

2015

Where is our revolution? : workers in Ciudad Juarez and Parral-Santa Barbara during the 1930s

Andres Hajar

Follow this and additional works at: <https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allgraduate-thesedissertations>

Recommended Citation

Hajar, Andres, "Where is our revolution? : workers in Ciudad Juarez and Parral-Santa Barbara during the 1930s" (2015). *Graduate Research Theses & Dissertations*. 6709.

<https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allgraduate-thesedissertations/6709>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research & Artistry at Huskie Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Huskie Commons. For more information, please contact jschumacher@niu.edu.

ABSTRACT

WHERE IS OUR REVOLUTION?: WORKERS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ AND PARRAL-SANTA BARBARA DURING THE 1930s

Andres Hajar, PhD
Department of History
Northern Illinois University, 2015
Rosemary Feurer, Director

This dissertation explores the way workers on the border in Ciudad Juárez and in the mining district of Parral-Santa Barbara increased their power during the 1930s. Unionization, collective bargaining, labor tribunals, political alliances, and direct action gave workers control of crucial aspects of the production process for the first time in the nation's history. Furthermore, workers' efforts allowed them to extend their power beyond the workplace and into the community. In some instances, workers were radicalized, especially in the border city. To attenuate workers' rising power, political and economic elites intervened in labor conflicts in different ways depending on the interests of the elites in the location under study.

Political elites' intervention in some cases deradicalized miners, but it also allowed them to increase their power against The American Smelting and Refinement Company (ASARCO). In Ciudad Juárez, workers' rising power and radicalization resulted in a violent response from political and economic elites, which eventually reversed workers' victories during the 1920s and 1930s. The Lázaro Cárdenas presidency supported workers in both the border and the mining district, but failed to rein in political and economic elites' actions against workers in Juárez, who guarded their interests above those of workers through violence and illegal means.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DE KALB, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2015

WHERE IS OUR REVOLUTION?: WORKERS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ AND PARRAL-SANTA
BARBARA DURING THE 1930s

BY

ANDRES HIJAR
© 2015 Andres Hjar

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Doctoral Director:
Rosemary Feurer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A considerable number of people contributed this to project. My main advisor, Professor Rosemary Feurer deserves most of the credit, without her support, comments, corrections, assistance, and constant search for perfection, this dissertation would have never taken form. I know I took a lot of your time Rose, so thank you. Professor Barbara Posadas, who went beyond the call of duty as a reader, and contributing important style and editing contributions that improved the final submission, thank you as well. Professor Mark Wasserman, an authority in Mexican and Chihuahuan history, deserves a special mention. His stamp of approval means a lot. I will also like to thank Professor Barry Carr, whose suggestions and corrections, or as he called them “silly” mistakes, greatly improved this work. Professor Mary Cozad, from Foreign Language and Literature, also provided additional comments and editing. I will also like to thank Northern Illinois University for providing me with the opportunity to further my studies, especially Professor Michael Gonzales as a Director of the Latino Center for Latin American Studies. Professor Gonzales provided me with the necessary funds to conduct my research in Mexico, and was also instrumental in providing me with the motivation to finish this project. A special hurrah to Western Illinois University, especially Professor Simon Cordery, who took a chance by hiring an ABD student in Latin American History. To everyone else, you know who you are, thank you. Paz.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Historiography	3
Chihuahua	9
Sources	14
Organization	19
1. THE ORIGINS OF RADICAL UNIONISM IN THE HIDALGO MINING DISTRICT AND CIUDAD JUÁREZ	25
Political Economy Before The Revolution	28
Radical Labor Organizers and Ideas in the Mexican Revolution and its Aftermath	45
The Labor Movement: From Radicalization to Co-optation	49
Conclusion	61
2. ORGANIZING FOR POWER	62
The Formation of Labor Federations in Ciudad Juárez	64
Parral-Santa Barbara	73
Collaboration, Support and Deference	83
Conclusion	90

	Page
3. COLLECTIVE CONTRACTS AND THE USE OF CONCILIATORY COURTS TO INCREASE WORKERS' POWER	92
Hidalgo Mining District	98
Ciudad Juárez	108
Conclusion	118
4. DIRECT ACTION AND CO-OPTATION	119
Workers' Power in Parral-Santa Barbara.....	120
Ciudad Juárez: Radicalism, Violence, and the Elites	131
Electricians Union's Strike Movement	142
Conclusion	148
5. LABOR'S POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND ITS LIMIT—A SPECTRUM FROM COOPERATION TO REPRESSION	151
The Benefits of Cooperation	153
Ciudad Juárez: The Limits of Alliances	160
Subsequent Elections and the Limits of Political Alliances	167
Armando Pórras Murder	176
The CSO's Co-optation	179
José Quevedo's Ousting and the Militarization of the Border	181
Jose Borunda's Murder and its Relation to Labor	185
Conclusion	187
CONCLUSION	189
BIBLIOGRAPHY	191

INTRODUCTION

How and to what extent did workers increase their power after the Mexican Revolution? That is the central inquiry of this dissertation, which asks how workers struggled to make the Revolution their own. This dissertation explores two different areas of Chihuahua, Mexico, the cradle of the Revolution, to address this question. It focuses on workers in the border city of Ciudad Juárez and in the mining region of Parral-Santa Barbara, also known as the Hidalgo Mining District. It also addresses the following questions: What were the tangible gains for workers after the Revolution? What was the role of local, state, and federal officials? To what extent did federations of organized labor and its leadership shape or limit workers' identities along class lines after the Revolution? What kind of tactics and strategies did workers use to increase their power, and did these differ depending on the location? What role did radicalism play (or not) in either of these areas? What was the extent of intra-class divisions among workers?

This exploration of these two areas of Chihuahua adds to our existing knowledge regarding the different ways in which the Revolution increased workers' power, and the role that place, as well as regional and global power played. The resulting analysis will help us understand why some regions developed a more enduring labor movement than others. Moreover, examining different regions within Chihuahua, where the Revolution took center stage, will help us determine whether Chihuahua's workers benefited in any way from the Revolution. Furthermore, examining two areas in Chihuahua allows for thinking about the contours of these

developments within diverging bases of workers and industries. The production of a major global extractive commodity, in this case silver, defined the Hidalgo Mining District, while Ciudad Juárez was one of the most important border cities in Mexico, one whose main economic activity depended on U.S. political and economic interests. Examining these two areas will allow us to see the effect and limits of the Revolution on workers. The Revolution did not take place in a vacuum: the interests of foreign capital, mainly U.S., also contributed to these post-revolutionary changes. Moreover, the Revolution was also contextualized by the experiences of workers who crossed the border to the United States and experienced life as laborers in that country before the 1930s. Finally, the comparison will help us understand local political and economic elites' contrasting behavior towards workers in both areas, and how their power could dictate workers' eventual success, or lack thereof.

The focus on the role of place stems from the argument that Mexico's history is the sum of its parts. As a result, the most effective examinations would have to take into account a deep understanding of each region. Historian Mark Wasserman, in his landmark study of Chihuahua before the Revolution, highlighted the importance of examining specific locales in Mexico to understand the changes that certain watershed events, in this case the Revolution, brought to specific communities: "Mexican history, from Independence to Revolution, is a narrative of regions and locales."¹ This study follows Wasserman's methodology by examining workers' roles at the local level after the Revolution.

¹ Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprises in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984), 19.

Historiography

This is the first study examining workers in the mining region of Parral-Santa Barbara, or in Ciudad Juárez after the Revolution. This study thus adds to a significant number of regional studies examining workers in pre- and post-revolutionary Mexico. These studies show radicalism's influence on workers' identities and behaviors, and workers' struggles to wrest control of the workplace away from owners and business operators during the 1930s.

Labor historians have studied specific regions and industries to address questions similar to mine. Jeffrey Bortz's, *Revolution within the Revolution: Cotton Textile Workers and the Mexican Labor Regime (2008)*, utilizes a comparative regional approach to analyze workers in his study of the Puebla and Veracruz textile workers. Bortz examines workers' efforts to effectively control the workplace through the use of direct action and unionization. He concludes that textile workers controlled the workplace vis-à-vis business operators once they organized into unions and showed a willingness to rely on direct action. The comparison allowed Bortz to establish revolutionary principles among workers in the textile regions of Puebla and Veracruz. While Bortz examined only textile workers, his methodology comparing workers in two different regions allowed him to see the changes beyond specific locales. Juan Luis Sariago's comparative study of the coal region in La Laguna and the copper district of Cananea, *Enclaves y Minerals en el Norte de México, historia social de los mineros de Cananea y Nueva Rosita 1900-1970 (1984)*, demonstrates labor's ability to transform longstanding power structures under similar conditions to those present in Parral-Santa Barbara during the 1930s, and it remains one of the few studies that examines extractive industry workers after the Revolution in northern Mexico. Similar to the mining region in Parral-Santa Barbara in terms of its status as an extractive community connected to the global economy, especially in the case of Cananea, Sariago

demonstrates concrete improvements among the labor force and their communities in these two regions once they organized into unions. Sariego shows tangible gains in workers' power once they began bargaining collectively for better wages, adequate housing, schools, hospitals, and other essentials that they lacked before the Revolution.²

Other regional studies have shown the significant presence of radicalism among workers. Historian Michael Snodgrass' study of urban workers in highly industrialized Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and the Revolution in Mexico* (2003), demonstrates significant communist influence among workers in the highly developed steel industry during the 1930s. Snodgrass also looks at steel workers' identities and concludes that despite competing messages, steel workers in Monterrey adopted radical labor tenets in an effort to further the changes brought about by the Revolution. For Mexico City, *Bakers and Basques: A Social History of Bread in Mexico* (2012), shows the bakers' proclivity to join anarchist and Communist federations after the Revolution. Organized bakers eventually became one of the largest and most radical organized groups in the nation. John Lear's investigation of workers in Mexico City during and after the Revolution, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (2001), also demonstrates workers' inclination to adopt anarchist principles once they organized into unions. Myrna I Santiago's investigation of the rich oil area of Tamaulipas, *The Ecology of Oil* (2006), demonstrates the presence of Industrial Workers of the World, hereafter referred to as IWW, organizers among the unionized workforce in the area going back to the early 1920s, showing significant influence of radical labor principles among workers in northern Mexico. For the state of Jalisco, Joseph Green's

² Jeffrey Bortz, *Revolution within the Revolution: Cotton Textile Workers and the Mexican Labor Regime* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), Juan Luis Sariego, *Enclaves y Minerales en el Norte de Mexico, historia social de los mineros de Cananea y Nueva Rosita 1900-1970* (Ediciones de la Casa Chata, 1984).

2006 dissertation reveals Jalisco miners' significant ties with Communists in the 1920s. Andrew Grant Wood's, *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protests in Veracruz* (2001), demonstrates that workers in the state of Veracruz used anarchist principles and tactics, as well as the influence of Communist leaders in the 1921-1922 tenant strike movement in the state of Veracruz.³

These examinations at the local level have resulted in an important cluster of studies, which have concluded that the Revolution increased workers' power. These studies account for the importance of local, state, and federal authorities in workers' ability to articulate their demands; nevertheless, these studies have also critiqued previous histories that relate workers' movements to state formation, and contest the majority of investigations that purport to demonstrate epic failures on the part of organized labor to remain autonomous and combative prior to and after the pro-labor presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1940.

Two of these works that downplay labor's impact are Adrian Bantjes', *As if Jesus Walked on Earth* (1998), and Ben Fallaw's, *Cárdenas Compromised* (1991). Bantjes argues that organized labor, despite its best efforts, failed to change or even modify power structures in Sonora (the state neighboring Chihuahua). Bantjes also stresses the limits of President Lázaro Cárdenas' power by showing the way that local elites, in compliance with local and state authorities, effectively stopped Cárdenas' education and labor reforms in Sonora. Similarly, Fallaw examines the failure of land reform in the Henequen-rich (twine) region of the Yucatán in

³ Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and the Revolution in Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), Robert Weis, *Bakers and Basques: A Social History of Bread in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), Myrna I. Santiago, *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Joseph Howard Green, "Workers, Peasants, and State-building During the Mexican Revolution: The case of Jalisco, 1910-1940," (PhD dissertation, University of California Riverside, 2006), and Andrew Grant Wood, *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870-1927* (Wilmington Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2001).

the Mexican southeast. He shows the way local elites wielded their power and prevented Cárdenas' operators (themselves elites who, according to Fallaw, excluded certain members of the community from participating in the process) from transforming the way labor relations took place in the state. These studies critique workers' reliance on the state to arbitrate labor conflict and uphold the law, which eventually resulted in a loss of their newly found, yet short-lived power once government officials at all levels opposed or neglected workers' interests. Other scholars, like Nora Hamilton, have argued that Mexico's dependence on foreign capital curtailed Cárdenas from successfully implementing his pro-labor and agrarian initiatives.⁴

The aforementioned regional studies downplaying organized labor's autonomy complement the historiography examining workers at the national level. These studies have argued that the co-optation of the post-revolutionary labor movement by the state took time, but eventually resulted in labor's loss of independence, and undermined workers' ability to use direct action to influence authorities and business operators throughout Mexico.⁵ They discuss the rise of corrupt leadership among unions as one of the consequences of labor's decision to rely on the government as arbitrator and as a source of economic support. Scholars, including Fallaw and Bantjes, also refer to powerful local political and economic elites whose interests directly clashed with those of the workers as the main source inhibiting their success.

These scholars argue that Cárdenas failed to prevent these corrupting forces from intervening in labor conflicts and hindering workers' accrual of political power. Some date these

⁴Adrian Bantjes, *As If Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998), and Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) argues that Cárdenas' efforts to establish certain revolutionary principles among workers faced significant obstacles at the local level from local elites. For an international take of Cárdenas, see Nora Hamilton, *The Limits of State Autonomy: Post-revolutionary Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁵Norman Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State: From the Porfiriato to NAFTA* (Forth Worth: Texas University Press, 1998), 76.

corrupting forces to the Revolution itself, and workers' relationships to power. Examinations of workers during and after the Revolution have highlighted organized labor's decision to ally with the government, and its minimal role in radicalizing the Revolution as evidence of workers' lack of revolutionary commitment. Referring to workers' role in the actual armed phase of the conflict, which lasted from 1910 to 1920, historian Alan Knight argues that "it was not a workers' revolution,"⁶ despite the presence of armed workers, called red battalions, during the height of the Revolution. Albeit that these battalions represented a minority among the reformist wing of the Revolutionary war machine, but they do show that workers' efforts to affect the outcome of the Revolution included joining the war effort. Knight's position also ignores the significant political influence some unions and federations had at the local level during the revolutionary years.⁷

But even historians like Alan Knight, despite claims that the Revolution was not a workers' one, admit that in certain locales, workers' contributions to the revolutionary movement were significant even in the 1920s. Most historians have accepted the 1930s as the decade in which workers achieved tangible benefits. Evidence suggests that this was a result of the struggles in the early 1920s in certain urban areas, mineral enclaves, including "the capital, the major ports (Veracruz, Tampico, Acapulco), and communities in the border zone (Chihuahua,

⁶Alan Knight, "The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1920," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16, no. 1 (May 1984): 51. In this particular article, Knight argues that the Mexican Revolution was not a miners' revolution, and that organized labor in their eagerness to access power and form alliances, traded independence and principles. See also, "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo," in *Mexico since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethall (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1991) argues that organized labor's independence and short-lived power resulted from the federal government's efforts, headed by Cárdenas, to include them. See also, "Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 1 (Jan 1994): 73-107, in which the author argues that Cárdenas, despite his good intentions, paved the road for the existing way of channeling discontent, which gave the state effective mechanisms to direct it. For pre-Cárdenas, see Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *Labor and the Ambivalent Revolutionaries, Mexico, 1911-1923* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

⁷Ruth Marjorie Clark, *La Organización Obrera en Mexico* (Ediciones Era, 1979), 53-82, and Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State*, 36-40.

Juárez, Cananea).”⁸ These areas were most affected by labor’s influence before the 1930s, and this thus constitutes a reason to study them carefully.

At the national level, two leading studies that examine Cárdenas’ rhetoric and policies have also shown that during the 1930s, his government (1934-1940) successfully integrated organized labor into the local, state, and national political landscape as an influential force. Adolfo Gilly demonstrates that Cárdenas’ oil, agrarian, and labor reforms, as well as the unions’ contribution to them, had no parallel in Mexico’s history, making his a pro-worker presidency. Arnaldo Córdova also shows the widespread level of unionization that workers experienced during this decade. However, he points out that the workers’ eventual acceptance of the state as arbitrator in labor conflicts began the corporatization of the labor movement, which undermined their autonomy. Córdova also argues that the extraordinary mobilization of previously disadvantaged sectors of the Mexican population in the 1930s had no precedent in Mexican history.⁹

The historiography examining organized labor thus remains divided alongside interpretive, geographical, and chronological lines. Whether workers benefited from the Revolution depends on the locale, the period under examination, and the way scholars frame and define the benefits workers’ achieved after the Revolution.

⁸ Alan Knight, “The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16, no. 1 (May 1984): 53.

⁹ Arnaldo Córdova, *La política de masas del Cardenismo* (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1994) and Adolfo Gilly, *El Cardenismo: Una utopía Mexicana* (Mexico D.F.: Cal y Arena, 1994).

Chihuahua

The historiography on Chihuahua derives from its importance in Mexico's history. That importance in turn derives from its geographical location, size, natural resources, provincial elites, and constant rebellions, including the Revolution of 1910, which officially began in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua.¹⁰ As a result of its sheer size, some regions in the state have received more attention than others. Most of the pre-revolutionary historiography has examined the Guerrero district, located in the Midwest of the state, largely because of its early importance as the cradle of the first revolutionaries.¹¹ Until recent events highlighting the murder of thousands of women and the brutal drug war, scholars researching Ciudad Juárez have focused their examinations on elites' influences on the border and the economic development of the city.¹² Recently, the transformations caused by the introduction of *maquiladoras* (transnational

¹⁰ For information on authors arguing for Chihuahua as the cradle of the Revolution, see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution Vol. 1: Porfirians, Liberals, Peasants* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs* (Duke University Press, 1993), and *Capitalists, Caciques and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). For more information on Chihuahuas' pre-revolutionary revolts see, Paul Vanderwood, *The Power of God and the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*, (Stanford University Press, 1998), Jesus Vargas, *Maximo Castillo y la Revolución Mexicana* (Nueva Vizcaya Editores, 2003), Francisco R. Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua, Tomo I*, (Instituto Nacional de Estudios Historicos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1964), Jane-Dale Lloyd, "Rancheros and Rebellion: The Case of Northwestern Chihuahua, 1905-1909," Maria Teresa Koreck, "Space and Revolution in Northeastern Chihuahua", and, "US. Military Interventions, Revolutionary Mobilization, and Popular Ideology in the Chihuahua Sierra, 1916-1971," found in Daniel Nugent's, *Rural Revolt in Mexico: US Interventions and the Domain of Subaltern Politics* (Duke University Press, 1998). The Jose Escobar rebellion in 1929 had an important popular and military base in the state. In fact, the cities of Juárez and Jimenez were taken over by the rebels. For information on that see, *El Continental*, April 2, and March 21-29. For a summary of Chihuahuas' economic history, see, Moises de la Pena, *Chihuahua Economico, Tomos, I, II, III*, (Mexico D.F.: talleres graficos de Adrian Morales, 1948),

¹¹ Victor Orozco, *Historia General de Chihuahua III: Los Pueblos del Distrito de Guerrero en el siglo XIX* (Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juarez, 1995), Francisco Almada, *La Revolución en el estado de Chihuahua*, and, *Resumen de la historia del estado de Chihuahua* (Mexico: libros Mexicanos, 1955).

