ANECP, but outside of the collective bargaining process. In the agreement, the union agreed to allow the introduction of "work teams" throughout the plant and to modify any clauses in the collective agreement that would otherwise impede flexible work arrangements. This agreement was signed before the conclusion of the 1992-1994 contract negotiations but it took precedence over the Collective Agreement. It meant that the collective agreement would be opened up subsequently, outside of the negotiation process and without ratification from the membership.

The second stage began when an oppositional movement arose among the membership after rumours of the agreement spread. Having no legal recourse to a ratification vote on the agreement, the Movement of July 20 organised within the parameters of the Federal Labour Law (LFT) to depose the union leadership. It held a vote of the membership and led a work stoppage, but the leadership resisted. The company responded by applying to the Labour Board to sever individual contracts and the collective agreement based on the argument that for "reasons beyond our control" (an act of god),

it was compelled to shut down production. As the Labour Board deliberated, the oppositional movement attempted to demonstrate the legality of its actions and receive the formal recognition which it was denied, while the union leadership sought out the support of the labour federation *Federación de Sindicatos de Bienes y Servicios* (FESEBES).

The third stage of the conflict began with the mid-August labour board ruling in the company's favour. After negotiations with the company, the union immediately altered its own constitution, signed a new collective agreement with the company and thus retained its legal title to the contract. Subsequently, SITIAVW, the Volkswagen union, rescinded its status as an independent union and affiliated with FESEBES. In early September 1992 the Secretary of Labour granted FESEBES the legal registration it had been denied for two years. Most of the workers were hired back to the company after signing a document giving up their legal rights to contest the Board's decision. The leaders of the oppositional movement were not rehired under the new agreement. In order to illustrate the authoritarian dimension of state-led 'concertation' and corporate 'team-work', I will review these three moments in more detail.

Stage One: Contract Revision 1992

As outlined above, in preparation for negotiations in 1992, the Volkswagen union had already accepted the discourse of modernisation requiring the re-organisation of work within a new

ideological framework based upon continuous improvement, cooperation and participation. Their acceptance was further demonstrated in the union's negotiating proposal for the 1992-94 contract. In it the union's definition of productivity, for example, reveals a wholly optimistic view of the dynamics involved in such new work practices:

The contracting parties conceive of productivity, in general terms, as the qualitative transformation of production systems and work methods, as well as collective and individual labour relations. This process tends towards a better and more rational utilisation of available resources to produce more and better with the same or less effort by the workers. It tends towards a better implementation of technological innovations and advances, to the opening of paths for the more active and creative participation of the labour force in productive processes and its corresponding participation in the economic and social benefits determined by increases in productivity. Consequently, the parties, express their commitment to realise their best efforts to increase productivity, quality and efficiency... adopting the best agreements to reach these stated ends, including the economic and social benefits corresponding to the workers."⁷⁵

The subsequent negotiations took place in the offices of the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Board and eventually broke down. The company refused to accept the 35 percent direct wage increase and the 20 percent increase in benefits that the union demanded. It offered a 12 percent direct wage increase instead. On July 1st, the union held a one day strike during which it called together other regional union leaders who demonstrated their support for the Volkswagen workers. The strike was not expected to last more than a day and in fact, lasted only a few hours before a settlement was reached.⁷⁶

After the negotiations were completed, the Revision Commission characterised the contract negotiations as having been the most

difficult that the union had ever faced. Noting the company's intransigence and the requisites of the changed economic situation, it announced that the union was successful in negotiating a 20 percent wage increase and a 3 percent increase in benefits. Punctuality and attendance bonuses were increased. Vacation days and bonuses were increased for those with more than three years seniority. The year end bonus was increased from 50-54 days and the expected amount of profit sharing was increased from 26 to 28 days. Food vouchers were increased by approximately 20 percent.⁷⁷

The Revision Commission argued that they were able to fight back against the 'mutilation' of the collective agreement, but they reported that they had agreed to changes as a direct result of the "National Agreement for the Elevation of Productivity and Quality" (ANECF) which called for "modernisation of organisational structures in the productive sphere". The union's report to the membership noted that, among other things, the National Agreement calls for:

new work systems limiting repetitive and alienating work corresponding to the traditional methods... now can be transformed through work groups in order to continuously adjust the old labour relations of subordination and control (Supervisors or foremen - obedient and submissive workers) for new relations of coordination and agreement (coordinators - thinking and participatory workers).⁷⁸

In the agreement, the Volkswagen union agreed to conduct studies after the conclusion of contract negotiations for the institution of work teams throughout the Puebla installations. Based on the ideals of increased quality and continuous improvement, work would

be re-organised according to the philosophy of a client-supplier relationship among workers in the production process. Work groups would be responsible for safety, order, cleanliness, minor adjustments to machinery and each group would be led by a non-union supervisor, now called a Coordinator. It was agreed that work groups were to be divided into cells in which one of the workers would be named a Facilitator and the rest, VW Technicians. The old auxiliaries were given the first option to become a Facilitator.

As an indication of the extent of these changes, was the Clause 15 of the new agreement which indicated that at least 14 of the 97 clauses in the collective agreement, as well as the chapter dealing with the promotion list and seniority rights, and any other 'impeding' clauses, would be re-negotiated separately after the conclusion of contract negotiations.

As the integration of groups is agreed upon in said work areas, both parties will establish the norms that will permit the establishment of the system and its development, independently of the text of the clauses of the collective agreement governing the systems under which work has been developed to the present date.

Once the groups have been instituted in all possible areas, the parties agree definitively to the modification of the clauses of the Collective Agreement that do not adjust to the system of work groups...⁷⁹

The agreement stated that it was arrived at in the spirit of the National Agreement on Productivity and Quality. It explicitly stated that no other ratification was necessary for the agreement to take effect than that concluded before the Labour Board.

With an astonishing rapidity, with very little discussion, SITIAVW accepted the arguments presented by both the government and the employer in two instances; within the framework of the National

Accord and in the collective agreement itself. The union agreed to the complete restructuring of shop-floor relations even before a pilot project on teams had even begun, and with little information on the possible ramifications that the project might have for workers and the union. Concretely, the union accepted the extension of the team concept, or work groups, throughout the plant.⁸⁰ In its report, the union argued it had been able to avoid the destructive tendency evident in other workplaces where companies ushered in the new labour relations through violence and coercion:

(We concluded) a wide ranging and new kind of negotiation process that we think will transcend our labour relations. This constitutes proof that, with creativity and imagination, it is possible to carry out the change that modernisation requires. We can do this in a peaceful manner, with absolute respect for the acquired rights of workers and with full expectation for progress and improvements for the whole of the labour force. This process may assist changes in perspectives of the leaders of the company and all the workers. The future transformation of the contractual bases will take place in a negotiated manner, progressively and cautiously, with the democratic participation of the representatives of our organisation.⁸¹

With negotiations of the collective agreement concluded, it was immediately apparent that this negotiation had changed the character of labour relations in the plant. In return for relatively substantial wage increases, the union leadership had fundamentally surrendered their own role in production relations as it had been understood historically. Subsequent events indicated that the negotiating committee had misjudged the membership which was unwilling to trade away their acquired rights for an increase in pay.

Stage Two: Deposing the Executive Committee

Workers were given very little information about the implications of the agreement that had been signed on the team concept, and, with no process for contract ratification, were unable to hold the leadership accountable for the changes that were announced at the end of contract negotiations. The union refused to distribute the collective agreement and dissent grew quickly as supervisors mocked workers, saying that the union had sold them out.⁸² Workers soon discovered that during the negotiations, SITIAVW had signed an agreement with Volkswagen permitting the limited trial of work reorganisation in the form of the Team Concept in Shop 6, on the monoblock line beginning June 8 and lasting six months.⁸³

Even more galling was the news that this trial had been superseded by an agreement on the rapid introduction of lean production in the plant. Neither at the assembly notifying workers of the strike, nor in the presence of the other union leaders at the Solidarity rally during the strike, did the SITIAVW executive indicate that on July 1st, the same day that the union struck the plant, a document signed by the executive was deposited at the Labour Board in the Federal District. The preamble of the agreement read as follows:

Given the modernisation that the Company requires in its productive processes, as well as in its organisational structures; motivated by the commercial opening that the country is undergoing; as well as being motivated by the possible celebration of the Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada; and based on the philosophy that people are the most important of any organisation; with the objective of looking for new forms of

work organisation that permit the direct participation of workers in the search for higher quality and productivity, as well as continuous improvement in the process, and excellence of personnel, the parties agree to the following:...⁸⁴

This agreement established the bases for the institution of lean production throughout the factory.

The union's response did nothing to diminish the growing discontent within the rank and file. On the afternoon of July 20, 170 of the 204 sectional delegates of the union attended an assembly at which they agreed to begin proceedings which would dismiss the Executive Committee, according to the provisions in their union statutes. Since the company refused to allow an assembly to be held in the factory, the sectional delegates then went through the lines and called the workers to a meeting outside of the factory to take the formal resolution to dismiss the committee. The sectional delegates collected signatures during the second and third shifts, and during the first shift of the following day. By 11 am on July 21 they had collected almost 9,000 signatures.

The leaders of the oppositional movement, which took the name of the "July 20th Movement", travelled immediately to Mexico City to submit the documentation to the labour authorities (*Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje*). In their deposition, the leaders argued that the document approving the institution of work teams signed by the union and management was deposited without their knowledge, at the Labour Board in the Federal District on July 1st, the same day that SITIAVW led the strike against the company. The dissidents argued that they had no information about

the clauses in the collective agreement that were to be changed to prepare for the team concept. They raised questions about the lack of training for the new work arrangements and they complained that there was a discrepancy between the company's practice and the union's statements regarding the actual wage increase. While the company indicated that the wage increase was 15 percent plus a 5 percent increase based on productivity, the union claimed that it was a 20 percent direct increase. They argued that the new conditions meant the disappearance of the inspectors and auxiliary workers, the sub-contracting of the wire harness department, and a new work day of 2 shifts of 11 hours each, with straight compensation for the two extra hours worked.⁸⁵

When they returned from Mexico City, the leadership of the oppositional movement discovered that the company had locked them out and stopped the buses from transporting workers to the factory. The dissidents called a meeting of workers outside the plant. Having reached quorum, and after the vote to dismiss the Union Executive and the legal advisor was taken, the workers declared a Permanent Assembly outside of the factory. There, 7,000 workers proposed a full referendum be held and demanded that the Secretary of Labour follow the requirements of labour law and "Take Note" of the change in union leadership that had taken place at the factory. The leadership of the July 20 Movement denounced threats that had been made against it. For its part, the union leadership under the direction of secretary general Gaspar Bueno, declared that it would

not resign, having been elected in clean elections in December 1991.⁸⁶

Volkswagen stated that it was in a legal position to sever relations with the union and rescind individual contracts four days after the shut down of production.⁸⁷ The Executive Administrative Committee of Volkswagen argued that the company had lost 30 thousand million pesos in the first 40 hours of the work stoppage and demanded that the federal and state authorities provide "guarantees of security to renew activities immediately."⁸⁸ The company claimed that this was an inter-union conflict and they would not intervene.⁸⁹ However, the judicial police, called by the company and armed with M-16s, arrived at the plant. In response, nine thousand workers marched to the centre of the city to hold a demonstration at the Government's Palace.⁹⁰

A delegation of sectional delegates went to talk to a commission of PRI deputies of the state of Puebla. They were advised to return to work, call sectional assemblies and make the leadership convene an assembly headed by the Commission of Honour and Justice, before the Labour Authorities. The PRI deputies suggested that they protest like the Japanese, and wear an armband while they work, to show their displeasure. In response, a sectional delegate stated, "It is not because of ignorance that we proceed like this. We know our statutes and the Federal Labour Law very well, but when the authorities do not have the will, the problems reach their limit."⁹¹