¹² Oscar Martinez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*, Nicole Mottier, "Drugs, Gangs, and Politics in Ciudad Juarez, 1928-1936," *Estudios Mexicanos* 25, no. 1 (2009): 25-46.

corporations) in the city have captivated scholars' attention.¹³ However, none of these works examined workers in the 1930s as the central subject of their studies.

Conversely, the Hidalgo Mining District and its workers have received significant attention from scholars. William French's study of the working class in Santa Barbara and Parral during the late nineteenth century demonstrates workers' proclivity to remain peaceful and docile in the mining region throughout much of the area's history, and then the dramatic transformations that workers experienced after the Revolution when they adopted a more empowered sense of agency based on class interest. French's work in the Hidalgo Mining District at the turn of the twentieth century highlights workers' behaviors and contributions in the mining area, but whether workers increased their power after the armed phase of the conflict ended remains unacknowledged.¹⁴ Thus, for the mining area of Parral-Santa Barbara, an area with an otherwise well researched labor force, no one has examined workers' participation in the post-revolutionary era.¹⁵

On the popular side of the conflict, Francisco Villa, the embodiment of militarized Revolution in the state, has garnered most of the attention by historians, leaving organized workers little attention.¹⁶ Furthermore, scholars have studied Chihuahua and its elites in depth, especially during and after the Revolution. Historian William French's study reminds us of the

¹³ Kathleen Staudt, *Violence and Activism at the Border: Gender, Fear, and Everyday Life in Ciudad Juárez* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

¹⁴ William French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

¹⁵ For information on the Hidalgo Mining District going back to the colonial era see, Robert West, *The Mining Community in Northern New Spain: The Parral Mining District* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), Chantal Cramaussel, *Poblar la frontera: La provincia de Santa Barbara en la Nueva Vizcaya en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 2007).

¹⁶ Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), Ruben Osorio, "Villismo: Nationalism and Popular Mobilization in Northern Mexico," found in Daniel Nugent's, *Rural Revolt in Mexico: US Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics* (Duke University Press, 1998), and Alejandro Quintana, *Pancho Villa: A Biography* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Press, 2012).

state's and elites' centrality, and points out that the Canadian railroad tycoons were able to continue operations successfully during the Revolution: "So began a decade of revolution that would leave the Mexican economy in shambles and Chihuahua with the reputation as the cradle of revolt."¹⁷ Historian Mark Wasserman also acknowledges the state's importance when he argues that, "The Revolution began in Chihuahua, and its victories, which lead to the overthrow of Díaz, were won here. Chihuahua can be a benchmark against which we measure the Revolution."¹⁸ Wasserman showed the state elites' ability to maintain economic and political power during the tumultuous revolutionary years.¹⁹

Wasserman argues that Chihuahua's political, social, geographical, and economic dynamics effectively represent a microcosm of post-revolutionary Mexico, and that workers' participation remains the only element missing from the existing research. Wasserman affirms this and points to the absence of workers' voices in his study of the elites' roles in the reconstruction of Ciudad Juárez once the revolutionary conflict ended: "The outline nevertheless leaves us with many questions, especially about the roles played by local agrarian and labor organizations."²⁰ As Wasserman points out, despite extensive research on the Revolution and post-revolutionary Chihuahua, most of the studies center on the elites' contributions.

A small group of historians, including Jesús Vargas, have studied Chihuahuan workers' behavior during the initial years of the Revolution (1900-1920). Vargas demonstrates the influence of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, including the presence of operatives belonging to the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM)—a radical organization headed by the Flores Magón

¹⁷ William French, "State Business as Usual: Mexico North West Railroad Managers Confront the Mexican Revolution," *Estudios Mexicanos* 5, no. 2 (1989): 221.

¹⁸ Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*, 12.

¹⁹ Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 119.

brothers—among workers in the area during the initial stages of the Revolution. Historian Friedric Katz notes the actual participation of Chihuahuan miners in the armed conflict.²¹

In relation to the border, recent historians have traced certain labor traditions that provided workers with the foundation necessary to readily embrace the post-revolutionary syndicalism calling for control of the workplace using direct action at the point of production. These scholars point out that the transnational migration across the Mexican U.S. border, which Mexican workers experienced in the early twentieth century, exposed workers to syndicalism, and prepared them to eventually adopt the radical workers' ideology that made its way into the mining camps and the border area after the Revolution. Historian Joseph Barton illustrates these dynamics by examining the different waves of circular migration between Mexico and the United States in which workers engaged early in the twentieth century.²² Barton's research demonstrates the transnational status of Mexican workers extending back to the early 1900s, and the significant wave of workers repatriated to Mexico during the 1930s, the time period this study covers. Furthermore, he argues that workers were able to reproduce their communities while in the U.S. in an effort to empower themselves, which shows the tendencies of Mexican workers to organize communally in order to improve their standing. Moreover, workers' migratory patterns placed them in direct contact with American workers who already had experience in unionizing.²³ In fact, Barton points out that Mexican workers themselves organized and formed unions in America during this time.²⁴

²¹ Friedric Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, and Jesus Vargas, *Maximo Castillo y la Revolución en Chihuahua* (Chihuahua: Nueva Vizcaya Editores 2003).

²² Joseph Barton, "Edge of Endurance: Mexican Migrant Workers and the Making of a North American Working Class, 1880-1945" (unpublished paper presented at the Newberry Seminar in Labor History).

²³ Colin Maclachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 5.

²⁴ Joseph Barton, "Edge of Endurance," 26-39.

This dissertation has also utilized the insights of comparative borderlands labor history recognizing the benefits of community-level studies, which have revealed workers' challenge to power structures in the midst of an apparent lack of power. Scholars studying the mining centers of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado, as well as the actions of Mexican workers in California and Texas, often utilize the struggle for space as a theoretical model to demonstrate radical behavior by going beyond the workplace and into the community to demonstrate power among workers, immigrants, and peasants. These spatial studies document underprivileged sectors with a degree of power that would have proven difficult to show using other frameworks.²⁵ In relation to the mining district and the border, this framework helps illustrate the sphere of influence unions had on both regions. Moreover, this study also uses existing frames that highlight the status of the borderlands as a unique region with its own economic, labor, social, and cultural traditions. The circumstances surrounding border areas have created a unique milieu in which two opposing labor traditions, one forged through industrial conflict and the other by years of agrarian struggle, meet where two nations come together.²⁶

²⁵ Nicolas De Genova, *Working the Boundaries: Race, Space, and Illegality in Mexican Chicago* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), José Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), Sara Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), Barbara Kingsolver, *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996). Another work with a similar approach, but not dealing with the borderlands per se, Scott Martelle, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (Rutgers University Press, 2007), and Elizabeth Jameson, *All that Glitters: Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998). On banditry as part of rebellious culture in another context see, E.J. Hobsbawm, *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Century* (Glencoe Ill: Free press, 1959).

²⁶ For more information on borderland studies see, W.H. Timmons, *El Paso: A Borderlands History* (Texas: Western Press, 1990), Oscar Martinez, *Boom Town*, Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), and Mario Garcia, "Border Proletarians: Mexican American and the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers," in *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

Sources

The majority of the sources in this study originated from three municipal archives in the state of Chihuahua: the Archivo Histórico Municipal de Parral, the Archivo Municipal de Santa Barbara, and the Archivo Municipal de Ciudad Juárez. These three archives have not been previously studied for the period and subjects that this investigation covers, which adds to the value of this study. Scholars examining Ciudad Juárez in the modern era have not utilized sources from the local municipal archive; instead, they have examined sources from the capital city of Chihuahua, the United States National Archives, and documents located at the University of Texas at El Paso. Furthermore, previous scholars have overlooked the Juárez's municipal archives in relation to workers. This study did not examine the municipal archives in the city of Chihuahua. I am planning to expand this investigation of workers' contributions after the Revolution by visiting the municipal archives at the capital city in the immediate future.

This investigation brings extensive material from the Juárez municipal archive to light for the first time. Perhaps more notably, previous studies have examined local elites' role in post-revolutionary Juárez, but have neglected the contributions of workers. Concerning the need to direct research towards labor organizations, historian Mark Wasserman writes, "We need to know more about the formation of peasant leagues and labor unions, whether they were locally based, state based, or encouraged by the national regime, or whether they were initially independent and their leadership later co-opted by Cárdenas."²⁷ This investigation will complement the work of other historians studying the 1930s in Ciudad Juárez, including Mark Wasserman and Nicole Mottier, by examining workers' contributions in the border city.

²⁷ Mark Wassermann, *Persistent Oligarchs*, 12.

In the case of the archives in Parral and Santa Barbara, no investigation prior to this one examining workers after the Revolution exists. In fact, few scholars have examined the Hidalgo Mining District's municipal archives as they relate to workers in the modern era, except for William French's study of the working class in Parral and Santa Barbara at the turn of the twentieth century.²⁸

This dissertation examines the following local newspapers found at the El Paso Public Library: The Spanish language daily, *El Continental*, the *El Paso Times*, and the *El Paso-Herald Post* from 1927 to 1942, the last two in English. These three newspapers, especially *El Continental*, concentrated most of their coverage on their sister city of Ciudad Juárez. For the mining region, local newspapers, including the *El Correo de Parral* and *El Crisol*, were also consulted, but not for the entire decade because of the difficulty in finding them. *La Voz De Chihuahua*, a state-wide newspaper located in the University of Ciudad Juárez (UACJ), was also examined from 1928 to 1940.

This investigation also includes materials from the United States National Archives and Records Administration, located in Adelphi, Maryland. The sources analyzed in these archives, including labor and political reports from the Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez Consulates, complement the local sources in various ways: the testimony of U.S. Consulate members affirms how workers transformed certain power structures, including gaining more control of the workplace through the use of direct action, the establishment of collective contracts, and the use of tribunals. These American sources also confirm the extraordinary levels of unionization across

²⁸ William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, examined the archives of Parral and Santa Barbara; however, his research does not extend to post-revolutionary Chihuahua.

trade and skill. Likewise, the reports shed light on the successes that unions achieved in the courts against business owners and operators.

In the case of Ciudad Juárez, the U.S. reports also highlight local elites' use of violence and electoral fraud to perpetuate their power, which means the material at the U.S. archives reaffirms the evidence found at the local archives. Thus, all four archives show a pattern demonstrating organized labor's rising influence, and perhaps more importantly, the way labor's ascendance took place.

This study also includes evidence found in the presidential correspondence of Presidents Manuel Avila Camacho and Lázaro Cárdenas, located at Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City. A high volume of correspondence between Chihuahuan local unions, including those in the mining area, and Juárez with the federal government shows support for strike movements throughout Mexico and Chihuahua, demonstrating the extent of federal authorities' interest in labor conflicts. This correspondence also reveals labor's expectations that the central government would come to its assistance.

It is also important to point out that the vast majority of the sources were originally written in Spanish. I have translated all of the documents—trying to stay true to the original form—by translating almost literally the words of workers and their leaders. Scores of individuals with different levels of education and sophistication created these documents. As a result, I have made concerted efforts to ensure that their messages stayed as true to the original as possible. Thus, one can easily deduce by reading the translation whether labor's leadership, authorities, or the workers themselves wrote the documents by analyzing the language in which they are written.

This dissertation rests on the premise that archival research at the local level can alter existing national narratives. Previous studies examining the Hidalgo Mining District have argued that narrow class interest determined workers' behavior.²⁹ Even after the Revolution, a handful of investigations examining workers in other locales have identified a wide array of forces preventing workers from supporting class interests exalting syndicalism, including paternalism and popular liberalism.³⁰ These works have demonstrated organized labor's inability to resist local elites and other competing forces, eventually halting labor's efforts to increase workers' power.

In contrast to the mining district, the evidence found in Ciudad Juárez coincides with some of the arguments made by scholars looking elsewhere in Mexico, and concludes that organized labor did not enjoy the support of local, state, and federal officials; its victories were few and brief. Thus, they assign causality to the decision by organized labor's leadership to ally themselves with the state, and to eventually accept it as the ultimate arbitrator of labor relations. Once less sympathetic authorities stepped into power at any level, but especially at the local level, workers' accrual of power proved elusive since the autonomy of local strongmen prevented federal efforts to balance power structures in certain cases. Finally, most scholars agree that once President Cárdenas stepped out of office in 1940, workers' most powerful ally no longer had the power to support them. The case of Ciudad Juárez will show that local and state-wide officials' economic and political interests trumped those of workers, despite the federal government's efforts to prevent this power imbalance from growing.

²⁹ William E. French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, as mentioned previously, French argues against the existence of identity among workers based on essentialist class interests.

³⁰ Adrian Bantjes, *As if Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution*, and Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán*.

In the case of The Hidalgo Mining District, the overall worker identity changed from peaceful and collaborative, to organized and combative. However, the largest and most significant unions in the mining district (National Miners Union, Section 9 and 11) never fully embraced radicalism, except when it came to the use of direct action to control the workplace. Miners' Union victories in their strike movements against ASARCO throughout the 1930s were in large part due to mediation, and to their close ties with government officials, who prevented their full radicalization.

In Juárez, workers embraced anarcho-syndicalist tenets highlighting direct action and a break with political officials, and a reliance on mass mobilizations, disruption of official events, strikes, and walkouts to control the workplace. The success of radical labor principles and the influence of Communist organizations at the border have almost no parallel in the history of northern Mexico. Finally, this investigation will show that political and economic interests of high-ranking local and state officials, as well as union leaders, affected workers in different ways. For the mining area, local authorities' ability to negotiate with labor and capital allowed them to rein in radicalism among miners and other workers, including bakers and loaders. In Juárez, once radicalism made its way to local unions, government officials reacted with violence. Eventually, the military took over in Juárez, further deradicalizing the movement since the army's presence stifled mass mobilizations, strikes, and other radical forms of resistance.

This work will identify and reconstruct the tangible advancements achieved by workers in both the border area and the mining region to demonstrate that workers readily accepted union leadership's efforts aimed at increasing their power in both regions of Chihuahua. This study will show, through their actions and words, how workers' consciousness and identity changed as well. Moreover, this change took place during and after the Revolution. Workers achieved this

transformation through massive unionization across trade and skill by using direct action (strikes, manifestos, boycotts, and mass protest), relying on tribunals at both the local and federal levels, and participating in electoral campaigns to choose sympathetic candidates. These elements eventually transformed workers' identities in both areas of the state.

Organization

Chapter one will provide the background necessary to understand the events that took place in the 1930s, including a brief summary of both regions' histories, the Revolution, ASARCO, and the labor movement at the national level. This information will allow us to understand the reasons why each region developed a different labor movement. In addition, this chapter will trace the various forces shaping workers' identities in both regions prior to the Revolution. These contributing factors include ASARCO, the Revolution, transnational migration, and the national labor movement.

Chapter two will show the different ways in which organized labor made concerted efforts to organize workers and increase their power through widespread unionization across trade and skill. Unions and federations sprang up during the 1930s in both regions. These labor conglomerates undertook a massive process of unionization among the labor force, which increased workers' power in the workplace and in the community. The Cárdenas presidency (1934-1940) and the Popular Front era, which called for a workers' alliance with pro-labor regimes, assisted in this process while at the same time attenuating workers' radicalism, especially in the mining district. This chapter will also show that despite the obvious competition among labor federations, (both locally and nationally throughout the 1930s), the two main national labor conglomerates, the initially radical, but increasingly co-opted *Confederación de*

Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM), and the always collaborative at the national realm, but independent and combative in some locales, the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM)*, effectively increased workers' identities at the border and in the Hidalgo Mining District.

In fact, the conduct of these two federations in both regions demonstrates concerted efforts to transform workers' behaviors and motivations along class lines, albeit with competing definitions and approaches regarding what class struggle should entail. Despite the fact that these class interests varied according to each federation, most organizations combined workplace interests with community-wide concerns. These included the creation and enforcement of collective contracts, demands for higher wages, hiring hall, and price and housing regulation, as well as other interests exclusive to the working class, which comprised the majority of the population, especially in the mining area.

Communist operatives radicalized the movement at the border once they formed alliances with the most important labor union in Juárez, the *Cámara Sindical Obrera*, or CSO. In the mining region, the National Miners' Union alliance with political elites and enduring paternalistic labor traditions, prevented radical labor tenets from influencing workers into questioning their subordinate role vis-à-vis capital. This was true despite workers' widespread use of direct action and a handful of leaders' rhetoric bordering radicalism. Despite, or as a result of these radical elements, local and federal authorities in the mining region complemented unions' efforts to increase workers' power towards acceptable class concerns, especially from 1932 to 1938. This decision to acquiesce to workers' demands resulted in labor's de facto acceptance of their subordinate role in the economic structure.

Chapter three will examine labor federations' push to establish and enforce collective contracts among the labor force in both areas as an effective tool to increase workers' power. The right to negotiate collectively, and the establishment of tribunals with worker-friendly laws regulating labor relations (both products of the Revolution) changed labor relations. For the first time in their history, workers had the mechanisms necessary to potentially control the workplace. In addition, owners' constant refusal to even negotiate these contracts provided labor federations with opportunities to use these contracts as vehicles to shape workers' identities. The use of both local and federal tribunals allowed organized labor to negotiate with business owners and operators as equals for the first time in the nation's history, which provided federations and unions with the moral capital to continue leading workers.

The unions' ubiquitous utilization of the courts to ensure the enforcement of contracts on the part of business operators balanced power structures in the workplace, both in Parral-Santa Barbara, and for a brief period in Juárez. These newly acquired legal protections allowed organized labor to increase its control of the workplace at unprecedented levels in the mining area and in the border city (until officials in Juárez responded with violence). Local authorities and business operators (these overlapped in many instances) also reacted to labor's increasing power in Ciudad Juárez through other means besides violence. These hindrances, which also took place in the mining district at a much lower rate, consisted of utilizing legal loopholes to delay the collective contracts' validation by the federal government. In other instances, they simply did not show up to sign the contracts in court. However, their main weapon to weaken labor's resolve remained violence and electoral fraud. Despite these tactics by elites, organized labor used the local Conciliatory and Arbitration Courts to guarantee their provisions, and forced businesses to respect these collectively bargained contracts.

Chapter four examines the use of direct action in the form of labor stoppages, wildcat strikes, public protests, sit-ins, manifestos, solidarity strikes, and other forms of direct action to demonstrate that unions in both the mining area and Juárez did not rely solely on spatial contestation, elections, and the tribunals to ensure the continuity of revolutionary policies. Moreover, the use of direct action indicates radicalism. Loyal to their anarcho-syndicalist origins, workers in the mining district relied on strikes, which jeopardized the elites' efforts to tame them.³¹ Furthermore, these strike movements required the approval and support of the rank and file, which demonstrates that strikes responding to the needs of other workers show the initiative and belief of workers in class struggle beyond the manipulation of their leaders. Workers' constant reliance on strikes demonstrates their active participation in the process of class formation in post-revolutionary Chihuahua beyond the leadership's rhetoric. For the mining district, it was precisely during one of these strike movements that a small window for workers' radicalization opened up.

Ciudad Juárez also experienced extraordinary levels of direct action and promotion of radical labor principles, especially when one examines the continuous mass protests, radical manifestos, and strikes the CSO engaged in. As mentioned previously, the CSO in Juárez made alliances with the local representative of the Mexican Communist Party, the *Cámara Unitaria del Trabajo*, in 1937. The CSO made concerted efforts to steer workers' identities towards radical definitions of class interests, using anarcho-syndicalist tactics calling for direct action and a rejection of collaboration with authorities or capital.

Chapter five will show the federations' participation in politics in both the mining area and Ciudad Juárez. Unions in both regions significantly supported certain candidates with public demonstrations, political rallies, and manifestos. Most of the candidates with union support

³¹ Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State*, 50-52.

eventually won most local elections in the mining region during the 1930s. In the case of Ciudad Juárez, except for the anarchist/Communist CSO, unions also made concerted efforts to control political power at the local level; however, local elites—through violence and electoral fraud—ensured that organized labor never had the opportunity to assume local political power, despite unions' numerous efforts to establish coalitions with other political actors. It will also show how fraudulent elections allowed certain interests, including those favoring anti-worker initiatives, to take control of political power in an illegal manner, which in turn corrupted the local tribunals whose purpose was ensuring labor peace, and allowed the indiscriminate use of police force against workers.

This chapter will also account for the different ways in which local authorities in Juárez used violence to weaken organized labor by imprisoning, beating, and murdering its leaders and members. Rodrigo Quevedo's (1932-1938) tenure as governor of the state of Chihuahua throughout the majority of the decade illustrates the power authorities could exert over organized labor, especially at the local level. In addition to the Rodrigo's governorship, Quevedo's siblings, Jesús and José, held the mayoral office of Ciudad Juárez on two occasions during the decade (1931-1933 and 1936-1937). Moreover, their known associates occupied the office as well throughout most of the 1930s, with the exception of 1936, when the federal government appointed a general to replace one of Quevedo's siblings.

Quevedo's revolutionary credentials allowed him to capture the governorship with the political backing of President Plutarco Elias Calles (1924-1928) after Quevedo supported the Calles' regime against General Escobar's nationwide rebellion of 1929, which had an important resonance in Chihuahua. His behavior in the mining region, where he supported workers in the numerous labor conflicts throughout his tenure, was as a fierce anti-Catholic who promoted

socialist education, and stands in stark contrast when compared to his actions in Juárez. The reason for this paradox lies in the fact that his economic and political investments at the border were much more significant than his interests in the mining district. In fact, his political shrewdness reveals itself when one examines his staunch support of the federal policies at the mining center supporting labor federations, anti-clerical policies, and socialist education, which allowed him to operate relatively freely in Juárez.

The conclusion briefly suggests how these local dynamics contribute to the understanding of the Revolution as it relates to workers, the Cárdenas regime, provincial elites, and the state of Chihuahua.



CHAPTER ONE: THE ORIGINS OF RADICAL UNIONISM IN THE HIDALGO MINING DISTRICT AND CIUDAD JUÁREZ

The radicalism of workers throughout the 1930s in Ciudad Juárez and in the mining district illuminates the radical legacy of the Revolution, but the foundation of this radicalism goes back to the pre-revolutionary era (1900-1910). Radical activists seeking to transform the existing Mexican economic and political system took refuge on the border. Juárez's sister city in the United States, El Paso, served as shelter for many political exiles of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship (1876-1911), including Ricardo Flores Magón, founder of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (PLM).

Exiles took advantage of the increasing discontent on the border to agitate against the dictator. The PLM criticized Díaz's economic policies favoring foreign interests to garner support for Revolution. Juárez's strategic location as a border port for immigrants headed to the United States, alongside access to guns and ammunition, made Juárez the natural place to launch armed rebellions to overthrow the Díaz regime.¹ The mining district also suffered from the dictator's favoritism towards U.S. capital, which allowed the latter to abuse and exploit workers, and monopolize resources. In the mining district, the spirit of Flores Magón in the form of his newspaper, *Regeneración*, also goes back to the pre-revolutionary era.

¹Richard Medina Estrada, "Border Revolution: The Mexican Revolution in the Ciudad Juárez/El Paso area, 1906-1915" (master's Thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1975), ii, 88. See also C. Harris and L. Sadler, *The Secret War in El Paso: Mexican Revolutionary Intrigue, 1906-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 17-27.

The long term resonance of the revolutionary era on workers movements in the 1930s is indicated by Miguel Felix, an original founder of Local 11 of the Miners' Union in Santa Barbara in 1934. Felix reflected on the continuing PLM significance in radicalizing workers. The PLM's ideas in the form of reading material "were all over," even into the 1930s, he recalled: "I never met the Flores Magón brothers, they were around, I read their newspaper-- that is where we got the idea of unions." Felix explained that the impetus to organize into unions was the result of conditions: "workers' wishes to put a stop to the abuse (*pisoteados*) by the company."¹ But the role of ideas that came out of the Revolution is clear from Felix's testimony because it establishes a direct link between the PLM and the subsequent union movement, which experienced its climax during the 1930s in the mining district. Felix considered himself and the unions in the area to be the heirs to the rebellious spirit of the Magón brothers. Historians have shown the PLM's influence among workers in the northern mining districts before the start of the Revolution of 1910. Javier Torres Pares demonstrates the presence of PLM cadres in Parral and Santa Barbara and the minimization by local authorities of their importance, which would prove a mistake four years later.² According to historian John Mason Hart, "beginning in 1904, the Magonistas, from their American sanctuary began to send emissaries - revolutionary culture brokers - into the mining camps of the Mexican north."³ On June 30, 1906, Elfego Lugo founded the first PLM section in Parral, and Albino Pérez did the same in Santa Barbara that same year.⁴

The presence of PLM political clubs, organizers, and printed material in the mining camps of

¹ Author's interview with Don Miguel Felix, one of the original founders of Section 11 (Santa Barbara) of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, Andres Hajar, July 16, 2010, author's possession.

² Javier Torres Parés, *La revolución sin frontera: El Partido Liberal Mexicano y las relaciones entre el movimiento obrero de Mexico y el de Estados Unidos, 1900-1923* (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, 1990), 55-56.

³ John Mason Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 84.

⁴ Jesús Vargas, *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, January 31, 1989. Also see Jacinto Huitrón, *Orígenes e Historia del Movimiento Obrero en México* (Mexico DF: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1978), 109.

Parral and Santa Barbara provided workers with the necessary language and overall strategy to increase their power.

Immigration from and to the United States also assisted in the spread of ideas derived from pre-revolutionary sources through the 1930s. The railroad linked the two regions in the study with transnational capital in this period, which made both regions susceptible to the massive influx, or return, of immigrant labor. This transformed Ciudad Juárez and Parral-Santa-Barbara into attractive destinations for thousands of pre-industrial landless immigrants seeking to improve their rapidly declining ways of life. Legislative changes in 1867 modified land tenure from communal to private, changes which speculators and large land owners utilized to take land away from communities.⁵ These same transformations meant that workers were carrying experiences from radical labor experiences in the United States. The border and the mining district served as the endpoint of immigrant labor returning to Mexico after years working in the United States, which introduced them to radical labor ideologies.

This chapter will show the processes that led radical views to be implanted in the labor union structures of these areas, and also introduce the way that national labor unions were affected by some of these radical goals before they began to compromise with the government in the years before the 1930s. An examination of the forces shaping workers' lives prior to the Revolution, including foreign capital, transnational migration, radicalism, local elites, government officials, national unions and their alliances (or not) with the state, and workers themselves, will illustrate why workers on the border embraced radicalism to a greater extent than their counterparts in the mining district. Some scholars have highlighted the role foreign

⁵ Richard Medina Estrada, "Border Revolution," 2, 33, 70, 33. Also see William French, *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals and Class Formation in Northern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 15, and Francisco Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua, tomo I* (Chihuahua: Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1964-1965).

capital played in generating worker divisions and conflict in mining and smelting towns, while others have given greater emphasis to local political conditions as detonators for the Revolution, especially at the municipal level. The latter interpretation does not see workers as the main engine fueling the pre-revolutionary process.⁶ This chapter combines these two interpretations by demonstrating that the privileges foreign capital enjoyed in Ciudad Juárez and in the Hidalgo district generated significant discontent, while at the same time, showing the influence radical political leaders had in agitating the unprivileged masses of workers and peasants. Although the PLM agreed that the dominating role foreign interests had in the Mexican economy needed to change, their vision for Mexico consisted of a total transformation of the economic and political system. Once the Revolution started in 1911 under the banner of Maderismo (those following Francisco I. Madero, the apostle of the Revolution and a wealthy industrialist from Coahuila), former PLM sympathizers and active members joined the Maderista movement, which initially favored land and labor reform. These ideas remained hidden for twenty years while countless reformist governments tried to eliminate them until the Lázaro Cárdenas presidency reopened a smoldering radicalism

Political Economy Before The Revolution

In both regions, the dictator's economic policies favored foreign interests which allowed transnational capital to control the most profitable economic activities, including commerce and mining respectively. These economic measures generated significant discontent among the

⁶ John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), highlights the transformations caused by US massive investment in Mexico. Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), examined the role US high-ranking officials had in toppling Madero and putting Victoriano Huerta in power from 1913 to 1915. For the role of the locale in the Revolution, see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Knight also emphasized the lack of anti-American sentiment in the Mexican Revolution.

middle class and workers across both regions. To add insult to injury, only a handful of local notables (supported by Díaz) enjoyed extraordinary political and economic privileges. These state elites, led by General Luis Terrazas and his son-in law Enrique Creel, used legislative changes to eliminate local and state-wide elections, and imposed themselves and their cronies at the municipal and state levels. Lack of democratic processes impeded border and Hidalgo district residents from determining their political futures.⁷ These processes made these communities ripe for the influence of the anarchist, Socialist, and agrarian pre-revolutionary rebellions, and played a role in making labor activism a strong influence in the 1930s.

Foreign interests have dominated the Hidalgo district's most profitable activities from its inception. The Spanish crown founded Santa Barbara (1567) and Parral (1631) for the sole purpose of exploiting the area's productive silver deposits, and to a lesser degree, its gold deposits. The crown turned Parral into the largest silver producer in the Americas throughout most of the seventeenth century, and despite its decline in productivity over time, it remained an important mining center up until the modern period.⁸ The cities of Parral, Santa Barbara, and San Francisco del Oro are located within twenty miles of each other, and together they comprise the Hidalgo Mining District.

The introduction of wage labor in an effort to attract workers began a narrative of competing messages, one forged by centuries of independent mining, and the other aimed at directing workers in the district to keep them locating, excavating, and smelting ore for the crown.⁹ The coexistence of different ways of organizing the labor force in the mines continued

⁷ Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua*, 27-45.

⁸ Robert West, *The Mining Community in Northern New Spain: The Parral Mining District* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949).

⁹ West, *The Mining Community*, French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, and Chantal Cramaussel, *Poblar la frontera: La provincia de Santa Barbara en la Nueva Vizcaya en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 2007).

until the start of the modern period, which meant three hundred years of contested labor identities. The crown's inability to influence workers' behavior was compounded by workers' ties to their own land, which compelled them to return to their communities in search of independence.

Another element limiting employers' control of the labor force and the mine's resources was the spatial layout of the district, which allowed individuals to reject wage labor and instead work independently. Anyone in the community had access to the mines since many entrances to the "mines" existed. In fact, the entire underground area was one big mine, which explains the ubiquitous presence of independent miners in the area throughout the colonial era.¹⁰

Because of the relatively easy access to the mines, independent mining, or *gambusinaje*, developed alongside wage and coercive non-wage labor in the region during the colonial era. The widespread presence of independent mining emphasizing independence, control of work rate, and a modest challenge to private property left a resonance for the language of industrial unionism in the 1930s; it emphasized independence and workers' control. However, workers' ability to work independently and smelt ore through artisanal methods was curtailed, but not eliminated altogether, once transnational capital entered the district. The foreign-owned companies had the necessary capital to invest in the technologies needed to profitably smelt the low grade ore left in the district's mines as well as the managerial innovations - including paternalistic methods to generate loyalty among workers - to prevent them from returning home.¹¹

¹⁰ Interview with Miguel Felix.

¹¹ French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 54-58, 79.

U.S. based capitalist influence in the area was conditioned on relationships with the Díaz dictatorship and set labor terms learned in multiple sites of operation. The Guggenheim family developed the largest smelting conglomerate on the continent, the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO), and entered the Hidalgo district in 1899 in large part because of its close connections with high-ranking Mexican officials. These powerful individuals, including Díaz, Terrazas, and Creel, gave ASARCO “special concessions, low taxes, and political influence,” the kind of access unavailable to Mexicans.¹² Founded in Pueblo, Colorado, in 1889, ASARCO spread across the continent and the globe as one of the world’s largest trusts; it was located in dozens of areas across the western hemisphere by the 1920s, including El Paso, Texas.¹³ Immediately after its formation in 1899, ASARCO started operations in the Hidalgo district with the acquisition of mines in Santa Barbara, including the largest and most productive mine in Santa Barbara, Tecolotes, using its different subsidiaries, including American Smelters Securities Company.¹⁴ By 1905, ASARCO already had a significant presence in northern Chihuahua as well, including a smelting plant in Avalos, Chihuahua.¹⁵ On September 9, 1915, Montezuma Lead Company transferred their holdings, which included the mines, La Veta Rica y La Favorita in Santa Barbara, established in 1896, to ASARCO.

ASARCO also acquired smaller mines in an effort to control most of the registered mines in the area. The company expanded its monopoly over smelting in Mexico when it started processing other metals including copper, silver, zinc, and lead, which allowed the U.S. firm to spread its dominion over the area. ASARCO took advantage of the new laws privatizing land

¹² Michael J. Gonzales, “U.S. Copper Companies, the Mine Workers’ Movement, and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920,” *Hispanic America Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (1996).

¹³ Isaac F. Marcossou, *Metal Magic: The Story of the American Smelting and Refining Company* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1949), 57.

¹⁴ Mark Wasserman, “Metal Magic Only Went So Far: The American Refinement and Smelting Company in Mexico, 1890-1940” www.rcu.rytgers.edu/.../Wasserman-MetalMagic.pdf. Accessed June 22, 2015

¹⁵ French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 16.

previously held by communities, to expand into adjacent land to fuel their local smelters, which displaced local communities and forced their members to work in the mines, or migrate. In an effort to inconspicuously keep their intentions to monopolize mining activities in the district and keep nationalistic fervors at a minimum, ASARCO entered into partnerships with Mexican citizens who already had mine licenses. The advantages of partnerships and indirect ownership had to do with legal concerns. For one, with various mines consolidated into one partnership, as was often the case, owners only needed to provide overall production as evidence to confirm that the mines were worked. The acquisition of mines allowed ASARCO to use the mines for different purposes besides extracting ore, including storing machinery. But if they registered each mine separately, the law required operators to provide production numbers for each venture to avoid abandoned or unproductive mines. In addition, this massive acquisition of mines reduced competition.¹⁶ ASARCO's main purpose was to close as many entrances to the mines as possible to prevent *gambusinaje*, and that is why they made efforts to buy most of them, so they could close the many entrances and prevent bootleg mining.

The company imposed onerous labor conditions in order to extract and process the metals, thereby critically altering the social space of the mining areas. Managers notoriously set up company towns and policing systems for their mines. Former miner and union leader, Miguel Felix, confirms that “the Americans and other foreigners had their own private (*colonia*) neighborhood, with a hospital, a school, and private guards.”¹⁷ Mining companies were also infamous across their operations for exercising control through a systemized racial and ethnic structure. Workers were pitted against each other for the best jobs, and dual-wage structures based on these categories were operative. ASARCO was a huge wealth-extracting conglomerate,

¹⁶ For a discussion of ASARCO's expansion, see French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 164-166.

¹⁷ Interview with Miguel Felix, July 16, 2010.

the largest mining interest in Mexico. This was a source of complaint about United States imperialism, and had important implications. United States firms owned most of the Mexican mining industry and their blatant disregard for Mexican laws and their workforce generated discontent.

Scholars like Francois-Xavier Guerra have examined the dissatisfaction emerging around mining towns, and have developed a thesis that mining towns precipitated the Revolution of 1910.¹⁸ In 1906, workers struck against the Cananea copper mine demanding an eight-hour day and equal pay with United States foreign workers. However, Arizona Phelps-Dodge vigilantes and Arizona Rangers supported by Díaz and Sonoran governor, Rafael Izabal, crossed the border to put it down. Combined Mexican and North American expeditionary forces confronted miners and killed at least fifty people. This incident created one of the outrages that sparked the 1910 Mexican Revolution despite the fact that it took place four years earlier.¹⁹ The 1906 conflict in Cananea brought together discontent generated by the transnational racial and condescending attitudes towards the Mexican labor force along with the presence of U.S. based political operatives from the PLM, the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), in an episode that agitated Mexican workers.²⁰

U.S. trade unions also assisted miners in the Hidalgo district in the 1920s, but not prior to 1910. Local organizations following IWW principles and with ties to the Industrial Workers of the World—a radical union using direct action, industrial unionism, and a break with politics to advance workers' power—surfaced during the 1920s. Norman Caulfield shows the IWW

¹⁸ Francois-Xavier Guerra, “La Revolution Mexicaine: d’abord une revolution miniere?” *Annales E.S.C.* 36 (1981).

¹⁹ Juan Luis Sariago, *Enclaves y Minerales en el Norte de México* (Mexico City, 1988), 131-137.