Wives of the dissident workers held a demonstration in the streets of Puebla and met with officials from the Department of the Interior, asking for the intervention of the authorities for a solution to the conflict and in order to maintain the safety of the unionists. The workers held a demonstration on the highway linking Puebla and Mexico and were publicly supported by workers in the textile, steel and petroleum industries.⁹²

The dissident leadership agreed to a meeting at the Secretary of Labour (STPS) in order to present their two demands. They agreed to go back to work if a referendum was held allowing workers to declare their positions with respect to the conflict. Secondly they demanded that an interim commission to be formed to call new Executive Committee elections.⁹³ Nevertheless, the company presented the Federal Arbitration and Conciliation Board with a request to terminate the contract with the union representing 14,500 workers, for "reasons beyond their control".⁹⁴ On announcing this decision at a press conference on July 27, the President of the Administration Council of the company, Martin Josephi asserted:

We are deeply sorry that certain workers... have not understood that the modernization of the country and the challenges of opening of our economy imply profound changes in worker-employer relations, but before all else, the adherence to and respect for the law.⁹⁵

Under the labour law, the Board had 11 days to consider the request. If the argument based on "reasons beyond our control" was accepted, the company would be able to sever the workers according to the terms of Federal Labour Law which states that severed

workers are entitled to three months wages and 12 days wages for each year of seniority.⁹⁶ Immediately following this announcement, the 14 leaders of the movement were fired by company and expelled by the union under the exclusion clause.⁹⁷

After an inconclusive meeting between the leadership of the opposition and the leadership of the union in the offices of the Federal Secretary of Labour, relations between the leadership of the union and the July 20th Movement were completely ruptured.⁹⁸ On August 2, at a rally in Puebla's central square, the July 20 Movement decided to begin a permanent encampment outside the Secretary of Labour in Mexico City, until the conflict was resolved. 5,000 workers stayed outside at the encampment during the first days of August.⁹⁹

In early August, the Movement of July 20 held a rally to call for a formal General Assembly that would have the power to form an interim commission which would then call for new elections. Following the union constitution concerning on the dismissal of an executive, the dissidents collected signatures from the workers for a second time. To call a General Assembly, they had to demonstrate the support of 33 percent of the unionised workers and this they did by collecting the signatures of 158 sectional delegates and 309 sheets of paper recording the signatures and identification numbers of 6,760 unionised workers. They then had to give ample notice of the General Assembly which was called for August 15 1992. The signatures, along with examples of 3 newspapers where notice for the Assembly was published were

deposited with the labour authorities. As well, they requested that officials from the Secretary of Labour present observers.¹⁰⁰

The Audience at the Federal Labour Board was held on August 7th. The company presented its reasons for wanting to break off labour relations with the union. The company indicated that it was held up in its plans and was losing six million dollars each day as a result of the conflict.¹⁰¹ The audience lasted for almost 15 hours, with the legal advisor of the union speaking for nearly 10 hours, arguing against the company's position. He argued that the Audience was illegal and ought to be cancelled, since the parties were not given the required notice of 10 working days. The oppositional leadership, as well as labour lawyers external to the conflict, concurred, arguing that this violated Article 763 of the Labour Law.¹⁰² But they also argued that the labour law was contravened since the company had already, in fact, terminated labour relations long before any judgement had been made by the Board. The union's legal advisor stated that it was not *fuerza mayor* (an act of god), but the fact that the company had cancelled the buses to the factory that prevented workers from returning to work and resulted in the cancellation of production. The union's legal advisor, Héctor Barba, demanded that the employers pay all of the lost wages, and open the plant immediately. He declared that if they lost, and if all relations with the union were broken, then they would go to the Supreme Court of Appeal.¹⁰³ The fired leadership of the oppositional movement was not given legal status at the audience but they continued to demand legal recognition and

the "taking of note" by the Secretary of Labour.¹⁰⁴ Their lawyer, Carlos Fernández Del Real, argued that Article 433 of the Federal Labour Law permits the termination of the collective agreement only if the plant is completely shut down. Yet throughout the conflict, non-unionised workers, including office staff, were working at the plant. Obviously, an "act of god" was not the issue in question.¹⁰⁵

After the audience, Volkswagen indicated that it would await the decision of the Labour Board before trying to come to any resolution with the union. But the company also hinted that it would consider a new kind of "concertation", or concerted agreement, as a satisfactory outcome for the conflict.¹⁰⁶ The following day, at a rally of about 2,000 workers, the General Secretary of the union, Gaspar Bueno, reported on this meeting and was accompanied at the podium by the Francisco Hernández Juárez, FESEBES; Antonio Durán, Secretary of External Relations of the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas, and the other leaders of FESEBES. Hernández Juárez noted that FESEBES had sent 18 tons of food to the embattled union as an expression of solidarity. They had invited the independent Volkswagen union to work with FESEBES, he stated, not in order to control it, but so that they could work together.¹⁰⁷

The Movement of July 20 held its assembly on August 15 as planned and for the third time, workers demonstrated their intentions to depose the union executive. According to the documentation submitted to the Secretary of Labour, 9,494 of the

total 14,233 unionised workers attended the assembly. 9,301 workers, including 152 sectional leaders, voted to dismiss the Executive Committee of Gaspar Bueno and all the Union Commissions.¹⁰⁸ Voters deposited their ballots, on which were written yes or no, in urns that were sealed and counted by press photographers. The assembly elected a provisional Executive Committee headed by Jesús Valencia that would be responsible for holding new union elections. The ballots and attendance cards which indicated that the voters were union members were brought to the Secretary of Labour.¹⁰⁹ Secretary General Gaspar Bueno responded by arguing that the assembly was illegal, that there was a lack of security at the meeting and that many of the people who voted were not union members.¹¹⁰

Stage Three: Resolution- The Labour Board brings down its ruling

The Board ruling was delayed long past its expected date and brought down its ruling on August 17. It accepted Volkswagen's arguments for the suspension of labour relations and it gave the company 72 hours to sever its relations with its 14,233 workers.¹¹¹ The Board ruled that the inter-union conflict had produced an "irreparable condition" that resulted in the shut down of production.

With the news that the oppositional movement had lost, the union leadership called a meeting of approximately 7,000 workers for that same day where a package of proposed modifications to the union statutes was presented to the workers for their approval.

SITIAVW announced that the company required it to reform its internal union statutes if it wanted to avoid firings. The union formed a commission to take the reformed statutes to the labour authorities and the company offices.¹¹² The new union statutes were intended to reflect the new flexible working conditions, according to reports by SITIAVW's legal advisor, Hector Barba. In the new constitution, 40 of the 100 clauses of the union constitution had been altered. Among other things, the practice of forming opposing slates in union elections was ended. The new statutes terminated the practice of calling General Assemblies and eliminated sectional delegates. The 214 sectional delegates were replaced by 14 secretaries who control approximately 1,000 workers each. The practice of granting severances to outgoing union members was also ended.¹¹³

Six hours after the Labour Board brought down its ruling, the Secretary of Labour, Arsenio Farell Cubillas called a meeting of the Volkswagen officials and Gaspar Bueno to conduct negotiations on the re-hiring of the workers under the new contract.¹¹⁴ Secretary General of FESEBES Francisco Hernández Juárez attended the meeting as a union advisor. A completely new collective agreement was signed just before 4am the next day, August 18th.

The new collective agreement prepared for the immediate imposition of work teams. The union's legal advisor, Barba, argued that the collective agreement was the same as the old one with respect to wages and benefits. It included a 20 percent direct increase in wages, 4 percent increase in benefits and the

equivalent of 28 days wages pay for profit sharing, paid in December and May.¹¹⁵ When asked for corroboration of Barba's announcement the Secretary of Press and Information of the union, Fausto Lara Paisano, indicated that the new contract had not been distributed because "It's not even printed yet, anyway why would we give it out if they are not even interested in it and wouldn't even read it anyway?"¹¹⁶

The rehiring process caused immediate concern among the workers returning to the plant. Not everyone was rehired and those who were had to give up one of their rights under labour law: workers had to sign a statement agreeing not to appeal the decision made by the Labour Board. Workers were required to hand in their old identification card that indicated seniority levels. This caused immediate alarm, since the new cards did not record seniority and were similar to those given out to temporary workers in the past. Workers in the maintenance and wire harness departments were not listed among those to whom the new hiring process applied.¹¹⁷

On August 19, the day workers returned to the factory, 300 dissidents tried to organise a meeting in the early morning but were attacked by guard dogs and beaten by soldiers. 11 were arrested. After a meeting between their lawyer and the state governor, the detained were released. The government agreed to pay their medical costs.¹¹⁸

The next day, Volkswagen took out advertisements in national newspapers with the following message:

Home sweet Home: Unity will strengthen our family. Now we will be able to see, once again, the fruits of our talents, creativity and imagination. We will hear again, the movement of the line that transports parts, engines and automobiles from one work group to the next. We will continue to offer the results of our abilities and our efforts. It fills us with enthusiasm to return. But we are most proud to know that we will continue being a family: The great Volkswagen family. **Volkswagen de México.**¹¹⁹

By early September, the 400 remaining members of the Movement of July 20 were able to negotiate their severances with the labour authorities according to the conditions of the old collective agreement. The other six hundred workers who were not re-hired, signed over all of their rights to appeal and agreed to be represented only by the union's legal advisor in the negotiations with the company.¹²⁰

When the workers were being hired back, the company stated that dissident leaders would not be re-hired since they had received economic support from the same international organisations that had participated in the Ford conflict. Thus, they were not to be given access to the plant again.¹²¹ The presence of ex-Ford workers at earlier rallies, as well as the support from the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW-TCA) was criticised in the official press, as being an interventionist attempt by Canadian and US workers to destabilise Volkswagen and turn the conflict over to foreign hands.¹²²

Public Reflections on the Conflict:

The conflict at Volkswagen was watched widely within Mexico and ignited much discussion in public discourse. Labour lawyers,

academics, labour leaders, politicians and industry leaders commented on it. In the shadow of the NAFTA negotiations, the Volkswagen story appeared as a harbinger of things to come and fuelled much debate. Whether the "lesson" was that labour law was not respected, or labour law ought to be reformed, or the problem was located in the imperatives of free trade, or that state authoritarianism was increasing, or that participation in management's restructuring plans was the only alternative, the conflict touched a national nerve.

Labour lawyers deplored the attack on the right to association, arbitrary detention and violation of the Constitution. In a public denunciation, the *Asociación Nacional de Abogados Democráticos* (National Association of Democratic Lawyers) stated:

We call on all workers and the people of Mexico to consider the seriousness of this Resolution in terms of the annulment of Constitutional rights established in their favour. We call on the Mexican government to rectify the violations committed, thus restoring the constitutional order.¹²³

The *Asociación* launched a public campaign arguing that it was "absolutely false" to suggest that the movement of workers had impeded the access to the plant and shut down production. No "act of god" could be proved. Rather, argued the lawyers, the company had achieved its objective which was to terminate labour relations in the plant, with the complicity of the *Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje*, and the *Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social*. Further, without any basis in jurisprudence, the labour authorities interfered with internal union affairs by refusing to "take note" of the change in union leadership that had been

concluded according to the union's own statutes. It did, however, recognise the changes to the union statutes submitted by the deposed union leadership without any ratification by the membership on August 18th.¹²⁴

The *Asociación* indicated its concern for the rule of law given the decisions sanctioned by the Presidency during the NAFTA negotiations. In part, their concern reflected a broader debate about the reform of labour law in Mexico. Although labour law reform had been contemplated in Salinas' Reform of the State, it was not carried out because of the polarization of positions on the issue. Labour lawyers argued that, in fact, the labour law had already be altered through concertation at the national level, and changes to collective agreements at the level of the plant. Unwilling to risk a overt conflict, Salinas reformed the law in an indirect manner. As labour lawyer Néstor De Buen commented:

There are some who worry themselves- even me as a case in point, -about reforms to the Federal Labour Law. Idiots that we are. Because our political system has invented a much better formula: throw the law into the garbage and make a new one every day according to the whims of the client.