²⁰ Michael J. Gonzales, “U.S. Copper Companies, the Mine Workers’ Movement, and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920,” 104. For information on the WFM, see George G. Suggs, *Colorado’s War on Militant Unionism; James H. Peabody and the Western Federation of Miners* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1972), and Eric C. Clements, “Pragmatic Revolutionaries?: Tactics, Ideology, and the Western Federation of Miners in the Progressive Era,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2009).

presence in Santa Barbara, “The IWW campaign began at the ASARCO complexes in Santa Barbara.” Caulfield adds that IWW operatives organized a strike in Santa Eulalia (located north of the Hidalgo district) in 1924.²¹ Moreover, the substantial migration from other mining centers in the United States to the Hidalgo district, including to the ASARCO unit in El Paso, Texas, makes it plausible to argue that many mining workers in Chihuahua were familiar with radical labor ideologies.²²

Roberto Calderón is one of a number of scholars who have demonstrated the transnational migration of mining workers in Northern Mexico and concluded that experience with unions in the United States transformed Mexican workers.²³ Furthermore, the coal mining region of Coahuila is located very close the Hidalgo Mining District, which makes it highly plausible that some Coahuila miners also ended up at the Hidalgo camp. A year after the Cananea strike in Sonora, ASARCO laid off more than one thousand workers in Santa Barbara and closed most mining operations in Parral that same year due to financial panic and plummeting mineral prices in the United States.²⁴ It seemed that economic crisis, transportation links, and general social discontent made the work of radical political leaders in the district easier. This was the backdrop for Revolution in the mining district.

On October 5, 1910, from San Antonio, Texas, Madero circulated his manifesto calling for armed rebellion to topple the Díaz regime. In Parral, Guillermo Baca, under the flagship of Maderismo, surrounded the hills around the city with more than a thousand men from all over

²¹ Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State*, 51.

²² Interview with Miguel Felix, July 16, 2010. See also, Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 183, and Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill): University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 6, 23, 26, 28.

²³ Roberto Calderón, *Mexico Coal Mining Labor in Texas and Coahuila, 1880-1930* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2000), 196.

²⁴ Mark Wasserman, “The Social Origins of the 1910 Revolution in Chihuahua,” *Latin American Research Review* 15, no. 1 (1980): 23-24.

the area, including Parral and Santa Barbara.²⁵ The district quickly fell under the control of moderate liberals whose main interest centered on the political arena; they had no interest in radically transforming existing socioeconomic conditions. Thus, Maderos' new government left existing structures of power untouched at the national level, including the military, large landowners, and the church. Madero also failed to recognize and reward the popular wing of his movement in Chihuahua state.²⁶ Additionally, foreign interests in the area still enjoyed the same privileges that they had had under the Díaz regime. Despite Madero's reluctance to embrace economic and social transformation, the opposition to his government, or the reaction as they were called in revolutionary Mexico,—composed of conservatives and economic elites— had other plans for the first president of revolutionary Mexico.

After Madero was murdered in Mexico City in late February 1913, Victoriano Huerta, a general in the Federal Army representing the church, oligarchs, foreign interests, and the military, seized power. Immediately those elements that had supported Madero against Díaz, including Francisco Villa in Chihuahua, declared war against Huerta. Francisco Villa's prominence increased in the state due to his merits on the battlefield, which included helping Madero take Ciudad Juárez. Villa joined the Constitutionalist Movement, headed by former Coahuilan governor, Venustiano Carranza, against the usurping government established by Victoriano Huerta. Constitutionalism was a movement composed of various ideologies, from radical and reformist to conservative, with individuals from different economic, social, and racial backgrounds. This formidable coalition quickly defeated Huerta by mid-1914. Villa soundly defeated the armies of Huerta in Chihuahua and most of Northern Mexico, but after exiling Huerta, Carranza bypassed him in favor of Alvaro Obregón when it came time to distribute the

²⁵ Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua*, 161.

²⁶ Jesús Vargas, *Maximo Castillo y la Revolución en Chihuahua* (Chihuahua: Nueva Vizcaya Editores, 2003), 165.

spoils of war. This led Villa to declare war against his former Constitutionalist leader in a campaign that lasted two years.²⁷

During this period, Villa controlled the state of Chihuahua from 1913 to 1915, but retained some power throughout the state until his assassination in 1923. During the height of his power (1913-1915), Villa made the decision to “give top priority to the revitalization of mining.”²⁸ Thus, Villa allowed ASARCO to operate and even provided protection for the company’s smelter in exchange for coal. In fact, in 1915 at the behest of ASARCO, Villa deported IWW organizers from Chihuahua.²⁹

Historian Frederick Katz has demonstrated that Villa did have a social agenda, including the relatively extensive land distribution that he and his troops engaged in. However, Villa allowed ASARCO to continue production during his brief regime, an indication of his distance from the radical labor demands of the Magonistas. He did not make significant efforts to transform the economic and social order in the mining district mainly because his continuous need for resources forced him to let ASARCO continue operations, as it provided him and his troops with “forced loans.” Villa was assassinated in Parral in 1923, twelve years after taking Ciudad Juárez.³⁰ However, his ability to affect national policy ended after Obregón crushed Villa’s army in León and Celaya, Guanajuato, located in Central Mexico. After Villa’s defeat in

²⁷ Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols., see also Michael Gonzales, *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, The United States, and the Mexica Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California, 1987), Ramon Eduardo Ruiz, *The Great Rebellion, 1905-1924* (New York: Norton, 1980).

²⁸ William K. Meyers, “Pancho Villa and the Multinationals: United States Mining Interests in Villista Mexico,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23, no. 2 (1991): 341.

²⁹ Meyers, “Pancho Villa and the Multinationals,” 355.

³⁰ Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), Ruben Osorio, “Villismo: Nationalism and Popular Mobilization in Northern Mexico,” in Daniel Nugent (ed.), *Rural Revolt in Mexico: US Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics* (Duke University Press, 1998), and Alejandro Quintana, *Pancho Villa: A Biography* (Santa Barbara California: Greenwood Press, 2012). For information of elites sympathizing with the popular front, see William Beezley, *Insurgent Governor: Abraham Gonzales and the Mexican Revolution in Chihuahua* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973).

1915, the Constitutionals controlled the mining areas and put in place pro-labor laws that provided them with a political base of industrial workers to assist them in cementing their tenuous hold on power.

The chaos of the Revolution did not affect ASARCO significantly from 1910 to 1915. In fact, it benefited the company as it allowed them to expand and eliminate competition. For example, in 1915, while the armies of Villa and Obregon devastated the north, ASARCO invested 2,700,000 US dollars in Mexican mines formerly owned by those bankrupted by the disruption in smelting and transportation network caused by the Revolution.³¹ ASARCO's large pockets allowed the company to buy bankrupt and weak mines and absorb losses because of production stoppages and transportation network disruptions during the Revolutionary period. After the defeat of Villa, ASARCO simply negotiated with the authority at hand, in this case the Constitutionals, although this proved a bit more difficult than dealing with Villa due to the Constitutionals' preparedness to establish alliances with workers at the expense of foreign capital.³²

Even after the nationalization of its mines in 1917, ASARCO waited six years to change its name to Compañía Minera ASARCO to comply with a new law aimed at dismantling the control foreign industries had over certain industries, including mining.³³ To sidestep the new law, ASARCO associated with Mexican elites, who did not have any interests in transforming the way ASARCO conducted business.³⁴ For example, in 1924, the company announced a ten

³¹ Meyers, "Pancho Villa and the Multinationals," 346.

³² Barry Carr, "The Casa del Obrero Mundial, Constitutionalism and the Pact of February 1915." In M. Meyer and J. Vazquez, *Work and Workers in the History of Mexico* (Tucson and Mexico City, 1979), 603-631.

³³ For information in the circumstances of the nationalization, see, Marvin Bernstein, *The Mexican Mining Industry, 1890-1850: A Study in the Interactions of Politics, Economics, and Technology* (Albany: University of New York, 1964).

³⁴ Bernstein, *The Mexican Mining Industry*.

million dollar investment in construction projects.³⁵ The new laws did not prevent ASARCO from continuing its monopoly over the Mexican silver, lead, copper, and zinc smelting industry. Nor did, the new legislation stop ASARCO from consolidating its dominion over smelting operations in northern Mexico and, in fact, ASARCO expanded during the 1920s right after the new legislation. This expansion took place despite difficulties in certain locations where local radical unions, emboldened by constitutional provisions and radical labor state laws, had gained ground in crucial aspects of the labor-capital relations including control of the workplace. These difficult times prepared the company for the following decade, which proved even more difficult in terms of labor's increasing radicalism and the nationalist positions of the Lázaro Cárdenas regime directed against foreign control over certain crucial sectors of the Mexican economy, including petroleum and mining.

Throughout the period 1896-1920, Mexican workers struggled against a company whose global power seemed to survive even in spite of the Revolution. ASARCO and its subsidiaries faced significant obstacles in their efforts to influence workers. This was due to the Hidalgo district's pre-industrial labor traditions that had favored the development of worker autonomy. The desire for autonomy was fueled by the spatial layout of the mines, which facilitated bootleg mining. These obstacles in the way of ASARCO's efforts to control its workforce increased with the constant migration of Mexican workers to the United States, facilitated by the railroad. The railway connected the Hidalgo district to Ciudad Juárez and exposed workers to radical unionism on the U.S.-side of the border. From the onset, ASARCO sought to use technological and managerial innovations to direct its labor force. Thus, as "*barreteros* became *perforistas* (drillers), the importance of drilling and blasting skills diminished and mine workers lost control over the workplace, [while] outside the *contratista* system, [workers] also lost control over the

³⁵ Wasserman, "Metal Magic," 8-9.

hiring of unskilled mine workers.”³⁶ ASARCO’s introduction of technology forced skilled workers to accept automatized jobs that required little expertise. This allowed ASARCO to hire unskilled workers to perform the jobs skilled workers used to perform. These individuals, “members of a *población flotante*, comprised of unemployed and marginalized artisans, campesinos deprived from their lands, rural and urban laborers drawn by the prospect of higher wages, and others, roamed northern Mexico. They provided the labor force for a Mexico bent on progress.” Most of these individuals came from the surrounding agricultural communities in the district and from other mining centers throughout the state and the nation, including Batopilas, Santa Eulalia, Nacozari, Guanajuato, and Zacatecas.³⁷

In addition to the deskilling of the workforce, managerial innovations made sure skilled workers no longer hired unskilled workers, which allowed transnational capital to control the hiring process, thus further breaking the potential for class unity. William French has argued that ASARCO shrewdly exploited workers’ disunity by taking advantage of the fact that “a substantial number of workers retained their ties to the land and maintained their loyalties to rural communities. Members of the *población flotante*, they were sharply divided from those - often those with skill - who came to depend completely on wage labor.”³⁸ Thus, French argues that the division among skilled and unskilled workers prevented them from uniting along class lines in pre-revolutionary Mexico. Moreover, French highlights the company’s use of moral imperatives to shape workers’ identities and consequent behavior. But we can see other influences, including the long-standing tradition of bootleg mining in the area, which generated a sense of solidarity among members of the mining district and, more importantly, a challenge to private property.

³⁶ French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 33.

³⁷ French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 3, 5, 6.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 6.

The Hidalgo district's middle class also participated in the efforts to influence workers,⁴⁰ while supporting ASARCO's goal of creating docility. A growing segment of the Hidalgo district's middle class sought to address moral concerns centered on workers' alleged alcohol abuse and widespread gambling; this social project directed workers away from class conflict. William French argues that "waging this struggle over work habits and values in northern Mexico were members of a growing and vocal middle class – the self-proclaimed *gente decente* - on the one hand, and, on the other, a young, mobile, and overwhelmingly male workforce of diverse origins."³⁹ The district's middle class promoted these messages in an effort to separate themselves from workers, shame them, and ultimately direct them towards acceptable behaviors distancing them from class conflict.⁴⁰

Historian William French acknowledges that workers in the mining region, despite their concern for morality and manners, had a type of moral economy with underlying class concerns serving as the basis for their identities long before the armed conflict began. French states; "Rather than serving as a catalyst for creating new demands, the revolution provided an opportunity for the full expression of what might be called the hidden transcript that had remained unspoken, or at least, unheard of, before 1910."⁴¹ Once the Revolution's pro-labor rhetoric made its way into the mining camp, this moral economy was effectively framed by organized labor leadership into community-wide concerns exclusive to the working class. As a result, workers' demands for power increased throughout the 1930s in places like the mining region of Parral-Santa Barbara and on the border itself.

Ciudad Juárez was connected by railroad to the Hidalgo region, and through that embodiment of advanced transnational capital it exchanged radical ideas along the rail lines.

³⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 84-87.

⁴¹ Ibid, 182.

Ciudad Juárez was originally founded as Paso del Norte in 1659, and was renamed Ciudad Juárez in 1888 in honor of Benito Juárez, the first indigenous president of Mexico.⁴² But if the name Juárez represented independence, the city's workers' experience was increasingly less geared to autonomy. The expansion of the railroad in 1884 (financed by U.S. capital) from Mexico City to Ciudad Juárez, turned the border into a transportation hub, merging resources and people from all over Mexico into one location situated steps away from the United States. In addition, on the U.S. side of the border, El Paso became an important transportation and smelting center—the only major city in the American Southwest connected by railroad tracks with the rest of the nation.⁴³ These developments turned the border into a transportation hub for thousands of Mexican landless workers.

Historian Joseph Barton explores these dynamics by examining the different waves of circular migration between Mexico and the United States that workers experienced early in the twentieth century. Barton explains that “peasants and miners streamed northward after the wrenching fall of the northern Mexican economy of 1907 and 1908, then rushed back to Mexico following the sudden downturn in the United States of 1908 and 1909. A larger, more sustained movement reached the United States in the revolutionary years between 1910 and 1917, only to retreat south during the recession of 1920-1921. After 1923, migrants once again flooded northward, and then suddenly reversed flow between 1928 and 1933, when in the face of long-term depression and relentless expulsion half a million fled to Mexico.”⁴⁴ Barton's research demonstrates the transnational status of Mexican workers extending back to the 1900s, and the significant waves of workers returning to Mexico during the 1930s, the same time period this

⁴² Oscar Martinez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 19.

⁴³ Perales, *Smelertown*, 21-23.

⁴⁴ Joseph Barton, “Edge of Endurance: Mexican Migrant Workers and the Making of a North American Working Class, 1880-1940,” Unpublished paper presented at the Newberry Seminar in Labor History, 67.

study covers. Furthermore, his findings regarding Mexican workers' ability to reproduce their communities while in America in an effort to empower themselves shows workers' proclivity to organize communally to improve their existing conditions.

Mexican workers' migratory, transnational patterns placed them in direct contact with American workers who already had a long experience in unionizing.⁴⁵ Mexican workers organized and formed unions in the United States as they encountered a vibrant labor movement harboring radical tendencies during this time.⁴⁶ The Industrial Workers of the World and their anarchist vision promoting the eventual destruction of the current capitalist system influenced many Mexican workers at the turn of the century. Mexican workers "borrowed the organizational form of the Western Federation of Miners, seized upon the millennial expectations of the Industrial Workers of the World, and fused them with the nationalist symbolism of the Mexican Liberal Party, thereby transforming disparate local movements into a class mobilization."⁴⁷ This means that migrations led significant numbers of Mexican workers to embrace class struggle as a complement to their quasi-radical pre-existing identities, forged by years of agrarian struggle in Mexico and their status as transnational migrants. Many of these individuals stayed on the border, and eventually participated in the extraordinary class struggle that took place in Juárez during the 1930s.⁴⁸

The importance of the border as a transnational hub needs highlighting. Ciudad Juárez provided a rest stop for millions of individuals engaged in a perpetual agrarian struggle against political and economic elites, both as labor migrants looking to improve their lives in the United

⁴⁵ Colin Maclachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 5.

⁴⁶ Barton, "Edge of Endurance," 26-39.

⁴⁷ Barton, "Edge of Endurance," 73.

⁴⁸ Calderón, *Mexico Coal Mining Labor in Texas and Coahuila*, 196.

States, and as returning workers fleeing from the American dream.⁴⁹ These experiences prepared many Mexican workers to eventually adopt a radical workers' ideology. Moreover, the border's strategic location made it a favorable destination for radical exiles from Mexico who created a hidden transcript highlighting class concerns among border residents, which would resurface again in the 1930s. The railroad thus transformed Juárez into a continental crossroads utilized by migratory workers from the central and north central states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Aguascalientes, and Zacatecas. Most of them followed the Mexican Central Railway route that acted as a launching point back and forth across the border.⁵⁰

The railroad also changed the economic development of Ciudad Juárez. Thousands of people arrived at the border every day looking for wage work opportunities, but because of the power and control of transnational capital, which exacerbated the economic imbalance between the two sister cities, none of the Mexican ore mined in the Hidalgo region stayed in Chihuahua. Instead it was transported across the border to El Paso, Texas. Border historian Oscar Martínez highlighted the distinctions: "While Juárez went through its boom and bust period, El Paso made steady progress, evolving into a prominent international transportation center. El Paso received early impetus in becoming a supply, processing, smelting, and refining center."⁵¹ The economic decline of Juárez vis-à-vis El Paso continued through the twentieth century, especially after 1905, when national authorities removed the "free zone" (tax free) status that Juárez enjoyed from 1888 to 1905. This created resentment from people of all classes, as it had allowed the Mexican border city to grow evenly with its sister city across the border.⁵² The PLM took

⁴⁹ Oscar Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 4-7, 71, Barton, "Edge of Endurance," 50-75.

⁵⁰ Medina Estrada, "Border Revolution," 2-3.

⁵¹ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 30.

⁵² Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 31.

advantage of this anger over the declining status of Juárez in order to garner support on the border.⁵³

As mentioned above, the lack of sound economic planning resulted from Mexican federal and local authorities' decisions to inhibit the development of self-sustaining economic policies. The authorities sought little input from local economic sectors, including the cotton producers' constant demands for more water in the Juárez Valley, and this generated significant discontent on the border.⁵⁴ Local Mexican elites, deprived of the ability to address these issues, began to develop the border as a leisure and entertainment hub for Americans. Martínez summarizes, "As the twentieth century began, Juárez changed its economic base. With its once prosperous commerce ruined by the abolition of the *Zona*, its agriculture seriously affected by water shortages, and its industry damaged by internal trade obstructions, the city turned to tourism."⁵⁵ The conflict for water rights on the border with the United States created a movement of resistance among the Juárez Valley's agricultural producers. The cotton producers of the Juárez Valley formed organizations to defend their interests against the constant encroachment of the United States regarding water rights, and it remains one of the few pre-revolutionary precedents of class struggle in the area alongside the PLM exiles.⁵⁶

Finally, the border experienced a sudden influx of U.S. capital, once Prohibition, which began in 1920 in the United States, caused scores of restaurants, bars, whisky distilleries, ice factories, and other related business and patrons to move into Juárez. As a result, a large new labor force suddenly emerged made up of workers ready to organize after decades of

⁵³ Medina Estrada, "Border Revolution," 32-33.

⁵⁴ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 4-17.

⁵⁵ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 30.