And this is why Volkswagen merits special attention. After the beating that it received as a result of NAFTA and content requirements of 62.5 percent, all this was worth the consolation prize- that's it for labour relations, the union and the collective agreement. So, everyone lives happily ever after. Amen.¹²⁵

In its ruling, the labour authorities dealt a serious blow to the old corporatist trade union structures and official trade unionism. Seeing a serious threat in FESEBES's victory, traditional corporatist unions responded with resounding

disapproval. The president of the Labour Congress (CT), Mario Suárez, condemned the union's advisors and urged the workers to appeal the Board's decision. Fidel Velázquez, leader of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* announced that the decision of the Labour Board was a "ominous and ill-fated precedent for the labour movement that might be repeated in other conflicts".

Further:

Whichever way you look at it, we are very sorry. The *compañeros* of VW had followed a different road from ours, they want to be independent of any central, but dependent on guys like Ortega Arenas.¹²⁶

Juan Moises Calleja, deputy and legal advisor to the CTM, maintained the traditional official line by defending the legality of the decision and the role played by the Secretary of Labour Arsenio Farrell Cubillas. Calleja argued that the conflict was an inter-union one promoted by people external to the company; the same ones who interfered in the Ford movement.¹²⁷ Juan Ortega Arenas, who played a decidedly inactive role during the conflict, denounced the decision as fascist.¹²⁸

After a series of events in which the Secretary General of FESEBES, Francisco Hernández Juárez, publicly demonstrated his support for Gaspar Bueno and his Executive Committee, it became clear that SITIAVW would enter into a new relationship with the Federation. Upon crediting the company with a conciliatory attitude during the conflict, Hernández Juárez stated that FESEBES promoted unity and "identified with those unions wanting change" along the lines offered by the modernization agenda.¹²⁹ Among labour leaders, Hernández Juárez, stood alone:

The truth is, I have to say, that the attitude of the company was very positive in this process and the attitude that my *compañeros* assumed in order to resolve this. The truth is that this has been a very important experience for us. It is an excellent precedent that perhaps will serve as a demonstration that it is possible, even under the most difficult conditions, to find solutions in favour of everyone.¹³⁰

Hernández Juárez' declaration was in concert with that of the president of the Administrative Council of Volkswagen of Mexico, Martin Josephi, who hoped that other companies would follow VW example:

the changes that were made to the collective agreement are reflected in other labour relations, since there is liberty to exercise the productivity and quality programs, these are very important aspects to be able to compete in international markets.¹³¹

Indicating his support for FESEBES, Josephi stated that the Volkswagen union ought to belong to a federation or union central. This VW executive indicated that the reform of the union statutes extending the term of office to six years was welcome since the three year term did not allow for experience to develop within the union leadership.¹³² FESEBES was granted its official registration by the labour authorities in early September. Francisco Hernández Juárez, who was elected as the General Secretary of the Telephone workers union in 1976, began his two-year term as head of the Federation.

One debate within academic circles considered whether flexibilisation was inherently repressive, or was the authoritarianism with which it was instituted in the Volkswagen case separable from the model itself.¹³³ Evaluations of the impact of work intensification were not available, given that

Volkswagen workers had not laboured under the new conditions. Due to the influence of previous studies on the impact of lean production in other workplaces such as Ford, however, the "flexibility" debate registered a range of positions. Given that the optimistic vision is inscribed within the precepts of lean production, arguments considering the impact of "intensification" rather than "flexibilisation", I would argue, were more likely to comprehend the implications for workers and unions.

The Volkswagen conflict shows how the institutionalisation of a new productive mode may be undertaken by authoritarian means even in the midst of a severe crisis of representation. The oppositional movement at Volkswagen was defeated, not because lean production had won the hearts of the workers, but because the government was willing to risk deepening the crisis of representation by being seen to undermine the Constitution itself. The conflict at Volkswagen had an impact at the national level and reinforced the demands of the opposition for a reform of the state.

The conflict also took on international significance because of the questions that were being raised at the time concerning the possible relevance of the labour side accords. The Volkswagen conflict lent credence to the argument that labour rights could not always be defended at the level of the state. Could unions and other oppositional groups in North America force state leaders to introduce guarantees at the supra-national level and challenge the precepts of the NAFTA framework?

Labour and NAFTA's Parallel Accords: The problem of representation in global corporatism

It is useful to refer back to the level of world order, so as to consider the negotiations concerning free trade that continued for a year after the Volkswagen conflict was concluded. The debate over labour's ability to defend workers' rights in the face of the NAFTA was a strenuous one. In the United States, the AFL-CIO, along with other citizens groups and coalitions of social movements, expressed fears that NAFTA would mean the loss of jobs to low wage zones in Mexico where corporations would not have to contend with effective environmental and labour standards. However, the AFL-CIO expressed its support for the addition of side-agreements which would limit the possibility of companies moving to take advantage of these conditions.¹³⁴

The Canadian labour movement refused to become involved in the negotiations of parallel accords to the NAFTA. It offered no official positions with respect the negotiations, no speeches, and little documentation. The CLC was offered the chance to brief the government on the issue, but refused since it would have to adhere to the secrecy provisions of the process.¹³⁵ In general, the position of the CLC and its member unions was one of outright rejection of the FTA, the NAFTA and the proposed side agreements. The Canadian labour movement, along with the Action Canada Network (ACN), expressed its lack of confidence in the negotiations on the side agreements, arguing that they could not alter the fundamental character of NAFTA the labour and environmental problems inherent

in it. The ACN denounced the anti-democratic character of the negotiations.¹³⁶

In Mexico, the official labour movement rejected any attempts to infringe on the sovereignty of Mexico with the use of parallel accords. A more radical labour perspective was advanced within the *Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio* (RMALC) coalition of groups that developed a strong criticism of NAFTA by arguing that sovereignty had already been compromised. RMALC attempted to open up space for a debate on the implications of Free Trade between countries where regional inequalities are so dramatic.¹³⁷

According to Berta Luján, the RMALC insisted throughout the NAFTA negotiations that the social aspects of NAFTA have to be examined: protection of workers, Social Agenda, labour and environmental issues, free movement of peoples, discussion of the Foreign Debt, compensatory funds, and consideration of low wages as an unfair trading subsidy. During the debate on the side agreements, RMALC proposed three objectives: to improve working conditions, to provide for the upwards harmonization of standards, to allow national legislation to regulate the side agreements.¹³⁸ The opposition argued that the lack of interest in these matters confirmed the argument that NAFTA advanced the interests of transnational corporations at the expense of labour and popular groups in all three countries.

Although consultations were held as early as the middle of February of 1993, the formal process of meetings and negotiations

with respect to parallel accords on environment and labour began on the 17 of March 1993 in Washington. Canada and México began from the premise that the accord would not be reopened, nor a "comma changed". Both countries announced their intention that the parallel accords would respect national sovereignty and would not imply changes to labour or environmental laws.¹³⁹ In an effort to appease national opposition while not alienating Republican members, the Clinton administration proposed that the Trilateral Commissions on labour and the environment be endowed with enforcement powers.¹⁴⁰ In the end, an agreement was reached. The central premise of the side agreements is to consider, in a non-adversarial way, whether or not a country's domestic laws have been complied with. The Labour Side Agreement deals with alleged failures to enforce national laws regarding child labour, minimum wage standards, forced labour, discrimination and other issues touching on basic liberal freedoms such as the right to organise, bargain and strike.

The many contentious issues raised in the debate on the side agreements may be understood as a broader process of negotiation over the meaning of democracy in the context of globalisation. During the debate, issues of democracy and sovereignty were at times constructed as opposing precepts. Arturo Alcalde, of the *Asociación Nacional de Abogados Democráticos*, described the conflict; "When governments talk about free trade, sovereignty is outdated. When they talk about labour rights, sovereignty becomes important again."¹⁴¹ Despite strengthening the visibility of

international labour solidarity in the context of NAFTA, with the conclusion of these agreements on labour and the environment, the national juridical-institutional framework was affirmed as the primary site of struggle for labour movements as they organise to contest the terms of neoliberal restructuring.

The appropriate site for the defence of labour rights continues to be debated within North American unions. In the Volkswagen conflict we do have an example of political interference in the administration of justice within Mexico. But this conflict reveals problems that run much deeper and call into question, not simply the question of administrative efficiencies and legal transparency, but the very form of state that was being institutionalised during the Salinas years. The Volkswagen conflict raised serious questions about the need for ongoing struggle against the entrenched *caudillismo* of the Mexican state and the need for a broad struggle for fundamental reform. In the 1990s, wide sectors of the Mexican population took up this challenge.

Democratisation and the Crisis of the State

On January 1 1994, Mexico woke up in the midst of a Rebellion. From the Lacondonan Jungle in Chiapas, the *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) issued a call to arms and invited all Mexicans to rise in rebellion against an illegitimate state.¹⁴² It was not simply the Salinas government that they rebelled against, but a much longer history of disenfranchisement that had

crystallised in the state itself. The EZLN did not speak for itself only. It spoke from the margins of Mexican society to a national problem and addressed its demands to the broadest sectors of civil society. From the centre of a direct confrontation with the state, the Zapatistas called for a counter-hegemonic struggle within civil society.¹⁴³

1994 marked the end of the Salinas term and the assassination of the PRI's presidential candidate just months before the federal election. In the midst of a profound crisis of legitimacy, the political order degenerated rapidly. Other prominent leaders of the PRI were assassinated in what appeared to be conflict within dominant groups.¹⁴⁴ The organisations of civil society looked for opportunity within these degenerating circumstances. After years of organising in defense of the vote in gubernatorial elections, non-governmental organisations stepped up the pressure for free and fair elections. They argued that if the liberals were really serious about destroying the corporatist system and supporting individual rights, then the government would be compelled to permit the opening of new spaces on this political terrain. In this demand they were partially successful. Organisations defending the vote sprang up to extend this new political space.