⁵⁶ Committee "Pro defensa de la autonomía de San Ignacio" to Mayor Baltazar Adame, July 25, 1931, box number 1931, Archivo Municipal de Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as 1931/AMCJ.

revolutionary conflict. Prohibition in the United States also acted as a catalyst changing Mexican workers' identities. Prohibition brought thousands of jobs to the border, which transformed Juárez into a border city with a large labor force, and a mecca for American tourism.⁵⁷ This generated thousands of service-oriented jobs, whose workers quickly organized into unions after the Revolution, some of them in radical ways.

Radical Labor Organizers and Ideas in the Mexican Revolution and Its Aftermath

The radical labor movement of the 1930s in the areas under consideration certainly must be examined within the larger historical context shaped by the activism and militancy of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), which left legacies and resonance in these areas. The PLM, headed by Ricardo Flores Magón, paved the way for radicalism in all of Mexico. Following the publication of its paper *Regeneración* in 1900, Magón was forced into exile in St. Louis, Missouri, by 1904, and established ties to the Western Federation of Miners and the Industrial Workers of the World. Magón's writings, which entered Mexico via travelling migrants and those who sought to further a radical revolution, became well known in anarchist U.S. circles.⁵⁸ When Madero prevailed in the initial phase of the revolution (1910-1911), the PLM condemned his failure to expropriate land. In 1911, Magón issued a manifesto that displayed much more radical demands than those made by more moderate revolutionaries. Magón was an anarchist who believed in radical agrarian reform and the complete eradication of private property. Donald

⁵⁷ Martinez, *Border Boom Town*, 30-35.

⁵⁸ Tomas C. Langham, *Border Trials: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Liberals* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1981), Claudio Lomnitz-Alter, *The Return of Comrade Flores Magón* (Brooklyn N.Y.: Zone Books, 2014), Charles H. Harris III, *The Secret War in El Paso: Mexican Revolutionary Intrigue, 1906-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), Jacinto Barrera Bassols, *Correspondencia de Ricardo Flores Magón, 1902-1912* (Puebla: Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, 1989), and Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State*, 12-17.

Hodges summarized the manifesto's content, "for a war to the death against private property, political authority, and the established church. Not only lands would be expropriated, but also agricultural implements and urban industries- even private houses."⁵⁹ The PLM was never successful in implementing its large scale political agenda, but provided millions of landless peasants, unemployed artisans, and exploited workers with a vision of a way out of the widespread poverty they were experiencing.

Worker and peasant discontent was articulated through political organizations, unions, guerrilla movements, and other radical forms of resistance in the pre-1910 period. The PLM's radicalism resonated across a poverty-stricken nation, and across different elements of the working and middle class. While on a macro level, the Magonistas' (as those following Flores Magón were called) influence was seemingly marginal, for the labor movement, the dreams of a society organized around worker control influenced a range of labor organizations and groups, from simple trade unions to central federations, and was a catalyst long after Ricardo Flores Magón died in a US military jail in 1922. Many of the radical labor movements' experiences on the border and in the mining district are a direct result of the PLM's struggles and their long-term resonance.

Juárez's crucial location as a border town harboring a significant number of intellectual exiles, and easy access to guns and ammunition from the United States, as well as opportunities for quick escapes, allowed the PLM to launch an armed insurrection in 1906 and another one in 1908.⁶⁰ In 1906, Captain Adolfo Jiménez and Lieutenant Zeferino Reyes, infiltrators from the

⁵⁹ Donald C. Hodges, "The Political Heirs of Ricardo Flores Magón," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 17, no. 3 (1992): 100.

⁶⁰ Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua*, 107-118. For more information of the Flores Magón initial armed uprising in Chihuahua, see Jesús Vargas, *Maximo Castillo and the Mexican Revolution* (Nueva Vizcaya Editores, 2003), 4-20, 44, and Huitrón, *Origenes e Historia*, 141-151, Harris and Sadler, *The Secret War*, 17-27.

Mexican military gained the Magonistas' trust, thwarted the plan, and raided the PLM's headquarters in Juárez. The police arrested high-ranking PLM members including Juan Sarabia, Lauro Aguirre, and Rafael Valles alongside dozens of other magonistas.⁶¹ This setback did not stop radicalism on the border. In 1908, this time led by Praxedis G. Guerrero and José Ines Salazar, the PLM tried again to launch an offensive from Ciudad Juárez. As happened in 1906, individuals connected with high-ranking state officials infiltrated the movement and eventually informed authorities of the planned invasion. The police again raided the PLM's headquarters and arrested thirty-four PLM members; however, Guerrero and Salazar escaped.⁶² The military actions failed, but armed rebellion did not stand alone in the PLM's arsenal of resistance. The PLM also had political clubs and print media in Juárez, and evidently their influence outlived the political insurrection.

John Mason Hart has demonstrated the presence of two anarcho-syndicalist unions, *Acracia* and *Ni Dios Ni Amo*, agitating for direct action and the rejection of political alliances with the moderate revolutionary government on the border in 1918.⁶³ As in the mining district, the presence of PLM-inspired organizations adopting the banner of anarcho-syndicalism in Juárez before the Revolution explains (alongside widespread poverty and lack of political openings) the success radicalism had on the border during the 1930s. Despite the fact that it lost out in the revolutionary ferment at the hands of Villa, the PLM's influence deserves credit for starting the labor movement at the national level in Mexico. In addition, through the 1930s, ideas that animated the PLM, including industrial unionism, workers' control, and general strikes,

⁶¹ Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua*, 107-118. See also, Jesús Vargas, "Los Mineros" *El Heraldo de Chihuahua*, January 31, 1989. See also MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution*, 17.

⁶² Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua*, 115.

⁶³ Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class*, 156.

influenced some national unions in Mexico, and in turn this inspired local activists in Hidalgo and Ciudad Juárez.

Workers in the mining district also experienced the influence of the U.S. radical trade labor movement in the 1920s. The *Unión de Canteros y Albañiles* (Construction Workers' Union), comprised of skilled and unskilled construction workers, drafted a constitution in 1922 based on the model of the radical IWW. This model called for organizing into industrial-based unions, and rejected craft unionism and political alliances, called for direct action to control the workplace, and general strikes as a mechanism to leverage workers power against capitalism.⁶⁴ The newspaper article does not specify the names of these individuals, but it does emphasize the participation of IWW operatives from the United States in the process of framing the union's constitution. Furthermore, a self-proclaimed "*Organización Obrera Roja*" (Red Workers' Organization), composed of unemployed workers and the local IWW representative in the state, the *Unión de Trabajadores del Mundo de Chihuahua* (Industrial Workers of the World in Chihuahua), celebrated their meetings in Parral during the early 1920s.⁶⁵ Finally, as mentioned previously, IWW operatives started their efforts to organize miners throughout Chihuahua in Santa Barbara.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 75-76, 87, 108-110, 145-147.

⁶⁵ *El Chihuahuense*, October 12, 1922. This paper was published in Chihuahua City, but the article does not supply information of the aforementioned unions, only that the IWW was involved.

⁶⁶ Caulfield, *Mexican Workers and the State*, 51

The Labor Movement: From Radicalization to Co-optation

The modern labor movement in Mexico started with the foundation of the anarchist oriented Casa del Obrero Mundial on September 22, 1912.⁶⁷ Colombian Juan Francisco Moncaleano alongside a handful of Mexican nationals, including Jacinto Huitrón, Praxedis G. Guerrero, Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, Juan Villarreal, Juan Sarabia, Candido Aguilar, and others—most of them former members or sympathizers of the PLM—formed the Casa.⁶⁸ The Casa disseminated radical workers' ideology through classes, poetry, marches, and media (*La Luz*). The Casa served as the platform from where most of the early unions, including those with anarchist and socialist tendencies, started. One of its founders, Jacinto Huitrón, summarizes the Casa's ideological stance when first formed: "We frankly declared ourselves, with all our loyalty, followers of Revolutionary syndicalism."⁶⁹ This syndicalism rejected political alliances, and the church, and instead agitated for the use of direct action at the point of production to pressure capital, as well as the eventual takeover by workers of the overall economy. Huitrón credits the PLM as the intellectual precursor of the Casa. As a result of this connection, the early phase of the national labor movement in Mexico had significant anarchist tendencies. Regional studies have shown these radical tendencies among Casa del Obrero sympathizers in the states of Jalisco, Oaxaca, Nayarit, Nuevo Leon, Veracruz, and in Mexico City.⁷⁰

Thus the legacy of magonismo can be seen almost everywhere in Mexico as it provided subsequent groups and individuals with the necessary language and concepts to articulate their

⁶⁷ Huitrón, *Origenes*, 21-32, 213-214, Andrew Grant Wood, *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers and, Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870-1927* (Wilmington Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2001), 68.

⁶⁸ Huitrón, *Origenes*, 1-15, Hart, *Anarchism*, 100-120, 150-154, and Ruth Marjorie Clark, *La Organización Obrera en Mexico* (Ediciones Era, 1979), 27.

⁶⁹ Huitrón, *Origenes*, 214.

⁷⁰ John Mason Hart, "The Urban Working Class and the Mexican Revolution: The Case of the Casa del Obrero Mundial," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 1 (1978): 4, Barry Carr, *El Movimiento Obrero y la Política en Mexico, 1910-1929* (Mexico: Secretaria de Educación Pública, 1976), Ana Ribera Carbo, *La Casa el Obrero Mundial: Anarcosindicalismo y Revolución en Mexico* (INAH, 2010).

long standing demands for social justice. The PLM itself died out early in the conflict once Flores Magón was exiled and imprisoned in the United States, but his heirs and principles remained in those individuals and groups who found inspiration in the ideas and teachings disseminated by the Flores Magón brothers.

Finally, the PCM, or Mexican Communist Party, was also influenced by former PLM members, including Primo Tapia, who became an IWW follower while working in the United States and then later a Communist because of magonismo. He went on to form agrarian leagues in Michoacán in west-central Mexico.⁷¹ In Jalisco, José Romero Gómez also formed peasant leagues based on the doctrines of the PLM, and Valentin Campa, one of the original members of the Communist party and former railroad union leader, credits Flores Magón as “an enormous influence that contributed to the decision to form the PCM.”⁷² Former PLM members started the Mexican Communist Party at the regional level in places like Veracruz, Monterrey, Tabasco, Puebla and Mexico City.⁷³

From 1914-1924, reformist regimes first challenged and later co-opted unions into their established governments. The Constitutionalists, liberal in nature and made up of coalitions of a wide array of ideologies including a radical wing, used labor and agrarian reforms to cement their power and curtail radicalism by convincing a large segment of workers and their leaders that its reforms would benefit them. This group made a concerted effort to control labor radicalism by co-opting its leaders through patronage and violence at the local, state, and national level. From 1917-1920, before his assassination in 1920, Venustiano Carranza, a

⁷¹ Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Englewood Cliffs; Prentice-Hall, 1970),

⁷² Donald C. Hodges, “The Political Heirs of Flores Magón,” 106-107.

⁷³ Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 24-25, see also, “Marxism and Anarchism in the Formation of the Mexican Communist Party 1910-1919”, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 63 no. 2 (1983): 277-30.

conservative land owner and former governor of Coahuila, led the Constitutionalist towards a path of co-optation of the labor movement. Carranza skillfully navigated the armed phase of the Revolution, and through military victories and popular support —the product of calculated agrarian and labor reforms— ascended as head (Primer Jefe) of the movement. His trusted general, Alvaro Obregón, from Sonora, became President as well (1920-1924). Obregón defeated Villa in 1915, which eventually catapulted him into the presidency and left the latter's army decimated, which meant that the political future of Mexico was decided on the battlefield. Obregón and his successor, Plutarco Elias Calles, from the north-western northern state of Sonora, nurtured and directed a type of unionism that did not confront or question power structures.

The Sonorans had a political vision that included the co-optation of the labor movement to achieve political and labor peace. Historian Jeffrey Bortz writes that “political harmony is a product of hegemony,” the consent of leaders and social groups to political and social power structures. In an effort to achieve this endeavor, the Sonorans left an opening for organized labor to articulate their demands and change discourse in the nation, to challenge the reigning hegemony. Bortz credited workers' activism with creating, “the most hegemonic, pro-worker labor regime in Latin American History.”⁷⁴ He argues that the 1917 Constitution reflected this new hegemony and that actually allowed workers to win the Revolution.⁷⁵ The reformist regimes of the 1920s in Mexico engaged in hegemonic processes to keep labor peace, and this was the result of workers' pressure from below. Historians Daniela Spenser and Richard Stoller concur with this premise but note that the Constitution's radicalism prevented workers from questioning

⁷⁴ Jeffrey Bortz, *Revolution within Revolution: Cotton Textile Workers and the Mexican Labor Regime, 1910-1923* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 2.

⁷⁵ Bortz, *Revolution within Revolution*, 2.

existing power structures.⁷⁶ In this study, both radicalizing and deradicalizing premises from the revolution are apparent.

The northerners' economic power allowed them to establish these hegemonic processes to begin with. In the period 1914-1917, the Constitutionalists controlled the oil rich region of Tamaulipas, the henequén (twine) area of Yucatán, key ports including Veracruz, and had amicable relations with the United States, which allowed them to acquire guns and ammunition while preventing others from doing the same, and permitted them to finance the collaborationist sector of the labor movement, which discouraged direct action and radical dogma in favor of cooperation.⁷⁷ Later, in the 1920s, the emergent revolutionaries, or Sonorans, were political pragmatists who saw organized labor as a tool to serve their interests, and as such, they willingly allowed workers to articulate their demands as long as they had the upper hand. Still, labor won specific concessions from these arrangements, which increased their power. Throughout the 1920s, Constitutionalist generals throughout Mexico had already put in place state-wide labor codes and labor tribunals to solve labor conflicts, which allowed labor leaders to choose the reformist wing of the Revolution as the lesser evil at the local level.

As the 1920s progressed, national elites put in place mechanisms to limit this power. President Calles established the Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje (Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Court) in 1927 in an effort to standardize the enforcement of labor laws at the national level. These courts set clear rules regarding whether each individual state or the federal government had jurisdiction over any particular labor conflict, and gave the federal government jurisdiction over the mining, railroad, plutonium, transportation, electric, and other crucial

⁷⁶ Daniela Spenser and Richard Stoller, "Radical Mexico: Limits to the Impact of Soviet Mexico," *Latin American Perspectives*, 35, (2008): 61.

⁷⁷ Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, vol. 2 (University of Nebraska Press), and Eric R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (Harper and Row, 1969), 42.

industries.⁷⁸ The jurisdiction over certain industries gave the federal government the ability to control emerging radical labor movements in certain crucial industries by limiting their independence and ability to act directly. Political elites, which emerged after the Revolution, needed these provisions to cement their still tenuous power at the national level. Kevin Middlebrook points out that President Calles created these courts in 1927 to undermine the radical railroad movement of the late 1920s, which threatened to destabilize his fragile government.⁷⁹ The majority of workers in Ciudad Juárez, except for those in the electric industry, came under the control of the local boards. As a result, most grievances, documented in the Ciudad Juárez archives, fell under the local and state boards which gave municipal presidents and local officials more power since they had the ability to appoint arbitrators.⁸⁰

In the national narrative, scholars have examined the use of tribunals and concluded that labor took advantage of the new laws to increase their power.⁸¹ Some historians argue that these courts truly assisted workers in transforming power structures.⁸² Other scholars see these tribunals as a series of legalistic mechanisms aimed at curtailing labor's freedom of action and independence. Scholars also point out that these venues increased the power of the state by allowing it to act as a mediator.⁸³ But the best way to see the potential and limits for workers' power is by examining the actual experience of workers in their locale. In the mining region and on the border, workers utilized collective contracts and the labor courts to increase their power.

⁷⁸ Marcos T. Aguila, "Mexican Miners Moral Economy: Quick Transformations, 1927-1940" (From the Great Depression to Cardenismo, paper delivered at the 1998 Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association a Chicago, Illinois, September 26-26, 1998), 5-7.

⁷⁹ Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 58-62.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-13, 43-44, 51.

⁸¹ Ashby, *Organized Labor*, 98-110.

⁸² Ashby, *Organized Labor*, 24.

⁸³ Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 2, 10, 43-44. See also, Alan Knight, "Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 1 (Jan 1994): 73-107, "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo," in Leslie Bethall, *Mexico Since Independence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), "Peasant and Caudillo in Revolutionary Mexico, 1910-1917," in David A. Brading, *On Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

Although in the short run these courts helped those workers under the umbrella of a pro-labor federal government, as it was the case in the mining district, those courts outside the national government's jurisdiction that fell into the hands of local officials did not fare as well.

The Federal Labor Law of 1931 further expanded the power federal authorities had over workers. The law placed limits on organized labor's ability to act directly and remain independent of government interference by giving government officials the ability to call any strike illegal, or by refusing to officially recognize any union. Perhaps more importantly, this legislation directed the articulation of workers' demands through a government created agency. Moreover, the newly created laws placed unions within the framework and rules devised by the state precisely to curtail excessive labor militancy.⁸⁴

These decrees decreased workers' ability to act directly without the interference of the federal government and its ability to repress or direct a labor conflict with violence, sabotage, patronage, or co-optation. Moreover, in the mining district, high-ranking state-wide officials, despite their lack of jurisdiction, still placed themselves as conflict mediators in an effort to control the labor movement without the interference of federal authorities, which would have exposed their lack of control over their provinces. Political elites also provided workers with the necessary conditions to accept these legislative changes to begin with.

The progressive and radical wing of the Sonorans had a counterweight, which pushed for collaboration instead of ceding to the continuous and increasingly radical demands of labor. Instead, it pitted unions against each other by recognizing only those favorable to reform, and more importantly, by providing economic support to some over others. These "*sindicatos blancos*," more often than not led by pseudo-leadership started to amass power at the national

⁸⁴ Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 10-13, and Nora Hamilton, *The Limits of State Autonomy: Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 94-96.

level by collaborating with conservative politicians. Obregón occupied the presidency from 1920 to 1924, before his assassination in 1928. Fellow Sonoran, Plutarco Elias Calles, also a former general and a close ally of Obregón, held office from 1924 to 1928, and Calles' cronies had national power from 1928 to 1934 in what is known as the maximato. The Sonorans cemented their power because of their ability to co-opt the labor movement and direct it towards collaboration, which gave their post-revolutionary, tenuous hold on power some stability. However, it is important to recognize that they had to compromise, which provided organized labor with effective ways to articulate their demands, including collectively bargained contracts, labor tribunals, and strikes. Nevertheless, the Sonorans effectively steered workers away from radicalism through the creation of collaborationist federations.

The Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM) laid the foundation leading to the eventual co-optation of the labor movement. The formation of national labor federations with the financial and political support of the revolutionary state, starting in 1918 with the CROM, directed the labor movement towards collaboration. Luis Morones, an obscure labor leader from the Mexico City Electrician's Union, founded the CROM in 1918; Morones embodies the new labor-state dynamics of collaboration instead of confrontation, even if it meant sacrificing workers' gains in the name of labor peace. The CROM, from 1918 to the late 1920s, deradicalized the labor movement nationally through economic and political means by outspending rival organizations, and through the formation of alternative company-friendly unions, especially in those industries where radical unions were strong. When these material incentives did not work, CROM shock groups purged radicalism from independent labor

federations through violence.⁸⁵ The CROM, according to historian Alan Knight, “represented the culmination of a long, hesitant process of detente between labor and the state: one that had begun appreciably before the revolution (and which had been pioneered by Porfiristas) but which the revolution served to accelerate; one that required the workers' repudiation not only of anarcho-syndicalism (witness Morones, the ideologue and lyrical poet of yesterday, become the labor boss of today) but also of the pristine liberalism promised by Madero, to which many had eagerly responded in 1909-13.”⁸⁶

The CROM's distancing from radicalism, and its increasing collaboration with the reformist regimes of Obregón and Calles, forced the most radical unions to leave the CROM. Historian Joe C. Ashby explains that radical elements, consisting at the time of Communists, the IWW, revolutionary Socialists and radical agrarian elements were well represented in the first two conventions in 1918 and 1919, but all left the CROM in 1920.⁸⁷

In 1921, the radical wing of the labor movement, which felt betrayed by the CROM, formed the anarchist Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT).⁸⁸ The CGT's membership never exceeded 30,000 members;⁸⁹ however, it would be a mistake to measure the CGT's influence solely on membership numbers. The CGT significantly influenced certain areas, including Mexico City (tram workers, bakers), Veracruz (tenant movement), Jalisco (miners), Puebla (textile workers), and Tabasco (independent agrarian communities), where they organized strikes and ensured tangible benefits for its members, including higher wages, union hiring hall,

⁸⁵ Huitrón, *Origenes del Movimiento Obrero*, John Lear, *Workers, Neighbors and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *Bolcheviques: historia narrativa de los orígenes del comunismo en México* (Mexico: Ediciones B, 2008).

⁸⁶ Knight, “The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16, no. 1 (May 1984): 78.

⁸⁷ Ashby, *Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas*, 11.

⁸⁸ Guillermina Baena Paz, *La Confederación General de Trabajadores, 1921-1931* (Mexico DF: Centro de Estudios Historicos del Movimiento Obrero Mexicano, 1982), 35-39. Moreover, the statutes of the organization claimed anarchism as their flag, 61.

⁸⁹ Ashby, *Organized Labor*, 79.

and official recognition. They began to increase their power largely as a result of their continuous use of direct action and the concrete benefits it brought to workers.⁹⁰ This resulted in a concerted effort by government officials to control their rising influence and radicalism with violence. Additionally, the CROM's continuous attempts to undermine the CGT through sabotage and violent acts, plus their own internal divisions highlighted by the anarchists and Communist split, hastened the CGT's demise.

The CGT suffered from the same problems the entire Mexican labor movement experienced in its inception, in terms of disunity between the different wings of the labor movement. For example, well-known anarchists in Mexico, like Jacinto Huitrón, questioned the CGT's credentials as stalwarts of anarchism, "by arguing that the latter's influence was minimal and weak, and in 1934-35, this organization fell into the hands of labor reformists."⁹¹ Despite the relative low number of workers adhered to its ranks, the CGT effectively introduced radical ideology and tactics to the post-revolutionary labor movement, which at the time leaned towards collaboration. The successful actions of CGT's strikers in Mexico City, Tamaulipas, Tabasco, Jalisco, Veracruz, and Puebla from 1921 to 1925 demonstrate that a large segment of the working class in Mexico adopted radical labor tenets despite continuous harassment from politicians and the CROM. Moreover, in February 1921, the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) and the CGT established a brief alliance during the first couple of years of the CGT's creation.⁹²

The PCM's influence at this time (1919-1924) remains a controversial topic. For some scholars, the party in its initial stages was the product of a handful of foreigners, who convinced

⁹⁰ For the CGT's actions in Mexico City see Lear, *Workers, Neighbors and Citizens*, and Taibo II, *Bolcheviques*, 187-195. In Jalisco, see Joseph Howard Green, *Workers, Peasants, and State-Building During the Mexican Revolution: The Case of Jalisco (1910-1940)*, 161, 166, 171, 177, 191, see also Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico* 11, 31, 32.

⁹¹ Huitrón, *Origenes e Historia*, 306.

⁹² Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 33-36.

Moscow that Revolution provided ample opportunities to spread the Revolution.⁹³ Daniela Spenser argues that the party immediately after its formation experienced factionalism, power struggles, low membership, and lack of funding that prevented it from influencing the Mexican labor movement.⁹⁴ Barry Carr disagrees with these views, especially at the local level. Carr argues that the PCM did build a significant base among peasants and agricultural workers in Veracruz, Michoacán, and Puebla and among railroad workers, and miners in Jalisco.⁹⁵ In the mid and late 1920s, after the turn Left of the Comintern, which forced the PCM to dissolve their political alliances they had with the non-communist left and after the violence unleashed by the Plutarco Elias Calles regime against communists, the party went into disarray and eventually underground from 1930 to 1934.⁹⁶

Once Cárdenas assumed national power in December 1934, the political, social, and economic environment for workers in Mexico changed. The CROM lost most of its power (although it retained a significant presence in Puebla and Veracruz states), and the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Mexico* (CTM), formed in 1936 by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, an organization much more radical in pronouncements, started to organize workers with the support to the federal government. The following radical organizations adhered to the CTM ranks immediately: *The Confederación General de Obreros y Campesinos de Mexico* (CGOCM), the *Confederación Sindical Unitaria de Mexico* (Communist), *Cámara Nacional del Trabajo*, *Sindicato de Trabajadores Ferrocarrileros* (Railroad Union), the SIMMMR (miners), SME (electrical workers), *Alianza de Uniones y Sindicatos de Artes Gráficas* (Printers Union,

⁹³ Taibó II, *Bolcheviques: historia narrativa de los orígenes del comunismo en México. 1919-1925* (Mexico DF: Ediciones B, 2008), 9-10.

⁹⁴ Daniela Spenser, *Stumbling its Way Through Mexico: The Early Years of the Communist International* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 37-50.

⁹⁵ Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico* 11, 31, 32.

⁹⁶ Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico*, 43-46.

and one of the first unions in Mexico), which meant that the CTM concentrated the radical wing of the labor force. The CROM, with its close ties with political elites, and the CGT, which continued under the banner of anarcho-syndicalism, continued to function but would never regain their previous power.

The CTM's founder, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, was a college graduate turned labor organizer, who broke away from the CROM once its leadership prevented radicals from occupying any position of power. Toledano's principles changed throughout his tenure as labor leader. Joe Ashby explains that "Toledano supported orthodox Socialism, collective owning the means of production, and public ownership of all productive property."⁹⁷ However, he gradually modified his radical stance towards what he referred to as multiple action, including the entrance of organized labor into politics, something anarchists and Socialists frowned upon.

The CTM had many factions vying for power. Even though Toledano founded it, he needed the presence of communists and of the conservative wing of the labor movement in Mexico City to make it effective.⁹⁸ The Conservatives end up taking control of the leadership positions and the PCM slowly, but surely lost any independence once the Poplar Front era dictated an all-out support of Cárdenas' Revolutionary regime. In 1939-40, a purge of radicals in the PCM took place, which saw its secretary general, Hernan Laborde and former railroad leader, Valentin Campa, kicked out of the party. The justification to expel key leaders of the movement revolved around corrupt practices in the party, but the main issue had to do with the total subordination of the PCM to foreign communist parties, in this case the United States Communist Party.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ashby, *Organized Labor*, 46.

⁹⁸ Daniela Spenser, "La Cimentación de la Confederación de Trabajadores de Mexico," *TzinTzun* no. 60 (2014): 254.

⁹⁹ Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico*, 75.

After 1935, the Communist Party agreed to work with government-level officials in the Popular Front era; the Popular Front suggested that the fight against fascism worldwide necessitated alliances with government officials. Cárdenas' overtures wooed the PCM in this alliance. This led the PCM to a membership of 30,000 nationally by 1939. Its peak influence was precisely under Lázaro Cárdenas – in terms of both membership and influence. It was hugely important in some of the national industrial unions with Railroad workers, for example, and in some sectors of the Miners union), and among schoolteachers (where it dominated); in many sectors of the peasant movement, intellectually and artistically, the PCM influenced workers nationally. Despite relatively low numbers, the influence of Communist organizers on the labor movement on the border was higher than expected. The influence was especially important, as we shall see, among the electric and textile workers, as well as unemployed workers in a city where radical workers' dogma never had a significant influence prior to the Revolution.¹⁰⁰ In 1937, most of the radical unions split from the CTM, and the latter lost a quarter of its membership. Most of the Communist unions left once the CTM's leadership curtailed their ability to act independently by forcing them to accept decisions without a democratic process behind it. However, Communist-identified unions returned to the CTM that same year after directives from Moscow forced them to return to the CTM. The Mexican Communist Party also experienced a split in which a significant number of their most loyal organizers (railroad workers, miners, and etc.) left the party that same year. This break resulted from a disagreement concerning whether to obey the mandates from the Comintern (IC) calling for collaboration with other forces and the sympathetic state, or remain independent.¹⁰¹ The eventual decision to remain an ally of the government forced CTM's most radical unions to leave. This left the CTM as the

¹⁰⁰ Spenser and Stoller, "Radical Mexico," Daniela Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way through Mexico*, Carr, *Marxism and Communism*, Taibó, *Bolcheviques*.

¹⁰¹ Carr, *Marxism and Communism*, 47-56.

most important labor conglomerate in Mexico, but without any radical unions in it, which meant the beginning of the end of the CTM's radical ways.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the material that provided the foundations for radicalism during the 1930s. The PLM's connection to the radical labor movement on the border and in the mining district is a direct one. This radicalism increased with the presence of IWW operatives, the transnational status of Mexican workers, the transcontinental railroad's crucial role (which allowed these migrations), and the pre-existing agrarian identity forged by the struggle against land encroachment by haciendas and other large land owners. However, in the mining district, workers deradicalized once high-ranking officials supported them, while in Juárez, this radicalism grew when local elites responded with violence. This section has also outlined some key developments in the history of the national labor movement. It has also examined the influence the U.S. and Russia labor movements had on each region and at the national level. The following chapter will analyze the unions' efforts to unionize workers in the region to increase workers' power through independent organizations and labor federations with different degrees of success.

CHAPTER TWO: ORGANIZING FOR POWER

During the 1930s, leaders of workers' federations in Ciudad Juárez and the Hidalgo mining region made efforts to establish the means to increase workers' power. They did this by uniting workers within federation structures, and articulating demands that bridged workplace and community interests. They sought to move beyond specific workplace concerns and developed more broad-based unions and labor federations. Within this framework, local labor movements articulated their demands with varying degrees of success. In both areas under consideration, notable drifts toward radical forms of labor resistance occurred although the degree of radicalism varied according to each locale under study. While later chapters will show how these impulses were contained, it is clear that the labor movement in the 1930s was not necessarily one that sought to contain workers' demands. The coming to power of President Lázaro Cárdenas in December 1934 affected these developments, but first, it is important to see how the labor movement developed at the local level.

Organized labor's growing radicalism was vibrant enough to draw comment from the United States' consulate in Chihuahua late in the 1930s. In 1938, American Consul Lee R. Blohm noted labor's impressive political and economic gains over the course of the decade, especially after Cárdenas took office. The consul highlighted labor leadership's determination to develop more power; his report suggested that the leadership's success in achieving "better working conditions and much higher wages" that portended an effort to "challenge capitalism."

The consul suggested that the leadership might not always have “been properly regarded by the workers themselves,” but his report also delivered a hopeful note to the U.S. State Department that the Chihuahua workers were tamer than their union leadership.¹ It is difficult with the sources at hand to know precisely whether and to what extent workers themselves forced leaders in a more radical direction, or whether Blohm was right that there was some distance between leaders and ordinary workers and their families.

Post-Revolution Chihuahua labor activists and radical labor federation leaders appealed to local workers’ broad class interests to increase their influence in the region. Labor federations undertook strategic campaigns to connect workplace-based organizations to community-based working class movements. Thus, issues like higher wages and worker control of the workshop were connected to local control of consumables, local rent regulations, campaigns for the organization of marginalized workers, and other demands. In the mining district, political and economic elites supported these endeavors as long as they felt they could still control and curtail more radical demands that contested capitalist ownership and their own security. Workers in Ciudad Juárez, on the other hand, faced more obstacles in creating a radical movement from the beginning of these campaigns.

Despite hostility from local government officials, unions and federations on the border engaged in a decade-long struggle to increase workers’ power through mass unionization. Furthermore, certain unions and federations on the border adopted radical tactics and utilized radical language (including mass protests, media articles and strikes) which exposed the elites’ lack of control over labor.

¹ Lee R. Blohm Consular Report, Labor Notes from Chihuahua, March 13, American Consulate in Chihuahua, vol. 5, 1938, hereafter referred to as 5/1938/ACCC, United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland, RG 84.3, hereafter referred to as 84.3/USNARG.

While he was a leading obstacle to labor radicalism on the border area, Governor Rodrigo Quevedo took a pro-labor stance in Parral-Santa Barbara. In doing so, he was responding to the political and economic strength workers showed through massive unionization, and his efforts were also intended to show Cárdenas that he supported the administration's labor policies. Thus, in general, local state officials sought to avoid conflict with organized labor. They knew that workers and unions had the power to shut down the mining industry, generating mass unemployment, economic hardship, and reductions in revenue due to unpaid taxes. By contrast, Governor Quevedo's economic interests in Parral-Santa Barbara did not clash with those of workers. Different political and economic exigencies in the two areas elicited radically different behavior from local officials in each region.

The Formation of Labor Federations in Ciudad Juárez

Radical labor unions and federations seemed to rise like a phoenix in Ciudad Juárez in the 1930s. As explained in chapter 1, an industrial base for unions was limited in this area, but the border had experienced radical revolutionary movements like the Magonista movement, going back to 1906. Beginning in the early 1930s, unions and federations started to develop from this base and continued to steadily develop at the community level across the 1930s. The radical Cámara Sindical Obrera, or CSO, formed on November 23, 1930, in the cities of Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, and Parral. The CSO was a statewide labor federation, which sought to organize workers regardless of skill or trade. The CSO was formed by the *Union de Filarmonicos de Ciudad Juárez* (Musicians Union), *La Gran Liga Textil Socialista* (The Socialist Textile Union), the *Unión Gremial de Cargadores* (loaders union) and the *Unión de Matanceros* (Butchers Union). These constituent unions went back to the 1920s. By 1933, this organization had already

reached out to other trades. Throughout the 1930s, the CSO continued to win other member organizations to its federation, such as the *Unión Sindical de Boleros* (shoe shiners), the *Sindicato de Vendedores Ambulantes* (street vendors), the *Unión Sindical de Estibadores del Norte* (loaders), and the *Unión Gremial de Obreros Zapateros* (shoe makers). As is clear from this listing, this was a federation that attended to workers at the bottom of the economic order. Notably, this included women's unions, further showing the CSO's intentions to expand the base of their power from the bottom-up. By 1937, the CSO eventually expanded to more than twenty-two organizations, including the Mexican Communist Party section in Juárez.² This represented a shift from when the CSO was started, as initially the organization denied that they had CP affiliation. In 1931, in an El Paso, Texas newspaper, *El Continental*, the CSO sought to counter the label of communist: "The Cámara Sindical Obrera affirms that their members are not Communists. Furthermore, we would like to inform the President that the CSO follows only those pronouncements made by the Mexican Revolution."³ The CSO, at the time, thought it important to disassociate from their radical colleagues, at least publically; however, their anticommunist stance did not last long. In 1937, they had made an alliance with the *Cámara*

² List of the organizations belonging to the CSO in 1935, Unión Sindical de Estibadores del Norte, Gran Liga Textil Socialista, US de Matanceros del Valle de Juárez, Sindicato de Cantineros, Meseros y Similares, C. Femenil Obrera, US de Boleros, L. de Camp. Y Obreros Forestales, US de Obreros Industriales de Ciudad Juárez, Unión Sindical de Pintores, S. de Cargadores de Almacenes y Similares, US de Locatarios del Mercado Cuauhtémoc, Sindicato de Tensorialistas y Similares, Sindicato de Empleados del Lobby No. 2, Sindicato Obrero. Manufactureros de Adobe y Ladrilleria, Unión Sindical de Expendedores de Carbón Vegetal y Similares, Sindicato de Tablajeros y Similares, Sindicato de Cancioneros de Ciudad Juárez, Unión Gremial de Cargadores de Cd. Juárez, Chih., Unión Sindical de Obreros Industriales de Guadalupe DB, Unión Sindical de Hacheros y Carboneros "Ignacio Zaragoza" del Vergel DB, Sindicato de Madereros y Similares, "Felipe Carrillo Puerto" de Madera, Chih., Sindicato de Ob. Y Camp. "Rio Bravo," Práxedes G. Guerrero, DB, Unión Sindical de Trabajadores De E. y Expendedores De Leche, Sindicato de Panaderos y Similares "Libertad," Unión Sindical de Zapateros de C. Juárez, Chih., Unión de Filarmónicos, Unión Defensa Rio Bravo, Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores "Francisco I. Madero," Sindicato de Cargadores de Almacenes y Similares, Sindicato de Obreros y Empleados de la Cia. Mexicana P. de Luz y Fuerza, box number 1932, Archivo Municipal de Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México, hereafter referred to as 1932/AMCJ.

³ *El Continental*, March 21, 1931.

Unitaria del Trabajo, the organization representing the PCM, or Mexican Communist Party, in Juárez.

By 1938, the CSO's ranks also included electricians, textile workers, bakers, coal workers, domestic workers, musicians, and other professional and non-professional organizations. Miguel Oaxaca (Secretary of the Transportation Workers Union), Pascual Padilla (of the Unemployed or Sin Trabajo Union), and Armando Pórras (Electricians' Union) were three of the best known and most radical union leaders of organizations composing the CSO in Juárez. Oaxaca started as a labor organizer with the bakers' union in the 1920s, and in the late 1930s, he organized workers in El Paso and Juárez, especially among ASARCO smelter workers in El Paso.⁴ Starting in 1932, Pascual Padilla became the most visible Communist Party operative on the border, as he led the Sin Trabajo Union into a confrontation with local high-ranking officials, which included the use of mass protest and disruption of government events. Armando Pórras led the Electricians' Union through a successful three-year ordeal (1935-1938) to establish a collective contract against the local Power Company (as it was called) managed by the Quevedo Clan.⁵

The CSO utilized different strategies to influence the community and counteract anti-labor initiatives in the area. The CSO had an affinity for using print media to communicate directly to workers, and to encourage direct action in the form of mass protests and strikes to pressure their adversaries. It relied on public shows of power in the form of political rallies, in an

⁴ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity 1930-1960* (Yale University Press, 1989), 183, and Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 101, 117, 131, 132.