Multi-sectoral coalitions were organised in preparation for the decisive election of 1994. The coalitions in defense of the vote created the *Alianza Cívica*, and drew over 12,000 national observers to its 1994 election day task. The *Alianza Cívica* was formed as a diverse coalition representing more than 400 non-

governmental and civic organisations from all 31 states and the Federal District of Mexico. Members worked to defend the vote by conducting their own educational and media campaigns. With the oppositional parties, they obliged the PRI to accept electoral reforms, including the presence of national observers and international visitors.¹⁴⁵

In turn, Salinas conceded to the multi-party accord when it was agreed that the observers would have limited responsibilities. The amendment to the electoral code permitted international visitors who were invited by the government or Mexican NGOs to "come to learn about the development of the electoral process" under the condition that they would not interfere in national politics in any way.¹⁴⁶ As far as officials in the Federal Electoral Institute were concerned, observers were restricted to accredited Mexican citizens and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and registered political parties. Neither observers nor visitors had any officially recognised role in affirming the final outcome. The electoral authorities were responsible for certifying the elections while the Chamber of Deputies would validate the election of the President.¹⁴⁷

At the same time, the Zapatistas also engaged civil society in an initiative in support of the election. They called for the creation of the *Convención Nacional Democrática* (CND). The *Convención* was a different kind of response by organisations that continued to organise themselves as social, rather than individual subjects, ie. constituted around a defense of social rights. After

having responded to the Zapatista invitation by electing representatives from social movements to state-level congresses during the early summer of 1994, these representatives of civil society met in the capital of Chiapas, San Cristóbal de las Casas. For two days 6,000 delegates met in workshops to contemplate resolutions for the reform of the state. Following that, the *Conventionistas* travelled by buses to the Convention site in the Lacandonan jungle inside Zapatista territory. The site, cleared from the side of a mountain, was christened "Aguascalientes" by the Zapatistas in memory of the first *Convención* that formed its popular Revolutionary platform at the beginning of the century.¹⁴⁸

Having been trampled in the Salinas years, these activists from a wide range of social organisations asserted their argument that effective democratisation would require a new form of state. In the context of the Zapatista uprising, it was inconceivable that the federal election could be held without the social movements mobilising to make their demands heard. They did so in relation to the centre-left oppositional party, the PRD and with the support of other democratic organisations. The CND, however, also organised massive and continuous expressions of support for the social demands outside of any political party. Not unrelated to the struggle for electoral democracy, the CND attempted to build a movement in support of the struggle for a new form of state.

The Two Elections of August 21st

The 1994 election was lost by the popular forces in Mexico, and the PRI emerged triumphant. In its election report, *Alianza Cívica* gave the following assessment:

The political rights of Mexican citizens are not yet guaranteed, and unfortunately, in Mexico a culture of respect for the personal, free and secret vote does not yet exist. Those who today try, ingenuously or in self-interest, to celebrate the quality of this election, contribute to widening the abyss that separates us from effective suffrage and credible and transparent electoral processes. That is not how democracy is constructed.¹⁴⁹

The *Alianza Cívica* findings indicate that there tended to be two different electoral experiences in Mexico. The *Alianza* found that the rate of irregularities was consistently higher in most rural and southern regions of the country, than that of northern and urban areas. While the incidence of violations in the secret vote of urban and northern regions was itself high (22.34 percent), the fact that observers in 59.89% of the polls in most southern and rural region reported such violations is staggering. Similarly, with respect to the evidence of coercion of voters, the discrepancy is enormous. Observers reported irregularities in 12.53% of polls in the most urban-northern region, while 46.03 percent of polls in the most southern-rural regions reported coercion of voters.¹⁵⁰

However striking these results, the "two elections" theory does not go far enough in explaining the results of the election. The pre-electoral conditions were such that voters went to the polls fearful of future reprisals were the PRI to be defeated or even weakened in the election. *Alianza Cívica* opinion polls indicated that 47 percent of the population believed that there would be electoral fraud and 70 percent of these believed that the

PRI would be responsible.¹⁵¹ The Mexican Institute on Public Opinion (IMOP), for example, released its report in which it estimated that the PRI outspent the PRD by 354 times during the campaign. It cited the case of one campaign for Senator in the Federal District where the PRI spent more money than in all of the PRD campaigns combined.¹⁵² The PRI government was able to manipulate the timing of expenditures for the PRONASOL and PROCAMPO programs. Its disproportionate access to, and control of, the media limited the public's access to other parties. The PRI created fear in the electorate by suggesting that voters would choose political instability if the PRI lost. Despite the concentrated efforts of opposition political parties and citizen's organisations, the credibility and impartiality of electoral bodies remained in question. In the months following the election more information became available. For example, the National Chamber of Radio and Television formally instructed all its affiliates on August 22 "not to discuss post-election protests, and not to use the word fraud".¹⁵³

The media paid a lot of attention to those international visitors who declared a free and fair election. Most of these visitors, who had not strayed far from the hotels of Mexico City and the offices of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), made their declarations long before the ballots were counted. Even after groups of national observers had issued preliminary reports questioning the legitimacy of the election, despite the fact that the two main oppositional political parties continued to raise

serious allegations of election day fraud and even though it was abundantly clear that the "international visitors" did not speak with one voice, criticisms were given only cursory treatment in the international press.

In their Election Day Report, the Civic Alliance argued while millions of citizens voted freely, electoral irregularities were more than isolated incidents, had clearly distinguishable patterns that systematically violated citizens' electoral rights. As a result, they asserted, millions of Mexicans were subject to intimidation, denied their right to vote or denied a secret ballot.¹⁵⁴ With the Federal Electoral Court (TRIFE) receiving 1,229 complaints and the PRD's evidence challenging the results in 190 of 300 districts, the elections raised more questions than they answered.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

Regional content is not the only important issue for auto workers and their unions who face the institutionalisation of neoliberalism in North America. Theirs is a broader struggle over the consolidation of global corporatism. This struggle begins with the character of labour relations and work organisation within the plant, but also involves other sites of social relations, including the state and the domestic sphere, as well as the organisation of world order.

In the aftermath of the Volkswagen struggle, it was clear that the worker-father had lost the advantages of state corporatism. The

losses involved may provide the impetus for a reinvigorated mobilisation in the future. Alternatively, the loss may be forgotten as a new generation of workers is installed in the factory. We do not know yet how successful the new mode will be inculcating workers into the discourse of flexibility and individual responsibility. In Mexico, the experience of labour's collective past is diminished as the social guarantees of state corporatism are defamed by the ideals of neoliberalism. Within global corporatism, the position of the worker-father no longer rests upon the family wage. Without the certainty of a social wage, facing economic instability, declining household incomes and precarious employment within a deregulated labour market, both men and women workers are pressured to rely upon their individual efforts to intensify their labour and achieve individual reward through productivity increases. Within global corporatism, the corporate "family" becomes the nexus where relations of paternalism and authoritarianism impose solidarity within the reorganisation of work. For the future of counter-hegemony, much will depend on the ability of oppositional labour movements, within and without Volkswagen, to contest the apparent naturalness of the hegemonic masculinity, and unity of the family, as it is reproduced in the new Volkswagen.

For their part, employers in the newly emerging mode are highly internationalised. They move in a globalised space, not as individuals, but as members of a business community where international standards replicate standard operating procedures in

productive nodes around the world. Their concern is with internationalised production and markets, rather than domestic economies. Conditioned by intense competition, the ambiguous imperatives of new technologies are intertwined with struggles in the organisation of work and labour relations.

The state played a definitive role in shaping these transformed relations. Insofar as it mandated the transformation of the productive mode through concerted national agreements, concealed the administration of justice, sanctioned the use of violence against workers, mounted a thorough-going restructuring of state-labour relations and forestalled an open debate on the merits of the existing labour law, the "reformed" Mexican state institutionalised the new mode.

In the process, however, the legitimacy of *caudillismo* within the Mexican state was undermined. The Volkswagen conflict was arrested, not resolved. It contributed to the erosion of confidence in the very institutions the government was placing at the centre of the modernisation project. Because the labour authorities were seen as having been influenced by the *Salinista* agenda on NAFTA, the reform of the state and lean production, their judgements had little legitimacy. Because the conflict was concluded in such a repressive manner, the authoritarianism of the state, rather than its attempts to curry favour with paternalistic policies, defined the relation and contributed to the destabilising of labour relations in the country.

Trade unions were central to the old productive mode of state corporatism centralised in Mexico City, with an important presence in labour history. In the 1990s, the principal of collective acquired rights, bilateral relations of unions and management and the practice of collective bargaining have become antithetical to advocates of the global corporatist mode. As the Volkswagen case shows, collective bargaining is being undermined in the institution of this new model of development in Mexico by authoritarianism on the part of the state and capital, around a discourse of participation and cooperation in new forms of work organisation and through concerted agreements on productivity and quality. Corporatism remains a mechanism of control and cooptation of union leadership but because the new mode was introduced into Volkswagen without any apparent benefit to workers, its optimistic promises were left unmet. The crisis besetting the country has its roots in longstanding inequalities of power and will not be righted without a radical process of democratisation that goes far beyond that which resulted in Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon's accession to the office of President in 1994.

ENDNOTES

1. Alejandro Álvarez and Gabriel Mendoza, "Mexico: Neo-liberal Disaster Zone," in Crossing the Line, ed. Jim Sinclair (Vancouver, BC: New Star Books, 1992), 26-37; Edur Velasco Arregui, "Industrial Restructuring in Mexico during the 1980s," in Political Economy of North American Free Trade, eds. Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell A. Cameron (Ottawa, Montreal and Kingston: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 163-175.
2. In the United States, "Fast Track" refers to the "authority that Congress may give the Administration to negotiate a trade agreement and present the legislation. Once negotiations are completed, Congress has 60 days to vote yes or no on the whole agreement and the implementing legislation." The fast-track authorisation was won by a vote of 23 in the House of Representatives in the spring of 1991. Citizens Trade Campaign, "Nuestros Trabajos, Nuestro Medio Ambiente, Nuestro Futuro: Una Introducción a la Campaña Cívica Sobre el Comercio," Washington, DC, 1993. (trans.mine)
3. Ricardo Grinspun and Maxwell Cameron, "The Political Economy of North American Integration: Diverse Perspectives, Converging Criticisms," in The Political Economy of North American Free Trade, 3.
4. Jim Stanford, Christine Elwell and Scott Sinclair, "Social Dumping Under North American Free Trade," Working Paper Series, Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, (October 1993), 56.
5. Canada, "Canada's Objectives met in the North American Agreement on Environmental Co-operation and the North American Agreement on Labour Co-operation," News Release, 13 August, 1993.
6. Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial (SECOFI), "El ABC del TLC: El Tratado de Libre Comercio," 4. (trans.mine)
7. Canada, "A Letter from Michael Wilson" in The Global Trade Challenge, Special Tabloid Supplement, 1992, 8.
8. Ken Traynor cites R.K. Morris, head of the National Association of Manufacturers in the United States on this point. See Traynor, "The Origins of Free Trade Mania," in Crossing the Line: Canada and Free Trade with Mexico (Vancouver, BC: New Star Books, 1992), 11.
9. Grinspun and Cameron, "Political Economy of North American Integration," 16.

10. United States Trade Representative, "Discussion Draft on Post-NAFTA Policy," Inside NAFTA, 23 February 1994, 18-19.
11. Héctor Marquez, Oficina de Negociación del Tratado de Libre Comercio Dirección General de Consulta y Enlace Sectorial, SECOFI, interview by author, México, DF, 6 April 1993.
12. "La Industria Automotriz y el TLC," Texto del Resumen de SECOFI. Tratado de Libre Comercio, resumen editado por la Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial (SECOFI), 1. (trans.mine)
13. The method of net costs subtracts the total cost of the good, royalties, advertising, packing and shipping. With this method, financial charges are reduced. SECOFI, "La Industria Automotriz," 1.
14. SECOFI, "La Industria Automotriz," 1.
15. SECOFI, "La Industria Automotriz," 4-6.
16. Canada, the Government of the United Mexican States and the Government of the United States of America, "Chapter Eleven: Investment," North American Free Trade Agreement (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1992), 11.1 -11.10.
17. SECOFI, "La Industria Automotriz," 4-6.
18. For further discussion of this point see Leo Panitch, "Rethinking the Role of the State," Globalization: Critical Reflections, ed. Mittelman, 83-113.
19. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), "Automotive Sector," in Which Way for the Americas: Analysis of NAFTA Proposals and the Impact on Canada Ottawa, November 1992, 48.
20. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Primer Informe de Gobierno 1o de Noviembre de 1989, México, DF. 1-62.
21. Presidencia de la República, Dirección General de Comunicación Social, The Mexican Agenda, 11th Edition, Mexico, DF. (April 1991).
22. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, "Reforming the State," trans. Presidency of Mexico, Office of the Press Secretary to the President, Mexico DF. First published in Nexos 148, 1990: no pages given, 6.
23. Salinas, "Reforming the State," 13-14.