⁵ I do not have background information of any of these three individuals. We know they were Mexican citizens because the Quevedos' did not try to extradite them. In fact, Oaxaca was deported back to Mexico in 1939. A more exhaustive research in the archives of the Mexican Communist Party or a more exhaustive search of El Machete might provide detailed information. I was not able to research the aforementioned archive due to lack of funds and time.

effort to inculcate a spirit of solidarity among the labor force. The CSO threatened the political elites in Juárez by having its members take their demands to the streets.

One example of the CSO's utilization of massive political rallies and demonstrations to project power and cultivate a sense of class pride among its members occurred in 1930. Apparently, the mayor had issued an invitation to labor organizations from the *Comite Directivo* of the '*Fiestas de la Revolución*,' which organized the official celebrations of Labor Day. In response, Silverio Villalobos, Secretary General of the CSO, objected to the attempt of political leaders' to co-opt memories of the Chicago Haymarket anarchist labor martyrs, "of the ones that were sacrificed for us." Specifically, Villalobos wrote that CSO objected that it was improper to accept the invitation to the official celebration because it would be "a sacrilege to the memory of our martyrs on the 1st of May in Chicago."⁶ Instead they insisted that the CSO should organize its own mass protest commemoration as opposed to leaving it in "profane hands." They sought to break with authorities by making it "a celebration by the *Cámara Sindical Obrera*."⁷ The CSO's manifesto and refusal to join the official celebrations reveals its commitment to working class autonomy, and a framework that situated their struggles within a broad global historical context.

The CSO's embrace of mass action in the form of public demonstrations also demonstrated the organization's ability to mobilize their members in a projection of worker power. Its protests exposed local and political elites' inability to control the way workers articulated their demands. In July 1935 for example, the CSO organized a public demonstration in downtown Juárez to gain "support from all the resistance organizations in the city to protest and to denounce publicly the presence of a rival company-friendly union in the Rio Bravo

⁶ Silverio Villalobos, Secretary General of the *Cámara Sindical Obrera* to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, José Quevedo, April 25, 1933, 1933/1318.741/AMCJ.

⁷ Silverio Villalobos, Secretary General of the *Cámara Sindical Obrera* to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, José Quevedo, April 25, 1933, 1933/1318.741/AMCJ.

Textile Mill.”⁸ The Rio Bravo Textile Mill union, alongside the Electricians and the Unemployed Unions, were the most radical organizations belonging to the CSO. The Textile Union embarked on a decade long struggle with the company’s management over its collective contract. In this particular instance, the creation of a company-friendly union by the company was the detonator for the protest. Throughout its existence, the CSO faced the efforts of elites to contain their union movement through establishing company-organized unions (or *sindicatos blancos*).

Public shows of power by unions, which essentially stopped all activities citywide, astonished the United States Consular office. In 1936, U.S. consular officials remarked at the effectiveness of the May 1 (Workers Day) mass meeting in the main plazas of Ciudad Juárez, commenting that organized labors’ show of power would make Ciudad Juárez “appear to be a dead village was almost literally true. Speeches were made by labor and political leaders in the main plazas. The number of participants in the demonstrations was impressive and evidenced the activity of the organizers.”⁹ *El Continental*, a Spanish only printed newspaper also noted the success of the May 1 parade organized by the CSO-affiliated unions.¹⁰

Massive displays of political and social muscle gave impetus to the effort of the CSO to organize sectors of the community which lacked prior experience in unionizing. This validated the group’s claim to be the protector of revolutionary values as unions at the time defined them. For example, in 1938, domestic workers in the area organized into the *Sindicato de Trabajadoras Domesticas de Izquierda* (leftist female domestic workers’ union) and immediately affiliated with the CSO. The Domestic Workers’ Union slogan, “for a society without classes,” illustrates

⁸ *El Continental*, July 12, 1935.

⁹ Lee R. Blohm, May Day Activities at Ciudad Juárez, Chih. Mexico, May 4, 1936, 5/1936/ACCC, 84.3/USNARG.

¹⁰ *El Continental*, May 1, 1935.

the CSO adherents' call for a revolutionary trade union movement.¹¹ Moreover, unions among marginalized sectors like the Domestic Workers were relatively less powerful as isolated individual unions which lacked funds and robust numbers, but once they belonged to a federation, their voices grew more powerful in unison with other workers of the federation.

The CSO's determination to bring women into the ranks of organized labor in Ciudad Juárez can be seen in another extraordinary movement — the organization of women street vendors. This confirms the federation's strategy to see workers who might normally be considered itinerant petty entrepreneurs or business operators as deserving of protections and to bring them under the umbrella of the CSO. In 1936, the *Centro Femenil Obrero* with the support of the CSO, mandated that those who would “sell tortillas in this city should belong to one of the two resistance organizations that are submitting this letter, which are the Centro Femenil Obrero and the Sindicato de Expendedoras de Alimentos.”¹² The CSO made sure that workers had protection against the possibility that anyone who was not part of the labor federation could sell tortillas to the public. The message was clear: all workers should be part of a labor movement, and the city should ensure that the CSO acted as guardians of the working class.

Other evidence shows that there was a notable effort to communicate inclusiveness in demonstrations, to address existing divisions in the labor force, and to undermine gender barriers. For example, at an April 1935 rally, organizers noted that multiple actors would have a voice “during the course of the demonstration including women representatives of the workers' unions.”¹³

¹¹ Sindicato de Trabajadoras Domesticas de Izquierda to Octavio Escobar, Mayor of Juárez, June 15, 1938, 1938/741.1318/AMCJ.

¹² Sindicato de Expendedoras de Alimentos to Juárez's municipal office, March 25, 1935, 1935/759.1362/AMJC.

¹³ Ernesto de la Una, president of the Cámara Sindical Obrera to Dr. Daniel Quiroz Reyes, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, April 24, 1935, 1935/759.1362/AMCJ.

The CSO utilized other tactics to instill pride among workers. One such event was the election of a Workers' Queen, something that might be now criticized for its reinforcement of gender norms, but which could also be seen in the light of working class pride. The origin of this tradition is unclear, but the meeting place for the celebration was a recognized public space, the Juarez Monument. On May 5th, after a parade, a "little girl", chosen from Juárez workers, was elected as "the Queen of Workers."¹⁴ These efforts can be seen as an attempt to claim all festivities as a part of workers' consciousness, and in turn, as an effort to create a kind of total worker movement, one that united worker and community. The community's conferring of the title 'Queen of Workers' also reveals feelings of pride in being workers and reveling in their class perspectives in public spaces. This was not local elites' condescending attitude directing workers to feel better about their status as workers by throwing them a parade; this was a working class community continually reminding itself that it needed to occupy public spaces with pride.

The CSO effort to inculcate class and community solidarity can also be seen in an episode in which the boundaries between community and union faded, and the overall effort to unite social justice with class solidarity was prioritized. The union representing charcoal workers, *Hacheros y Carboneros Ignacio Zaragoza de El Vergel D. B. Chihuahua*, recognized that it provided charcoal to the community at affordable prices, without which cooking and warming homes during the winter would have been expensive and difficult.

In a letter to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, workers noted that "hard work" through their "exploitation of national forest," produced a vital resource for people. They considered themselves as much a cooperative as a union, referring to themselves as the Sociedad

¹⁴ Ernesto de la Una, president of the Cámara Sindical Obrera to Dr. Daniel Quiroz Reyes, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, April 24, 1935, /1935/759.1362/AMCJ.

Cooperativa Forestal, who worked with “the approval of our regimentation by the Departamento Forestal de Caza y de Pesca.” Workers organized within the CSO explained that they were workers who also sold their charcoal until permission to sell the charcoal was threatened by the H. Union de Expendedores de Cd. Juárez in June 1937, which refused to sell the charcoal wholesale to the public. In a radical act of solidarity, and in an obvious attempt to gain favor among the people of the community, the cooperative argued that they were planning to defy authorities by selling charcoal directly to the consumer. They declared: “we are organized elements, and to be organized means that we have the duty to protect our class brothers, and at the same time protect our interests in legal ways and without harming the community.” After justifying their actions by appealing to the community’s interest, the union agreed “to sell it directly to the consumers at a price of eight cents per kilo, as with this the producer and the consumer will benefit and according to us they are the ones that most need it, being all of them working people.”¹⁵

The CSO in Ciudad Juárez sought to assert working class interests as their purview, emphasizing the right of labor organizations to regulate the local political economy. In May 1936, the leaders of the CSO complained of the hardships that confronted working class families because of speculation “by the wealthy merchants from the city and outside the city, and the ‘monopolies of SUGAR, RICE, FLOUR, which increased in an extraordinary way the prices of staple articles of food.” The CSO leaders inquired whether “the regulatory prices commission of this city was formed and if not, to hope it will be constituted as soon as possible, also to inform us of all the things that according to the Commission are in the interest of this union and the people in general,” thereby asserting that politicians should attend to restraining the power of the

¹⁵ Sindicato de Hacheros y Carboneros de El Vergel, DB, Chihuahua to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, José Quevedo, June 6, 1937, 1937/650/AMCJ.

class that was benefitting from the speculation.¹⁶ These campaigns show an expansive conception of the reach of union campaigns. If not revolutionary take-overs of business, these were certainly strong counters to private capitalist marketplace control of the political economy.

By 1937, the CSO made a bold move by establishing an official alliance with the PCM. The latter was acting under orders from Moscow, under the Popular Front, which called for alliances with non-communist leftist organizations and the sympathetic state. The U.S. consul in Chihuahua reported on the alliance formed by the CSO with other organizations in the city: “A meeting was called by the Cámara Sindical Obrera for the purposes of ‘definitely consolidating the proletarian unification of the frontier.’ The organizations signing the ‘Pact of Solidarity’ were the Cámara Sindical Obrera, Comité de Acción Social Ejidal del Distrito Bravo, Cámara Unitaria del Trabajo (communist), Comité Seccional del Partido Comunista de México (Mexican Communist Party), and the Bloque Obrero y Campesino.”¹⁷ This alliance by the Cámara Unitaria and the Communist Party with the CSO was a direct result of the Popular Front. The decision by labor on the border to support the national government coincided with the communists’ agenda to enter into political alliances once Cárdenas proved sympathetic to labor. The Cámara Sindical widened this gap with elites by cultivating radical class perceptions, which made them vulnerable to attacks by connecting them with communism.

Radicals in the CSO faced competition from the more established federation, which also wooed workers into state-sanctioned federations with more conservative directions. The Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana or CROM’s presence in Juárez was also significant. It represented workers in almost every economic activity in the city during most of the 1930s, and competed against the CSO for workers’ adherence. In many instances, workers in various jobs

¹⁶ Ernesto de la Una, president of the Cámara Sindical Obrera to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, José Quevedo, May 26, 1936, 1936/650/AMCJ.

¹⁷ Lee R. Blohm, Labor Notes from Chihuahua, Mexico, March 16, 1937, 4/1937/ACCC, 84.3/USNARG.

could choose from competing unions; one representing the CSO, and the other, the CROM. But most of the CROM's membership was made up of workers in the service sector that dominated the city's alcohol, cabaret, restaurant, and bar businesses. Unlike the CSO, CROM federation officials in Juárez collaborated with local elites as most of their members worked in businesses connected with local political and economic elites. The CROM's ties to powerful figures extended to the office of the mayor. Ricardo Espinoza, a CROM leader, became municipal president on October 9, 1935, when Dr. Daniel Quiroz quit; however, he lasted only three months before José Quevedo was elected. Nevertheless, his political ascendance shows the CROM's ties to local political power. This suggests that the CROM's access to local political power had more to do with the co-optation by local and statewide officials looking to deradicalize the movement in Juárez than a victory for workers.

The ultimate winners of this contest between styles of unionism were not clear until later in the 1930s. Would the CROM prevail, and a more tame form of union based on political alliances with ruling interests dominate Ciudad Juárez, or would the more radical form of unionism triumph. Part of the answer to this was worked out in a broader setting in which the nature and scope of unionism in other areas of Chihuahua were determined. A critical area in this respect was the Hidalgo mining region. Would that region join a radical agenda as a legacy of the Revolution, or would it be tamed?

Parral-Santa Barbara

After the Revolution (1910-1920), labor unions and federations in this important mining area sprang up seeking to increase workers' power by uniting and emboldening them to pursue

their class interests and resist capital, when necessary, through walk-outs, strikes, boycotts, and legal actions. Labor unions' and federations' successes in improving their workers' living situations transformed Santa Barbara-Parral into a labor-friendly space throughout the 1930s. Workers' support for these initiatives led many of the labor federations' leaders to gain access to the corridors of power and become influential actors throughout Chihuahua. Political elites realized that they needed the support of unions to get elected and to maintain political and economic stability.

The *Cámara Regional del Trabajo* (CRT), a regional federation, formed in the area in 1933 by *Union de Mecánicos Electricistas y Similares* (Electricians and Mechanics' Union), *Sindicato de Panaderos Ignacio Zaragoza* (Bakers' Union), and *Sindicato de Trabajadores Mineros Benito Juárez* (Miners' Union), represented the types of labor unions that sought to bridge divisions across trade and skill throughout the mining region. These federations provided an outlet for workers to articulate their demands within the legal framework established after the Revolution. How much workers could achieve by contesting employers through that legal framework was unknown at the time, but it is clear that they used these mechanisms to extract all that was possible from that framework through threats and political connections. The limits were not known until later.

The CRT did not join either the CTM or the CROM during the 1930s, which allowed them to remain independent of directives from the national labor leaders' mandates from Mexico City calling for collaboration and rejecting radicalism. The "Benito Juárez" Miners' Union (predecessor of Parral Section 9 of the National Miners' Union established in 1934) and the "Ignacio Zaragoza" bakers' union had both been part the CROM, but joined the CRT. CROM's influence in the mining region eroded as the 1930s advanced, both in Parral and Santa Barbara

and at the national level. The fact that miners joined with other workers in the area represented a break in continuity with the more passive resistance or lack of solidarity that William French argues was the dominant position of skilled mine workers towards their fellow unskilled workers throughout the rest of the community before the Revolution.¹⁸

In a manifesto published in the local newspapers immediately after their formation in 1933, the CRT quickly made its presence known in the mining area. The two largest and most powerful miners' unions in the area, the "Benito Juárez" and "Vicente Guerrero," from Parral and Santa Barbara respectively, joined the CRT. This decision by the local miners' unions strengthened the labor federation, since miners had a long tradition of resistance and unionization. The entire region depended on the mines, which in turn, provided a potential base to negotiate on behalf of others. Isaac Marcossón demonstrated this dependency in his landmark study of ASARCO.¹⁹ Furthermore, the foundation of the National Miners' Union, the Sindicato de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgico, Siderurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana (STMMR) in 1934, could have drawn miners toward a perspective that saw their interests as only connected with other miners and with ASARCO; miners in Santa Barbara-Parral remained in the CRT and its ethos of local and regional solidarity through uniting workers across trade and skill.

It was Salvador Santana, Secretary General of the CRT, who announced to ASARCO that the state-wide radical federation represented the majority of workers and requested a new contract. The CRT leadership boldly declared its intentions to defend "all workers as one."²⁰ The CRT highlighted that the organization cut across trades and skills, that it would refuse to allow division among the working class in the mining region to dominate the workers' agenda, and that

¹⁸ French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 6, 44, 138.

¹⁹ Isaac Marcossón, *Metal Magic: The Story of the American, Smelting and Refining Company* (New York: Farah, Straus and Company), 196.

²⁰ Salvador Santana, secretary general of the Cámara Regional del Trabajo to ASARCO, January 2, 1933, box number 1933, Archivo Historico Municipal de Parral, Parral, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as, 1933/AHMP.

it sought the means to unite in order to bring a new regimen to the company's operations. As the CRT acknowledged, "The hope in forming this federation was due to the current state of disorganization that has been perceived and after recognizing and embracing the times, we have made the resolution to join in a single flag and goal."²¹ The phrase "embracing the times" needs highlighting as it shows the CRT's decision to establish connections with the Cárdenas presidency, and places them in the larger context of the national labor movement.

The CRT used class-struggle rhetoric to frame its intentions in the area: "The chamber accepts class struggle as a fundamental premise. It does this without any hatred or spite, and it expects cooperation from other organizations that are alike in thought and action." CRT made it clear that it sought to bridge workers' interests across trades and skills as a means to assert their power. Perhaps more notably, the CRT shows a clear expectation that other organizations in the mining region would join them in making this a class-based struggle. They labeled their adversaries (captains of industry) as greedy individuals with opposing interests.

Nevertheless, the manifesto also acknowledged workers' apparent lack of preparation to defend the values of the Revolution, which the federation embodied. The newly formed chamber argued regarding socialist education, "We accept the reforms proposed in the educational system to establish in elementary schools the obligatory teachings of advanced doctrines that can prepare the youth for their logical incorporation in the new (national) regime."²² This statement reflects the CRT's decision to support Cárdenas' educational reforms, further showing its alliance with progressive national and statewide elites.²³

²¹ Salvador Santana, secretary general of the Cámara Regional del Trabajo to ASARCO, January 2, 1933, 1933/AHMP.

²² Salvador Santana, secretary general of the Cámara Regional del Trabajo to ASARCO, January 2, 1933, 1933/AHMP.

²³ For information of Cárdenas' education policies, see David L. Raby, *Educación y revolución social en México* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1974).

The CRT also expressed agreement with the long term agenda to reduce the hold of alcohol in workers lives, and sought to involve the political system to provide for “physical activity” as well as “concern for the welfare of the elderly and defenseless.” The manifesto announced an agenda to prevent wage devaluation, and expressed concern with addressing issues of mechanization and the preservation of “the advances achieved so far by the working class.”²⁴ These successful efforts at the local level to keep the value of wages at the same rate as inflation does not coincide with the depreciation of wages workers suffered throughout the 1930s at the national level.²⁵

The CRT was not the only organization competing for workers’ allegiance in Parral. The *Frente Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino (FROC)*, which originated in the late 1920s, was composed of the oldest unions in Parral, the Sociedad de Obreros “*Miguel Hidalgo*”, the “*Ignacio Zaragoza*” Union (bakers), and the “*Benito Juarez*” union (miners) before they left to form the CRT.²⁶ The Confederación de Trabajadores de Mexico (CTM) eventually coalesced with the FROC, combining their ranks in 1936, which strengthened the CTM in the mining area as the FROC also made efforts to broaden workers’ demands beyond the workplace.

This does not mean the FROC avoided issues that would make local officials uneasy, such as raising the wages of local municipal employees. In 1939, Manuel Gradea, Secretary General of the FROC reflected this inclination when he sent a letter “asking if you can tell us the reason that wages have not increased for our fellow workers, members of this union, who work

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Jeffrey Bortz, *El Salario en Mexico* (Mexico DF: Ediciones El Caballito, 1986).