24. Salinas, "Reforming the State", 16-18. For a critical discussion of this programme see Francisco Valdés Ugalde, "From Bank Nationalization to State Reform: Business and the New Mexican Order," in The Politics of Economic Restructuring: State-Society Relations and Regime Change in Mexico eds. Maria Lorena Cook, Kevin J. Middlebrook, Juan Molinar Horcasitas (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, 1994), 232. See also, Denise Dresser, Neopopulist Solutions to Neoliberal Problems: Mexico's National Solidarity Program, Current Issues Brief Series, no.3. (La Jolla: Center for U.S. Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1991).

25. Trejo Delarbre, Los Mil Días, 59.

26. Augusto Bolívar Espinoza, "Primera Parte: El período de la transición a la modernidad," in México en la Década de los Ochenta: La modernización en Cifras coords. Rosa Albina Garavito Elías y Augusto Bolívar Espinoza (México, DF: El Cotidiano - Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Azcapotzalco, 1990), 36 y 42.

27. Trejo Delarbre, "Los mil días," 319.

28. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, "Ocho Tesis para la modernización laboral," 10 de Mayo de 1990, as discussed in Raúl Trejo Delarbre, Los Mil Días de Carlos Salinas (México, DF: El Nacional, 1991), 324-330.

29. Francisco Hernández Juárez y María Xelhuantzi López, El Sindicalismo en la Reforma del Estado: Una visión de la Modernización de México (México, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992), 7.

30. Hernández Juárez, "El sindicalismo en la reforma del estado," 17.

31. Hernández Juárez, "El sindicalismo en la reforma del estado," 150-151.

32. Hernández Juárez, "El sindicalismo en la reforma del estado," 151.

33. The term has been attributed to Ronald Reagan who called the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement "an economic constitution for North America." Gordon Laxer, "Constitutional Crisis and Continentalism: Twin Threats to Canada's Continued Existence," Canadian Journal of Sociology, 17 no.2 (June 1992): 209. as cited in Stephen McBride and John Shields, Dismantling a Nation: Canada and the New World Order (Halifax, NS: Fernwood, 1993), 157. Stephen Gill refers to "the new constitutionalism" found in the NAFTA, as well as the

Maastricht Treaty and the Gatt Uruguay round, which makes it increasingly difficult for governments to direct trade, monetary or investment policy in the direction of "social protection" in the Polanyian sense. Stephen Gill, "Globalization, Democratization and the Politics of Indifference," in Globalization: Critical Reflections, ed. James H. Mittelman (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Press, 1996), 216. For an earlier reference see, Gill, "The Emerging World Order and European Change," in New World Order? The Socialist Register 1992, eds. R. Miliband and L. Panitch (London: Merlin, 1992), 157-196. As Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke report, the director-general of the World Trade Organization opened the first ministerial meeting with a declaration that drafting a global investment treaty was like "writing the constitution of a single global economy." Renato Ruggerio, as cited in Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, The Multilateral Agreement on Investment and the Threat to Canadian Sovereignty (Toronto: Stoddart, 1997), 30.

34. "Declaración conjunta de Zacatecas," in Memoria de Zacatecas 25, 26, 27 de octubre de 1991. La opinión pública y las negociaciones del Tratado de Libre Comercio: Alternativas Ciudadanas (México, DF: RMALC, 1992), 83.

35. Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio, letter to Dr. Jaime Serra Puche, Secretario de Comercio y Fomento Industrial, México, DF, 25 de julio de 1992.

36. Robert White, "Canadian Labor Letter on NAFTA," Inside US Trade, 31 July 1992, 14-15.

37. Janine Brodie, "New State Forms, New Political Spaces," in States Against Markets: the limits of globalization eds. Robert Boyer and Daniel Drache (London: Routledge, 1996), 383-384.

38. Brodie, "New State Forms," 389.

39. Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello, Global Village or Global Pillage (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 97-102.

40. In October 1990, 30 Canadians representing 26 organisations met with 104 Mexican participants representing 60 organisations in the first of a series of trinational cross sectoral meetings including labour and popular movement representatives which would take place over the next few years. Al Seymour and Tony Wolfarth, Memo to Canadian Auto Workers President Bob White, 17 October 1990.

41. RMALC, Memoria de Zacatecas, 84-85.

42. "Declaration", Memoria de Zacatecas, 85-86.

43. Women's Plan of Action, "Memoria Testimonial: Primer Encuentro Trinacional de Trabajadoras ante la Integración Económica y el Tratado de Libre Comercio", Valle de Bravo Toluca, Del 5 al 9 de Febrero 1992.

44. "If we propose that salaries be harmonized upwards, we will question the very foundation of the NAFTA. Its very reason for being are the low wages in Mexico. To demand the upward harmonization of salaries is the same thing as opposing the Treaty, which is totally unrealistic." Mexican participant, "Memoria Testimonial".

"(A) very obvious demand that we need to be insisting upon now in the context of the negotiations is that basic services in each country not be dismantled- services like child care, health and educational systems, without which we cannot work." Kalima Rose, Equal Means, San Francisco, US, "Memoria Testimonial".

"One demand that we can make is that the permissible levels for workplace toxics be standardized. Our bodies are the same- it doesn't make sense that the permissible levels in Mexico be so high. Georgina Rangel, SITUAM, Mexico. "Memoria Testimonial".

45. "In the unions in California, we have problems with the lack of democracy. The unions lost their power 20 years ago. Those of us who are new, in middle-level positions, decide to organize. We made our own analysis: We had forgotten the rank-and-file, direct representation. We are now re-organizing. We began by training membership, preparing them, making sure they can read and speak in Spanish and English. We teach them the history of unions, their achievements. And we prepare them to demand accountability from their leaders, from our superiors, from us." Marta Samano, ILGWU, Los Angeles, US. "Memoria Testimonial".

"This project of labour rights and modernization cannot be separated from the dispute regarding our very nationhood. Only a democratic government elected by Mexican women and men, with respect for suffrage, is capable of respecting and building on workers' rights." Rosario Ortiz, Telephone Workers, Mexico. "Memoria Testimonial".

"We have to demand full democratic participation. We must have information regarding the NAFTA negotiations and any treaty or agreement should guarantee the rights of the most marginalized in all three countries." Canadian Delegation. "Memorial Testimonial".

"The internationalist movement is more and more necessary

for the democratic movement, and especially for women." - Mexico.

"Memoria Testimonial".

46. "Our goal is to renew the alliance between mothers and teachers. Teachers can call the community together- to speak of what is happening locally and seek solutions to local problems. Our strategy is not to fight with the union, but to work outside of it." Teachers' Unionist, Mexico. "Memoria Testimonial".

In the sewing workshops in Los Angeles, every time the workers try to organize, the owners close up shop and open up again around the corner. Moreover, workers have an aversion to unions. So we decided to organize our Garment Worker's Justice Centre. We hold workshops on immigrants' rights, and that's how we attract new members. We are unionizing people without unionizing their workplaces. They can begin to organize themselves without endangering their jobs." Justice Centre, Los Angeles, US. "Memoria Testimonial".

We're seeing creative organizing, innovation among workers based on their own needs- with or without the support of unions... working in coalitions with women's organizations, churches, community-based organizations. We are taking up the challenge of organizing with a view of the whole community. Felicita Villasin, INTERCEDE, Domestic Workers, Canada. "Memoria Testimonial".

We hold workshops in which women reflect on the double day, how many hours they sleep, how many they work, what they like and don't like... We begin each session with group exercises which warm women up before beginning our analyses, games to help women talk. If we don't do that, they don't open up, few of them even speak Spanish. - Flor de María Cervantes Rojas, *Programa de Mujeres en Solidaridad*, Oaxaca, "Memoria Testimonial".

47. "We saw how 100,000 jobs had been lost AT&T in New York in the last 10 years. In Boston and New York, the operators have a campaign- "Say No to the Robot, Yes to the Human Voice." They received support to keep their jobs, but the general public still was in favour of implementing the latest technologies. It's a real dilemma.

The same changes that were implemented there over a ten year period are being carried out here in three. We have to stay in touch so that we can develop strategies to confront the transformation of our work... Next week, the leadership of our respective unions will meet in Miami to sign an agreement defending wages, jobs, and the work process." Rosario Ortiz, Telephone Workers, Mexico. "Memoria Testimonial".

"But these relations should not be taking place only at the top because that would serve only to strengthen elites and not involve the rank-and-file. One way or another, we need to be promoting grassroots-level connections, promoting contact among our locals.- Telephone worker, Mexico. "Memoria Testimonial".

48. "It has been important to begin putting together the puzzle of our three countries, so geographically close, but so culturally, economically and politically different." From the evaluation, "Memoria Testimonial".

49. See Trejo Delarbre, Los Mil Días, for a sympathetic analysis of the outcomes from the first half of Salinas' government. For a more critical view see Alejandro Álvarez Béjar and Gabriel Mendoza Pichardo, México 1988-1991: ¿Un ajuste económico exitoso? (México, DF: Facultad de Economía, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1991).

50. Compliance was overseen by the *Procuraduría Federal del Consumido* and the Follow-up and Evaluation Commission was given authority to coordinate activities with Commissions at the state level and among the parties to the Pact. The parties agreed to conduct studies on price increases if deemed necessary during the duration of the Pact while the Department of Industry and Trade (SECOFI) agreed to conduct industry studies in specific areas. The version of this national agreement in effect during the summer of 1992 was signed on the 10 of November 1991 and lasted until January of 1993. "Pacto Para La Estabilidad y El Crecimiento Economico" Convenio por el que se extiende hasta el 31 de enero de 1993 el término de la Concertación vigente. 10 de noviembre de 1991, Los Pinos, México.

51. This national agreement was first introduced on January 27 1992, amended and then signed by the largest union, peasant and business organisations as well as the Secretary of Labour on 25 May 1992 after months of contentious discussion.

52. Acuerdo Nacional para la Elevación de la Productividad (ANEP)

53. A Follow-up and Evaluation Commission was formed to ensure that the parties complied with their obligations. Ma. de la Luz Arriaga Lemus, "El Acuerdo Nacional de Productividad y la Política Laboral Salinista", Economía Informa, Noviembre de 1992, UNAM, México, D.F., 7-12.

54. Oscar Alzaga, "El Acuerdo para Elevar la Productividad reforma la legislación laboral," Trabajo y Democracia Hoy, 7 No. 2 Mayo-Junio de 1992, i-viii.
55. Rianne Mahon, "From Fordism to ?: New Technology, Labour Markets and Unions, Economic and Industrial Democracy: an International Journal, 8 No.1 (February 1987):11 (5-60)
56. Mahon, "From Fordism to?," 40-42.
57. Volkswagen, "Grupos de Trabajo", 4-7.
58. Volkswagen de México, "Grupos de Trabajo," 37.
59. Javier Aguilar García, La política sindical en México: industria del automóvil, (México, DF: Ediciones Era, 1984), 57-58. For an excellent history of the Volkswagen union, see Yolanda Montiel, Proceso de Trabajo, Acción Sindical y Nuevas Tecnologías en Volkswagen de México (México, DF: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1991).
60. Montiel discusses the problems of "traditional" trade unionism in the Volkswagen union that persisted in the post-UOI years. See Montiel, Proceso de Trabajo, 121- 205.
61. Montiel, Proceso de Trabajo, 184.
62. Montiel, Proceso de Trabajo, 204.
63. Article 21: All members of the union, without exception, may be elected freely to occupy any position in one of the bodies that the statutes establish, with the exception of those who in the previous term had carried out their responsibilities in that same body. Juan Ortega Arenas, "Modelo de Estatutos de Sindicato Nacional de Industria," Instructivo Obrero, (Costa-amic Editores: Mexico, DF, 1984), 144. (trans.mine) That this practice was reproduced in Volkswagen is confirmed by Montiel, Proceso de Trabajo, 181.
64. Héctor Juárez, Facultad de Economía, Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, interview by author, Puebla, Puebla, August, 1993.
65. Juárez, interview by author, Puebla, August 1993.
66. Montiel, Proceso de Trabajo, 204.
67. Carlos Fernández del Real, interview by author, Puebla, Puebla, August 30, 1993; Fernando Fco. Herrera Lima, "Reestructuración de la industria automotriz en México y respuesta sindical," El Cotidiano 46, (marzo-abril 1992), 32.

68. Fernández Del Real, interview, August 30 1993. See also Montiel, Procesos del Trabajo, 192.

69. Fernández Del Real, interview, August 30 1993.

70. Agreement between Volkswagen of Mexico and SITIAVW, "Claúsula No. 16," Del Trabajo de Terceras personas", Junio 28 de 1989.

71. Volkswagen was involved in negotiations with the Federal government to construct an industrial park of 18-25 suppliers. Oscar Vásquez, C., "Reitera VW su pretension de finquitar las relaciones contractuales," Uno Más Uno, Sábado 8 de Agosto de 1992.

72. Susan Rappo, "Crece la importancia de Volkswagen de Mexico," La Jornada de Oriente (Puebla), Miercoles 10 de Julio de 1992.

73. Lourdes Cárdenas and Notimex, "Cancelo la matriz un contrato con la VW de Puebla," La Jornada (México, DF) Viernes 7 de agosto de 1992; Susana Rappo y Oscar Victoria, "Estalló la huelga en la planta automotriz VW," La Jornada de Oriente (Puebla) Miercoles 10 de Julio de 1992.

74. La Jornada de Oriente, "Cambiara Volkswagen sus sistemas productivos y relaciones laborales," La Jornada (México, DF), Sábado 18 de Julio de 1992.

75. SITIAVW, "Cláusula No.25 Bis. De la Productividad," Proyecto Revisión 92-94.

76. Susana Rappo y Oscar Victoria, "Estalló la huelga en la planta automotriz VW," La Jornada de Oriente (Puebla), Miercoles 10 de Julio de 1992.

77. "Levantaron ayer su huelga los trabajadores de la Volkswagen," La Jornada (México, DF), Viernes 3 de julio de 1992; Susana Rappo, "Cláusulas modificadas del Contrato Colectivo de Volkswagen de México," La Jornada de Oriente (Puebla), Miercoles 8 de Julio de 1992.

78. Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz, Similares y Conexos "Volkswagen de México," "Información a Nuestra Base Sindical Sobre los Resultados de la Revision Contractual," 6 de Julio de 1992.

79. Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje, Expediente III-244/92, Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz, Similares y Conexos "Volkswagen de México" VS Volkswagen de México, S.A. de C.V., 1 de julio de 1992. no.15.

80. "Levantaron ayer su huelga los trabajadores de la Volkswagen," La Jornada (México, DF.), Viernes 3 de julio de 1992; Susana Rappo, "Cláusulas modificadas del Contrato Colectivo de Volkswagen de México," La Jornada de Oriente (Puebla), Miercoles 8 de Julio de 1992.
81. SITIAVW, "Información a Nuestra Base Sindical", 6 de Julio de 1992.
82. Fernández Del Real, interview, August 30, 1993.
83. Convenio #12, 28 de Mayo de 1992, entre Volkswagen de México y SITIAVW.
84. Junta Federal de Conciliación, EXP. III-244/92, SITIAVW vs Volkswagen, 1 de julio de 1992.
85. Previously, the first shift ran from 6-3 pm, the second from 3 pm-11:30 pm and the third from 23:30-6 am. The new hours fixed the day at 6 am-5 pm and from 3 pm-1:30 am. Alfredo Lucero y Beatriz Guillen, "Resistiremos, dicen los trabajadores disidentes," Sintesis (Puebla), 23 de julio de 1992.
86. Susana Rappo, "Piden la destitución de la directiva del SITIAVW," La Jornada de Oriente, 22 de julio de 1992.
87. Judith Calderón y La Jornada de Oriente, "Volkswagen despide a 14 de los disidentes; el sindicato los expulsa," La Jornada (México), Miercoles 29 de julio de 1992.
88. La Jornada de Oriente, "Asegura Volkswagen que el paro ya causo pérdidas por 30 mil millones," La Jornada (México), Jueves 23 de julio de 1992.
89. This indicated a shift in the company's position since four years previously, a three day work stoppage resulted in the dismissal of General Secretary Rodolfo Contreras. On that occasion, the company was flexible. Calderón, "Volkswagen despide a 14 de los disidentes".
90. Beatriz Guillen y Alberto Mendez, "VW: al trabajo por la fuerza," Sintesis (Puebla), 24 de julio de 1992.
91. Guillen y Mendez, "VW: al trabajo por la fuerza," 24 de julio de 1992.
92. "Dio entrada la JFCA a la demanda de la VW," La Jornada (México, DF), Miercoles 29 de julio de 1992.

93. Beatriz Guillen, "No regresaron al trabajo pese al ultimatum de Volkswagen," Sintesis (Puebla), 27 de julio de 1992.

94. La Jornada de Oriente, "Volkswagen da por terminada su relación laboral con el sindicato," La Jornada (México), Martes 28 de julio de 1992.

95. "Dio entrada la JFCA a la demanda de la VW," La Jornada (México, DF), Miercoles 29 de julio de 1992.

96. "Causa de fuerza mayor" also translates as "An act of God".

97. Calderón, "Volkswagen despide a 14," 29 de julio de 1992.

98. The Secretary of Labour, Arsenio Farell met with Bueno and Barba, Martin Josephi (President of the Administrative council of VW) and Valencia and the dissidents' legal advisor, Fernández Del Real. After 6 hours of discussions, Bueno agreed to hold an assembly to discuss the sanctions against the dissident leaders; discuss the ratification or dismissal of his leadership by the membership and call new elections if the membership decided to dismiss him. He then changed his mind, abruptly walked out of the meeting with his contingent and thus, broke the agreement. Fernández Del Real, interview, August 30, 1993.

99. Oscar Vázquez C, "Acepta Bueno Aguirre que una asamblea decida quien es el líder," Uno Más Uno (México, DF), Martes 4 de agosto de 1992.

100. The documentation was presented to the Dirección General de Registro y Asociaciones of the Secretaría Federal de Trabajo y Prevision Social. See also Oscar Vázquez, C., "Reitera VW su pretension de finquitar las relaciones contractuales," Uno Más Uno (México, DF), Sábado 8 de Agosto de 1992.

101. Volkswagen had been producing 400 Golfs, 400 Sedans and 65 vans as well as 2,000 engines each day. With stated plans to invest one thousand million dollars in Mexico over the next 5 years. Vázquez, C., "Reitera VW su pretension," 8 de Agosto de 1992.

102. Néstor de Buen, "Laudo habemus," La Jornada (México, DF.), Martes 18 de agosto de 1992.

103. Martha Elba Arrona, "Anulación de la Audiencia ante la Junta Federal de Conciliación Demandando el Sindicato de la VW," El Sol de Puebla (Puebla), Domingo 9 de Agosto de 1992.

104. Martha Elba Arrona, "Reconocimiento Legal Buscara el Movimiento "20 de Julio", " El Sol de Puebla (Puebla), Domingo 9 de Agosto de 1992.

105. Ruth Piedrahita, "Niega Jesús Valencia, intromisión de partidos y órganos extranjeros," La Opinión (Puebla), Jueves 13 de agosto de 1992.

106. "Hay la posibilidad de una nueva concertación: H. Barba," Síntesis (Puebla), Martes 11 de agosto de 1992.

107. La Jornada de Oriente y Andrea Becerril, "Podría VW recontractar buen número de obreros, pero en forma personal, advierte su presidente," La Jornada (México), Miercoles 12 de agosto 1992. Oscar Victoria, "Nuevo Diálogo entre la VW y el Sindicato: Bueno Aguirre," La Jornada (Mexico), Miercoles 12 de agosto de 1992.

108. Sara Lovera y La Jornada de Oriente, "Fuerza mayor: razón del fallo; plazo de 72 horas para indemnizar," La Jornada (México), Martes 18 de agosto de 1992.

109. Rosa Ma. Chavarría Díaz, "Desconocen en la VW a Gaspar Bueno: elegirán un líder interino," El Nacional (México, DF), Domingo 16 de agosto de 1992; Antonio Vázquez, "Destituyen a Bueno como líder de la VW," Unomásuno (México), Domingo 16 de agosto de 1992; Martha Elba Arrona, "Aprobaron la Destitución de Bueno, Miembros del Movimiento "20 de Julio", " El Sol de Puebla (Puebla), 16 de agosto de 1992; Andrea Becerril y La Jornada de Oriente, "Ratifican por unanimidad destituir a Gaspar Bueno en la Volkswagen," La Jornada (México) Domingo 16 de agosto de 1992.

110. Comité Ejecutivo General, "A la Opinion Pública...", " La Jornada (México), Lunes 17 de agosto de 1992.

111. Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje, Secretaría Auxiliar de Conflictos Colectivos, Junta Especial Número 15, Expediente Numero 579/92, Volkswagen de México, S.A. de C.V. vs Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz, Similares y Conexos Volkswagen de México y otros. México, D.F., 17 de agosto de 1992.

112. Ricardo Escobar F., "Acuerda el Sindicato Independiente de la Volkswagen modificaciones a los estatutos," Unomásuno (México), Martes 18 de agosto de 1992.

113. Judith Calderón Gómez y La Jornada del Oriente, "Empresa y Gaspar Bueno negocian ya nuevo contrato," La Jornada (México), Martes 18 de agosto de 1992; Beatriz Guillén, "Arreglo ajustado a derecho y con respeto al trabajo: Héctor Barba", " Síntesis (Puebla), 18 de agosto de 1992.

114. Calderón Gómez, "Empresa y Gaspar Bueno negocian", 18 de agosto de 1992.
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Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have examined three examples of labour resistance within Mexican labour unions. Each of these cases offers an insight into a different moment in the organic crisis whose beginning may be seen in 1968. I have argued that gender, having played a central role in the construction of relatively stable historical structures in Mexico during the mid part of the century, continued to shape the struggles of radical labour movements throughout the period of deepening crisis.

Under conditions of passive revolution in mid-century Mexico, the productive mode given primacy by the state was state corporatism. This historical structure was engendered by: i) the paternalistic ideology of the family written into the Constitution of 1917; ii) the institutionalisation of *caudillismo* as the hegemonic masculinity within the state expressed in the federal executive, trade union leadership, and the role of the father-worker; and iii) the masculinised character of production relations expressed in the automotive industry.

As this productive mode entered into crisis, certain elements of this historical structure persisted and others were transformed. Movements of trade unionists, as they resisted the conditions of their subordination, were both subjects of and subjected to, these transformations. I have

argued that the lack of attention to the gendered character of both the passive revolution and crisis has weakened the counter-hegemonic potential of the radical labour movements in the auto sector. This conclusion would invite some final reflections on the struggle for counter-hegemony in Mexico.

In the case of Nissan, Gramsci's insight into the importance of disrupting the 'common-sense' of the age may be appreciated. Although Mexico was not a hegemonic society in the late 1960s, during the movement from passive revolution to crisis, independent trade unions were able to widen the rupture in intersubjective meanings that was the result of the massacre of students in 1968. In the Nissan workers' struggles, we saw how the highly developed class consciousness of social unionism was developed through the slow process of building regional alliances of men and women workers, and other popular forces in the industrial centre of Morelos. This process, however, was thwarted at Nissan by a more narrowly defined "economic-corporate" consciousness in which the paternalism of an independent union movement resonated with the government's efforts to rebuild the social compromise at the national level.

Those workers who attempted to reestablish a broader based social unionism at Nissan were unable to confront the debilitating effect of paternalism within the union. At Nissan, the *caudillismo* of trade union leadership was not contested on gendered grounds. To have done so, would have

meant that the role of the *pater* would be at the centre of the movement's social analysis. There is little indication that feminist praxis was able to disrupt the commonly accepted beliefs about the role of the father in the family, the church, the community, or within working class organisations.

For its part, the democratic movement at Ford was conscious of its own need for unity, but the movement went beyond consciousness of itself as an economic group. It engaged the problem of the state in solidarity with other members of the working class. Its struggle on the juridical-political terrain was a struggle for equality with dominant groups. To the extent that this struggle for reform took place within existing structures, it reflected a highly developed class consciousness within the movement. Nevertheless, although the movement sought alliances with other subordinated groups, this solidarity was fragile. The movement introduced an important international dimension into the struggle, but the success of this effort depended greatly upon the shifting interests and perceptions of the Ford workers' northern counterparts.

More importantly, what the Ford workers' movement did not do was problematise the gendered dynamics of restructuring. The dissolution of state-corporatism meant an attack on the acquired rights of the worker-father in a highly masculinised industry. "Maquilization" introduced a feminised productive mode into the centre of industrial relations in Mexico.

Furthermore, the restructuring of representation challenged the legitimacy of workers' rights to contest the process. In the absence of a feminist analysis, the Ford workers too easily slipped into a defence of masculine privilege. Auto workers had a central place within the hegemonic masculinity of state corporatism. For Ford workers, presumably it would be an affront to be turned into "*maquila* girls".¹ One of the arguments that could be made in the course of a gendered contestation of restructuring, however, is that if established male workers fight to maintain their acquired rights they do not automatically exclude other less protected workers from gaining these rights. In fact, they may maintain this possibility in the face of employers' arguments that "there is no alternative" to the degeneration of labour's rights.²

The *maquilas* first complemented the shortcomings of state corporatism, but then overtook it as production was transformed. It is increasingly apparent that the struggles of the women who continue to work in the *maquilas* and the struggles of working class men in the *maquiladORIZED* industries are both conditioned by the inequalities of gender relations. When capitalists build new plants in the middle of a desert, they are not filling up empty space. They arrive into a whole nexus of social relations within which production already occurs. Otherwise, the fact that a young, educated, spanish-speaking woman of colour is chosen the preferred worker would have no meaning at all. At the same time, the

location of the new investments in the 'greenfield' is an overt repudiation by capitalists, of the social structures that had once been central to their own interests. When maquilization is reproduced in the older centre of the industrial model, contestation has to take place on a gendered terrain. Otherwise, the basis for neoliberal restructuring cannot be fully challenged.

In the 1990s, the struggle for counter-hegemony continues to take place under conditions of crisis. Global corporatism was institutionalised as a combination of lean production, free trade and concerted national agreements established under executive privilege. As the Volkswagen workers' movement shows us, the institutionalisation of this new mode did not reflect an organic response to crisis. Instead, the institutionalisation of global corporatism depended upon authoritarianism with a paternalistic veneer imposed through the *caudillismo* of the state executive. As a result, global corporatism exists as a very fragile social structure indeed.

The Volkswagen struggle, while it arose as a spontaneous response to the attacks on its own representative institutions, added to the general level of contempt for the unilateralism with which executive authority was exerted throughout the NAFTA negotiations. The struggle against presidential *caudillismo* that the movement at Volkswagen represented was taken up in the anti-NAFTA coalitional work. The presence on the international stage, of a broadly based

coalition was sufficient to indicate that a debate had emerged over who spoke in the name of Mexico in international negotiations. Within Mexico, the reform of the state became the focus of national level organising on the question of elections, as well as constitutional reform.

In Gramscian terms, the Volkswagen struggle may be seen as an instance of struggle in terms of an economic-corporate consciousness. Still, the conflict provoked the more broadly based social movements, such as the anti-NAFTA coalitions, the organisations in defence of the vote, and the Zapatistas, that had directed their struggle towards a transformation in the form of state. Set in the context of restructuring at the level of world order, the state and production, the Volkswagen story is also important because it also shows us how global corporatism, if it is to achieve some lasting stability, will likely not be built upon presidential *caudillismo*. Rather, it will depend upon the assumed unity of the family. In global corporatism, the "family" is redefined in terms of the corporate family. The inequalities upon which this image rests need to be made visible for there to be an effective contestation of this newly emerging mode.

Crisis and Reverberations in the Global Corporatist Mode

The Mexican economy collapsed in December 1994. Within a few months, the stock market fell 35 percent. Inflation reached 50 percent, interest rates increased to 80 percent and

the peso lost almost half of its value in relation to the US dollar.³ This collapse, appearing as a currency crisis, had its roots in the unsustainable deficit in the current account. Despite the restructuring of industry, Mexico was still importing more than it exported.⁴

The significance of the crash was that, after more than thirty years of restructuring meant to overcome the balance of payments problems of import-substitution industrialisation, export-oriented development had not been able to solve the country's current account difficulties.⁵ As an outcome of restructuring, manufactured products had increased to 83 percent of Mexico's exports, thus diminishing the significance of primary products exports, including oil. Nevertheless, over half of the country's manufactured goods were from the *maquiladora* sector which uses less than 1.5 percent of national inputs in its production.⁶ Without counting *maquiladoras*, between 1988-1994 manufacturing imports increased at an average annual rate of 41.3 percent, while exports average annual growth of 22.2 percent. The oil industry was unable to cover the difference.⁷ As a result, the current account deficit grew 11.4 times between 1988-1994 and rose by 37 percent in 1994 alone. In the auto industry we see an example of the severity of the problem. In 1994 the auto industry exported goods worth 4,607 million US dollars, while it imported materials worth 5,487 million US dollars.⁸

The deficit was financed by an influx of foreign direct

and portfolio investment capital supported by high interest rates. This strategy produced a surplus on the capital account that financed the disequilibrium. The surplus was produced, not through investments that represented long term commitments to Mexico, but through a strategy that left Mexico vulnerable to the discipline of foreign investors. In the 1990s, portfolio investment became increasingly important as a percentage of foreign investment. In 1990, 44 percent of foreign investment was direct (stocks). In 1993, this level fell to 15 percent, as the importance of the more volatile investment in government bonds increased.⁹ By the end of the second quarter 1994, portfolio investment had dropped by 82 percent, while foreign direct investment dropped by 25 percent.¹⁰

Many economists critical of the government argue convincingly that the deterioration in the current account during the 1990s was to be expected, given the opening of domestic markets under conditions of structural adjustment during the 1980-90s.¹¹ Liberalisation became highly politicised. Instead of responding to the problems that were visible and anticipated, the government paid for the deficit with its foreign reserves and waited months after the federal elections until the new President was installed before overseeing a chaotic devaluation set within a deflationary economic program.¹² The US administration, for its part, had

long accepted the over valued peso while it sold the benefits of NAFTA to the US Congress.¹³

It was after the crisis, however, that the impact of internationalisation under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) became more apparent. In 1995, the Mexican government sold 29 billion dollars worth of *Tesobonos* (bonds) indexed to the price of US dollars.¹⁴ As a result, foreign investors were guaranteed that public money would be used to underwrite their security. This act alone increased the indebtedness of the Mexican government in a way that raised the ire of many non-investing Mexicans. Securing the interests of private investors in Mexico was also a priority of the US government. Not only did the 40 billion US dollars in loans received from the US government bail-out support the interests of foreign investors in Mexico, they were guaranteed by four years of oil exports.¹⁵ Mexico signed away sovereignty in the process. Furthermore according to an economist with the *Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio*, given the restrictions on governments entrenched within the investment provisions of NAFTA, foreign investors have "absolute liberty":

They are not required to fulfil any obligations. They cannot be regulated or oriented according to a national project. All limitations on the free transference of resources and foreign exchange, etc are prohibited. Which is to say that foreign investment may be attracted, but it is forbidden to direct, or regulate it. Neither are there any instruments to distribute its location and duration.¹⁶

The problems with currency speculation and financial panic at the end of 1994 were manifestations of the problems of the neoliberal economic model which, as Fernando Chavez argues quite convincingly:

originated in 1983 and was reinforced financially towards the end of 1987 until the beginning of 1994... The ingredients that were lacking and finally made neoliberalism unviable as an historic project were evident from the beginning of its launching: political democracy and income redistribution. These could not be the results or the awards at the end of a long period of modernising transformation in the country. They were the hinges of a structural change in Mexican society. Without them, the cataclysm was inevitable.¹⁷

Once again, questions of representation were seen to be wrapped up with the problems of restructuring.

The links between restructuring and representation were also present in the Chiapas conflict that continued into 1995 unresolved. Eventually, the government of Ernesto Zedillo and the *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) agreed to begin negotiations on a series of themes. In October 1995, talks began on Round One, "Rights and Indigenous Culture". By February 1996, an agreement was reached and signed by both parties. Round Two "Justice and Democracy" began in March but was not concluded.

Although there are many reasons why such a sensitive negotiation might fail, one of the most convincing explanations rests with the government's fear that it could not limit the negotiations to a local and particular struggle, given the support within civil society for the EZLN's opening of the process to input from with diverse groups. The EZLN

called a national meeting of sectoral representatives from across the country in a seven day "Forum for a Reform of the State." In response, the government attempted to recapture this process and limit it to a discussion of electoral reforms within Congress where the PRI would have more control over it.¹⁸

The breakdown in negotiations between the government and the EZLN did not invalidate the original agreement. The "San Andres Agreement" was not implemented, however, given that the government did not make the necessary changes to the Constitution. Eventually, a multi-party commission (*Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación* COCOPA) was given the responsibility to draft the necessary changes in the spirit of the agreement. COCOPA submitted its proposals in late 1996 whereupon the government issued 29 objections. The process was paralyzed as a result.¹⁹

This tumultuous sequence of events set the context for the 1997 mid-term elections. In July, for the first time, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) lost its absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies.²⁰ The PRI maintained its majority in the Senate. In one of the most important outcomes, the mid-term elections brought Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to office as the mayor of Mexico City. In response to the election, business leaders declared there would be no capital flight unless the opposition turned to populism or pressed for changes to the economic model.²¹ International observers

associated with *Alianza Cívica* reported that the elections represented a great advance in terms of a democratic transition for Mexico. Although there were serious incidents which limited the right to vote in certain areas, including heavily militarized regions, both national and international observers reported that the election had been much strengthened by the self-organisation of citizens who defended the vote.²²

There were some important changes on the labour front in 1997 as well. Independent federations of labour were successful in organising a new labour confederation in direct opposition to the *Congreso del Trabajo*. In November 1997, the *Union Nacional de Trabajadores* was formed by a group of approximately 150 labour organisation. Francisco Hernández Juárez of FESEBES, along with the leader of the University workers union (STUNAM) and the secretary general of the union of Social Security workers, accepted a seat in the presidency of the UNT. Although representing diverse political perspectives, the new labour central groups together unions with one common interest in defeating the corporatism of the PRI.²³ Whether or not the new confederation may be considered more democratic, autonomous or independent than the CT will become clearer over time.²⁴ At the moment, it seems that the formation of this new labour central marks a significant change within the institutions governing labour relations. What is not certain, is whether this marks a

departure from corporatism or a transformation of corporatist labour relations. It will be important to see what kinds of debates take place within the organisation regarding lean production, free trade and any further efforts to renew trilateral concertation. So too will it be important to watch the extent to which *caudillismo* is reproduced within the new organisation. This will depend, in all likelihood, upon the success women trade unionists have as they organise feminist challenges within the UNT. This is the challenge that could become the basis for renewed contestation in the direction of counter-hegemony.

As the institutions of state corporatism are displaced, we do not yet know whether a new global corporatism under the rubric of export-oriented, lean production will replace them. At the end of 1998, the possibility that the government will enact a reform of the federal labour law has engendered a new round of debate on what the new labour relations regime ought to look like. Arising out of a "Women's Parliament" organised to mark International Women's Day 1998, women workers have raised the question of gender in the debate.²⁵ The PRD proposes that the law promotes equality opportunity and condition, women's participation in joint committees, and "positive" action programmes meant to decrease inequalities between men and women workers.²⁶

While these significant initiatives have been organised on the labour terrain in the centre of the country,

militarization and violent conflicts have continued and even increased in many rural areas, including Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero. Amnesty International (AI) reports its concern for the "deteriorating human rights situation" in Mexico and the impunity with which members of the armed forces participate in it.²⁷ Scores of gross human rights violations including disappearances, torture, and the extrajudicial execution of peasant leaders and opposition political party members that have taken place during the Zedillo administration have been documented by AI. The violence in Chiapas was made visible most brutally with the massacre of 45 indigenous people in Acteal, Chiapas in December 1997. Subsequently, the federal government was accused by the *Comisión Nacional de Intermediación* (CONAI) of following a "strategy of war" in which the language of peace and reconciliation has been accompanied by increasing levels of militarization, incursions into Zapatista communities, disappearances, the expulsion of foreigners, as well as coercive attacks against non-governmental organisations.²⁸ In this context, the government unilaterally proposed a set of changes to the Constitution pertaining to Indigenous rights and culture. The EZLN rejected the government's circumvention of the negotiated process.

Most recently, the EZLN has called for a new National Referendum which would evaluate COCOPA's proposals. In the words of one research centre in Chiapas:

So, it is the indigenous peoples who are recuperating the political initiatives. They are the ones who, once again, convoke the nation to a debate over the destiny of the country and the indigenous peoples. In this way, they will remove the debate from the seclusion where the federal government has kept it; in the Congress of the Union.²⁹

The National Referendum will be planned in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, on the Anniversary of the Revolution, November 20-22, 1998. A wide variety of representatives of civil society are expected to attend.

A final thought

To this point, global corporatism has not emerged as the basis for a passive revolution. Mexico continues to meet Gramsci's definition of a country facing organic crisis because it is clear that "the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses".³⁰ Globalisation has not brought the promised benefits to a society that has been so profoundly restructured in aid of those ideals. As a result, the crisis of representation only deepens.

Under conditions of global corporatism, individual rights do not necessarily replace collective rights as a new basis of legitimate representation, even though the identity of the individual worker is reconstituted and individual workers' responsibilities for production increases. Nor does the state necessarily defend individual rights in the face of the

offensive against collective rights. The new labour relations regime has been introduced by the authoritarianism and paternalism of the state, export-oriented production and a discourse of participation under lean production. But the state, under the leadership of the PRI, is in evident decomposition. Not only the government, but the form of state itself is questioned by significant sectors of the population. Export-oriented production has failed as a strategy, and workers, by their self organisation, have indicated that they will continue to look critically at the participatory ideology of lean production under working conditions that are excessively intense, as well as precarious.

When the crisis emerged, the coherence of passive revolution began to fray. Still, *caudillismo* persisted for a long time. In the Nissan case, we saw how *caudillismo* was reestablished within the new independent union. Not until the 1980s, as we saw in the case of Ford, did restructuring challenge the basis for the *caudillismo* of the worker-father. Later, as we saw in the Volkswagen case, the *caudillismo* of the Presidency was discredited as the Salinas years came to a close.

If *caudillismo* remains unchallenged as the hegemonic masculinity within the trade union leadership, however, it will be more likely for global corporatism to become established in Mexico. Working class organisations, in their struggle to rid themselves of their corporatist past, must

acknowledge how global corporatism reproduces a conservative, and not a radical, image of social relations in which the patriarchal family plays a central legitimating part. If they do not make the gendered dimensions of power visible, Mexican trade unions will certainly not be able to represent workers as they continue in their struggle for the counter-hegemonic transformation of social relations in Mexico. If they do, then they create, for themselves, a wider base for counter-hegemony.

ENDNOTES

1. As Cynthia Enloe discovered when she spoke with heterosexuals about gays in the US military, men who conform to the hegemonic masculinity, do not want to be "seen" as women are "seen". Cynthia Enloe, The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
2. Sam Gindin, presentation, "Cars and Continentalism" Harold Innis Centenary Celebration Conference, University College, University of Toronto, Toronto, May 1994.
3. Carlos Heredia and Mary Purcell, "Structural Adjustment in Mexico: The Roots of the Crisis," in Structural Adjustment and the Spreading Crisis in Latin America (Washington D.C.: The Development GAP, 1995), 3.
4. Fernando Chavez, "Colapso cambiario y ajustes macroeconómicos," El Cotidiano (México, DF) 68 (1995):1 <http://www.-azc.uam.mx/cotidiano/68/doc12.html>
5. From 1991 to 1994 only petroleum, primary products, livestock, apiculture, construction and fishing generated a trade surplus. All manufacturing sectors produced trade deficits. VI Informe de Gobierno de Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Anexo, 141-147 and cited in Alberto Arroyo, Investigador UAM-I, RMALC, "Hacia un diagnóstico de la Crisis y Propuesta de condiciones mínimas para enfrentarla," unpublished paper (February 1995): 3.
6. Alberto Arroyo, "Hacia un diagnóstico," 3.
7. Chavez, "Colapso cambiario," 5.
8. Alejandro Álvarez Béjar, Facultad de economía, UNAM, "Cinco enseñanzas del fracaso económico neoliberal en México," unpublished paper, (febrero de 1995): 8.
9. Alberto Arroyo, "Hacia un diagnóstico," 3.
10. Chavez, "Colapso cambiario," 6.
11. Álvarez points out that the deficit in the current account reached 30 billion dollars in 1993 and 27 billion US dollars in the third quarter of 1994. Álvarez Béjar, "Cinco enseñanzas," 6.
12. The government decreased public spending and imposed wage ceilings of 7 percent, and making growth projections

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13. James Laxer, "Straight Talk on Mexico, not another amigo," Toronto Star (Toronto), 2 April 1995.

14. Álvarez Béjar, "Cinco enseñanzas," 4.

15. Álvarez Béjar, "Cinco enseñanzas," 45.

16. Arroyo, "Hacia un diagnóstico," 1.

17. Chavez, "Colapso cambiario," 2.

18. Gustavo Castro, Centro de Investigaciones Económicas y Políticas de Acción Comunitaria CIEPAC, "Boletín "Chiapas al día" (Chiapas) 133, 24 de Octubre de 1998. (Chiapas al día 133, Topic 9620 carnet.mexnews, 31 October 1998) (ciepac@laneta.apc.org email address supplied at request of CIEPAC).

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22. Elizabeth Velasco C. "Gran avance, aunque falta eradicar la coacción del voto: observadores," La Jornada (México, DF), 9 de julio de 1997.

23. Viviana Patroni, "The Politics of Labour Legislation Reform in Mexico," Capital and Class 65, (1998):107-132. Fabiola Martínez and Alonso Urrutia, "Combatir corporativismo y pactos, fines de la UNT," La Jornada (México, DF), 26 de noviembre de 1997.

24. Martínez y Urrutia, "Combatir corporativismo y pactos," 26 de noviembre de 1997.

25. Carolina Velásquez, "El debate sobre LFT, coyuntura favorable a las trabajadoras," *DobleJornada* (México, DF), 2 de junio de 1998.
26. Velásquez, "El debate sobre LFT," 1 de junio de 1998.
27. Amnesty International, "Human Rights in Jeopardy (Oral Statement made to Non-Governmental Organisations in Geneva, Switzerland, 1 April, 1998. AI INDEX: AMR 41/19/98 <http://www.amnesty.it>
28. CIEPAC, "Chiapas al día," 24 de octubre de 1998.
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APPENDICES**A- Mexican Presidents: 1876-1940**

Porfirio Díaz	1876-1911
Francisco I. Madero	1911-1913
Victoriano Huerta	1913-1914
Venustiano Carranza	1914-1920
Adolfo Huerta	1920-1921
Álvaro Obregón	1921-1924
Plutarco Elías Calles	1925-1928
Emilio Portés Gil	1928-1929
Ortíz Rubio	1929-1932
Aberlardo Rodríguez	1932-1934
Lázaro Cárdenas	1934-1940

B- Labour Organisations

Casa Obrera Mundial (COM)

- formed 1912
- shut down 1916

Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM)

- formed 1918

Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT)

- formed 1921

Federación Sindical de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal (FSTDF)

- disaffiliated from the CROM 1929

Confederación General Obrera y Campesina de México (CGOCM)

- formed 1933

Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México (CSUM)

- formed 1928

Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicana (CTM)

- formed 1936
- CGOCM joined the CTM 1938
- *Federación Nacional de Trabajadores del Estado (FNTE)* formed and affiliated to CTM in 1936
- FSTDF affiliated 1936

Federación Sindical de los Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado

- (FSTSE) formed in 1938

Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Campesinos (CROC)

- formed 1952

Confederación Obrera Revolucionaria (COR)

- formed 1966

Confederación Unica de Trabajadores (CUT)

- formed 1947
- affiliated with the CROC 1952

Congreso de Trabajo (CT),

- Formed 1966

Afiliates included:

CTM
CROC
CROM
CGT
COR
FSTSE

National industrial unions such as the mine and metal

workers (STMRRM), the petroleum workers union (STPRM), and the railroad workers (STFRM) directly affiliated

C- Political Parties

Partido Laborista Mexicana (PLM) 1919

Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) 1929

Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM) 1937

Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) 1946

Partido Comunista Mexicana (PCM)

D- Auto Assemblers: Dates of Establishment and Unionisation

Ford Motor Co. de México arrived 1925

- unionised 1932
- affiliated with the CROM, then the CGT, then the CTM

General Motors de México

- founded in Mexico in 1935.
- unionised in 1937
- affiliated with the *Federación Sindical del Distrito Federal*
- affiliated with the CUT in 1947
- CUT affiliated with the CROC in 1952

General Motors, Toluca opened in 1965

- affiliated with the CTM

Fábricas Automex (under license to Chrysler) 1938

- unionised 1938
- affiliated with the CTM 1964
- formed a national union *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz Integrada, Similares y Conexos de la República Mexicana* (CTM)

Promexa (under license to Volkswagen) 1954

- unionised 1954
- affiliated with the CGT
- formed a national union *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Metalúrgica, Mecánica de Precisión, Similares y Conexos de la República Mexicana*

Willys Mexicana established in Mexico City, 1946

- transformed into *Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos* (VAM)
- unionised end 1940s
- later affiliated with the *Federación Sindical de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal* (CTM)
- affiliated with the *Federación Sindical de Toluca* (CTM)

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