²⁶ Juan Berriosabal, secretary general of the Federación Revolucionario de Obreros y Campesinos del Distrito Hidalgo to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin Aguirre, in which the above unions, alongside twelve other organizations, signed a petition requesting local officials to stop the introduction of music boxes in bars and other similar businesses, 1930/AHMP.

for this municipality, a list of whom we sent weeks ago.”²⁷ Kevin Middlebrook explains in his book, *Paradox of Revolution* (1995), that government employees had their own organizations to articulate their demands. Nevertheless, federations like the FROC in the mining district sought to speak for state workers by organizing them into a union.²⁸

Federations in the mining district used their influence by reach beyond demands for higher wages. They defended community-wide interests by speaking against inflation and merchant abuse. This concern for food and other essential items coincides with President Cárdenas’ food policies designed to control rising prices at the national level. Local officials in the district assisted these initiatives.²⁹ In a letter to the President of the Investigatory Commission which regulated the prices of food essentials, the mayor of Parral indicated that the unions in the area had made him aware that the regulatory authority needed to “intervene in an effective way in favor of making those articles of prime necessity affordable. Our members have made us aware that local merchants have raised their prices in an exaggerated and extreme manner. Since it is the obligation of this authority and those commissions created for this precise purpose to curtail merchants from profiting immoderately, we have no doubt that the local authority will do what is within its power to avoid the inaccessibility of those products consumed by the working class.”³⁰ At the local level, labor leaders took advantage of the favorable political context to increase unions’ power in a way that reached beyond the workplace.

Labor federations recognized the unregulated increase on prices of different products widely utilized by the community, and swiftly acted accordingly. Thus, they joined forces with

²⁷ Manuel Gardea, secretary general of the Frente Regional Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino to the mayor of Parral, Gustavo Chavez, April 27, 1939, 1939/AHMP.

²⁸ Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 91-91.

²⁹ Enrique C. Ochoa, *Feeding Mexico: The Political Uses of Food since 1910* (Scholarly Resources, 2002), 45.

³⁰ Parral mayor, Valente Chacón Baca, to the president of the Investigatory Commission regulating the prices of food essentials, February 16, 1934, 1934/AHMP.

the local government to counteract inflation and businesses' speculation with essential food. The letter confirms unions' expectations that authorities would assist in their efforts to regulate certain products and services in their favor.

Merchants' price speculation drew attention and ire from Section 11, a newly formed National Miners' Union in Santa Barbara in 1934. Officials of the organization sought to prevent harm to their members and the working class in the area. The union pressured local officials and demanded to know "the cause or causes of why certain merchants have significantly raised prices. This union leadership believes and expects, given your record, that you will stop the abuse of some merchants. We expect an answer as soon as possible to our request."³¹ The union's expectation of a quick resolution from local authorities shows the changes in the relationship between workers and government officials that the Revolution catalyzed.³²

As in Ciudad Juárez, unions and federations in the district realized the importance of inserting their voice into price regulation of articles of basic necessity. This influence among workers also demonstrated the federations' newly found power in respect to local businesses and operators. Throughout the 1930s, union federations accomplished much by regulating the prices of meat, milk, transportation, and housing, and engaged in concerted efforts to keep them affordable, a tactic which improved the lives of workers.

The following excerpt is an example of unions' involvement in controlling rising meat prices. In 1930, the FROC demanded action regarding the "exorbitant price of meat being sold to the public, despite the fact that the animals sold to the slaughterhouse are inexpensive." Now it was organized workers, not companies, whose voices were heard in municipal halls. The FROC

³¹ Nicolas Arellano, secretary general of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Section 11, to the mayor of Santa Barbara, Pedro Aguirre, December 3, 1934, box number 1934/minas, Archivo Municipal de Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as 1934/Minas/AMSB.

³² French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 35-63.

thought the same way and “agreed to force those trafficking with this product to reduce the price of meat, since this product is considered an article of prime necessity.”³³ In the same year, the FROC wrote to local officials that they felt compelled by their membership to help the federation intervene in rent issues: “We have agreed to make the local authorities aware that most of the owners of properties in this locality, taking advantage of the minimal raise in wages that workers earned, have disproportionally increased rents that were already high.”³⁴ Four years later, Section 9 of Parral continued to argue that housing was an essential right and demanded authorities legislate against landlord abuses. Section 9 sent the above quoted letter to pressure local officials. The union argued that no regulatory limits existed, so Section 9 lobbied the state congress pressuring them to draft legislation regulating this matter. Section 9 added that they would not recognize these increases.³⁵ The union added that workers would refuse to pay the difference in rent. Their alliances with high-ranking municipal officials gave workers hope to influence legislation.

Local municipal authorities shared the unions’ concerns regarding soaring rent prices. Gabriel Chavez, the mayor of Parral, responded, agreed and added that the municipality would take “steps to solve it.”³⁶ The response by local authorities illustrates the collaborative effort between them, which provided unions and federations with the necessary credibility to continue organizing around community and class concerns among workers in the area.

³³ Frente Regional Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin R. Aguirre, October 8, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

³⁴ Frente Regional Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin R. Aguirre, December 28, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

³⁵ Jesus Herrera, secretary general of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Section 9, to the mayor of Parral, Valente Chacón Baca, November 14, 1934, 1934/Minas/AMSB.

³⁶ Mayor of Parral, Valente Chacón Baca, to the secretary general of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Jesus Herrera, Section 9 1934/Minas/AMSB.

Labor federations' concerns over increasing transport cost boosted their credibility within the community and among local authorities. In January 1935, the miners' unions put pressure on local officials who "energetically protested" that the "owners of the transportation system have since the 16th of this month increased their rates to the excessive amount of 1.50 pesos for each trip to the city of Parral."³⁷ The miners' union recognized that some of their workers resided far from certain mines, and the evidence suggests that the demand was coming from rank-and-file workers, who warmed to the union agenda regarding community concerns. The mine union officials explained that they were responding to the serious protest of workers of this union due to the scarcity of food and housing in this mining locality. The union added that a lack of increase in wages, and unreasonable costs in housing and articles of basic necessity, had significantly damaged the working class.³⁸

Price and rent control were not the only community-based items on the agenda for the unions in the Hidalgo region. Organized labor in the area demanded the establishment of a minimum wage and profit sharing for all organized workers in the region as early as 1930. In a letter to the mayor of Parral in 1930, the FROC proposed that a Minimum Wage and Profit Sharing Commission be established in each year on the first day of January in every main municipality. The unions wanted these commissions to be composed of a representative of each party, one for workers and one for owners.³⁹ Unions pressured local authorities to ensure a minimum wage and the ability to share corporate profits as an aspect of the Revolution's granting of rights. The FROC expressed its frustration by writing, "Since the entire month has

³⁷ Secretary of the Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Section 9, to the mayor of Parral, Valentin Chacón Baca, January 7, 1935, 1935/AHMP.

³⁸ Jesus Najera, secretary general of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Section 9, to the mayor of Parral, Valentin Chacón Baca, January 7, 1935, 1935/AHMP.

³⁹ Frente Regional Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin Aguirre, January 29, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

passed and the municipality has failed to name such representatives, we are asking you to please install such a board in accordance with the law.”⁴⁰ Legislation contained in the Federal Labor Law of 1931 called for the creations of a minimum wage and profit sharing commission composed of workers and capital. Capital owners and operators, it appears, did everything to obstruct the law since they dreaded such interference with their private prerogatives and the new assertiveness on the part of unions; as a result, they made significant efforts to refuse to participate by failing to send representatives to meetings and commissions. Owners’ use of delaying tactics over a core and legislated working class demand created a context for more militancy on the part of workers, as it established clearer lines of division and revealed the class interests of each group. Finally, this document concludes with an energetic demand by the union to uphold the law.

Workers’ influence in the mining area through their unions and the federations allowed them to assert their voice into the regulatory mechanisms of labor conflict resolution. In some instances workers demanded the removal of inspectors whom the respective federation or union felt did not perform their duties as they would have liked. In June 1933, the CRT asserted its right and determination to remove local officials from office if they failed to adhere to the goals of the law. Apparently the union felt that a local inspector, Dolores Hernandez, was more interested in political advancement over workers’ health and safety. They wrote to Gabriel Chavez, the mayor of Parral:

We request that you intervene so that the state executive would answer two notes that we sent on the 14th and 16th of May which pertain to the accusations that organized labor has presented against Mr. Dolores Hernandez, the local inspector. He has completely missed the purpose of a regulator of industry and instead has concentrated his efforts on

⁴⁰ Frente Regional Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin Aguirre, January 29, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

politics. Since this acutely affects the working class, we have requested his immediate removal, but we have not received an answer.⁴¹

The archival file was incomplete so we do not know if authorities removed the inspector. But compared to what had been possible before the Revolution, we can see a developing assertion that politics should mean significant increases in power and more control over selection of officials to ensure the well-being of workers and an improvement in their working conditions in the 1930s.

Collaboration, Support and Deference

It is clear that the relationship between workers and government underwent significant changes throughout the 1930s, and expanded beyond material concerns. Various celebrations taking place in the community showed elements of collaboration, support, and deference between labor federations and local officials. One might argue that deference did not exhibit the presence of revolutionary class values, and that the close relationship with local officials in many ways only tamed the labor movement. Historian Alan Knight has argued as much, suggesting that “the labor leaders who emerged out of the decade of revolution ...traded independence and ideological fidelity for access to power.”⁴² But on the ground in the Hidalgo mining region, we can see that the political context after the Revolution, which led local officials to respond to the most popular grievances or risk losing their positions, and transformed workers’ and official’s consciousness. For the Hidalgo district, local officials were testing new ground, and initially, it was not clear that taming would result from some degree of collaboration.

⁴¹ Salvador Santana, secretary general of the Cámara Regional del Trabajo to the Parral mayor, Gabriel Chávez, June 26, 1933, 1933/AHMP.

⁴² Alan Knight, “The Working Class, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16, no. 1 (May, 1984): 30.

Such a process is seen when examining festivities, such as May 1, Independence Day, Cinco de Mayo, or the Revolution's anniversary celebration in November. Unions, labor federations, and authorities worked together to make festivities meaningful and to construct a community identity, which acknowledged unions and workers as a central players in the nation and community. In October 1934, the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana wrote to the mayor of Parral stating that the union had "agreed that the celebrations commemorating the revolution were to be conducted at the municipal building, while at the same time expressing our most sincere efforts to cooperate in them."⁴³ In the first place, this response by the union shows the changes taking place in the relationship between workers and government because prior to the Revolution, this would have never taken place in other celebrations, like Independence. Also, this meant that contrary to what took place on the border, where local officials and a segment of the working class celebrated in competing venues, organized labor and local officials joined in the celebrations reaffirming their ties to the community in the mining district. Labor federations enthusiastically organized festivities for cultural events in an effort to shape workers' identities along class lines. In May 1935, Section 11 of the miners' unions in Santa Barbara invited local officials to an evening of culture, and justified the invitations as going to local officials "who have cooperated with this organization in anything that has to do with workers' improvement and in the social struggle that it has taken on."⁴⁴

⁴³ Pedro Diaz Leal, secretary general of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Section 11, to the mayor of Santa Barbara, Pedro Aguirre, October 26, 1934, 1934/Minas/AMSB.

⁴⁴ Nicolas Arellano, secretary general of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Section 11, to the mayor of Santa Barbara, Pedro Aguirre, May 21, 1935, 1935/Minas/AMSB.

Whenever unions established new headquarters or offices where they could congregate, there was a celebration of this spatial presence that included municipal officials. These inaugurations took place in both Parral and Santa Barbara, and the entire community received invitations, making them large events that included music, poetry, and socialist education in the form of speeches and workshops promoting it.

The buildings in which workers could congregate contributed significantly to the success of unions in this area by providing a space to inculcate revolutionary working class values and shape identities. For example, the bakers' hall became a space used by different unions to celebrate, meet, and hold discussions. This hall turned into a symbol of workers' influence in the area. Unions recognized that having a space to create a culture and basis for unity was crucial for their ability to influence workers in the mining area. They made sure local authorities received an invitation as well. For example, in June 1936, Section 11 sent a letter inviting local officials "to the inauguration of our social building to take place on the 17th of the current month and asked them 'honor [us] with your presence, and thus our thanks in advance.'⁴⁵ Workers utilized the space for a comprehensive view of the meaning of unionism and for a vast number of varied collective events, including funerals. This means that intimate and important events took place in these spaces alongside labor organizing.

The control of local space to congregate remained a crucial variable in the ability of unions to spread their message effectively, since these gathering spaces turned into an important mechanism to cultivate ideas of class solidarity among workers in the area. The unions' ability to gain spaces in which to congregate owes part of its success to their relationship with local

⁴⁵ Nicolas Arellano, secretary general of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana Section 11 to the mayor of Santa Barbara, Baltazar Aguirre, June 17, 1936, 1936/AHMP.

authorities, which expropriated most of these buildings from previous private owners so that the unions could use them. They did this with various churches in both Parral and Santa Barbara.⁴⁶

The education of workers in the 1930s was another core part of union federations' strategy to shape workers identities. The goal of expanding educational opportunities for workers and their families strengthened the federations' credibility among their members. Unions embraced the idea of education based outside the Catholic Church. This approach was the cornerstone of the Cárdenas government's efforts to transform the nation. As a result, unions continuously supported local, state, and federal efforts to establish public education in the Hidalgo district. This coincidence in agendas allowed unions to enjoy shared goals beyond the workplace with the authorities because the support they gave to local officials in their educational reforms paid off once workers needed support to sign collective contracts or to stop merchants' abuse.

Local teachers and education officials became powerful allies of unions in the mining area. This contrasted with Ciudad Juárez, as previously noted. Outside of the formal state-based education system, unions set up their own schools to teach workers basic skills as well as connecting those basic skills to the workers' struggle. In early 1930, the CROM affiliated, Federación de Obreros y Campesinos del Distrito de Hidalgo, which competed with the FROC for workers' allegiance, painted a picture of how their education curriculum would range over basic household skills to political economy and other topics:

With the wish that the workers' movement develops and realizes its projects regarding the preparation of their leaders, as well as to lift the cultural level of the labor class, the Federación de Obreros y Campesinos del Distrito de Hidalgo agreed to organize the workers' college, which will be under the vigilance and direction of the Education Department of the Federation; its curriculum will include the following courses:

⁴⁶ Author's interview with Don Miguel Felix, one of the original founders of Section 11 (Santa Barbara) of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, Andres Hajar, July 16, 2010, author's possession.

mathematics, Spanish, political economy, workplace law, anatomy, and accounting. There will also be electives, such as English, household economy, seaming, painting, music and oratory.⁴⁷

Organized labor clearly sought to make these schools' curricula the basis for class identity.

Unions controlled the school curricula and personnel. They set out in 1930 to ensure that these workers' schools paid enough to keep the best teachers in their midst. Apparently Roberto Quiroz, a well-regarded principal of School no. 32, also helped to establish the "Nightly Cultural Center for Workers" after the Revolution. He found it difficult to commute from his residency in Chihuahua to the mining district and so did not show up for work. The remaining faculty "carry on their backs the heavy burden of educating workers" who had been enthusiastically signing up, the union noted, and demanded the reinstatement of Mr. Quiroz and additional compensation to pay for his transportation. We do not know if Professor Quiroz was reinstated in his post; however, organized labor continued to assert itself forcefully into education issues.

As William French demonstrated in his study of the same area before the Revolution, concern regarding morality on the part of workers goes back to the nineteenth century as an influential part of workers' identities in this region.⁴⁸ French's study suggested that concerns for morals and manners came from middle and elite directives, including ASARCO.⁴⁹ Middle class concerns about issues of drinking and correct behavior were used as a control mechanism. After the Revolution, workers directed these moral definitions, incorporating some elements of what had been a middle class ethos into a working class perspective. Part of the context was also the government's attempt to curtail alcohol abuse among workers.

⁴⁷ Juan Berriosabal, secretary general of the Federación de Obreros y Campesinos de Distrito de Hidalgo to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin R. Aguirre, January 4, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

⁴⁸ French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 5-10.

⁴⁹ French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 54, 79, 84, 85.

After the Revolution, concern over alcohol abuse came from organized labor's leadership and had a different tone to it. Instead of delineating class differences and accepting condescension from elites, labor's leadership utilized temperance as a way to solve workers' problems and enhance their potential power. In late 1930, the "Benito Juárez" miners' union wrote to the mayor of Parral in response to an invitation from President Pascual Ortiz Rubio for an anti-alcohol campaign.⁵⁰ The union leadership felt that alcohol abuse prevented workers from the full realization of their potential as human beings due to the substance's addictive nature. Union leadership also raised concerns regarding the way that money spent on alcohol caused deprivation for workers' families.

This letter from the Miners' Union to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin Aguirre, indicated that the unions embraced attempts for legal safeguards against abuse of monies distributed under the Revolution's profit sharing provision; they wanted alcohol consumption and distribution locally curtailed on the day workers got their shares from the profit sharing mandated by the 1917 constitution. They demanded that the mayor "strictly prohibit the consumption and distribution of alcohol during that day. This small favor we ask, for you could do a great favor to humanity." Their rationale held up the ideal of the nuclear family and its well-being as part of Revolutionary heritage: "So we have decided that your authority is the only one that can effectively assist us so that the small amount of money can be used to alleviate the suffering of many families."⁵¹ The letter shows an expectation by the unions that local officials would exert authority on their behalf.

The local union representing miners in Santa Barbara, "Vicente Guerrero," similarly called for controls over gambling and alcohol. In February 1934, it called for "bulletins placed in

⁵⁰ Miners' Union "Benito Juárez" to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin Aguirre, November 30, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

⁵¹ Miners' Union "Benito Juárez" to the mayor of Parral, Joaquin Aguirre, November 30, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

strategic locations,” and police enforcement to ensure that “underage individuals do not enter any place of vice, with the warning that parents and tutors will be punished severely, and so will local merchants.” The miners’ union also wanted these establishments closed at an early time. They vehemently opposed those businesses’ passing as grocery stores as a way to sell alcohol on the side. Finally, they raised concerns over the welfare of children and women.⁵²

Union concerns regarding workers’ abuse of alcohol turned on class power issues as opposed to middle class condescension towards workers’ manners and morals, since worker leaders controlled the narrative and the arguments used against its consumption, and not middle class and ASARCO officials trying to control their so called vice-riddled lives. Still, the line between employers’ condescension and unions’ lack of support for well-engrained working class habits and behavior might have distanced some workers from the unions. In industrious Monterrey, also located in the North of Mexico, Michel Snodgrass has demonstrated similar paternalistic dynamics in his study of workers during the 1930s. These types of condescending efforts effectively prevented workers from joining unions.⁵³ In any case, unions supported authorities’ attempts to rein in drunken and rowdy behavior that both parties felt was detrimental to moral rectitude.⁵⁴ Local authorities swiftly answered the unions’ concerns: they notified the unions that the law did not favor a particular group, and that they couldn’t change the law just because the union felt they should.⁵⁵

The FROC also sought to curtail gambling among a significant number of workers who visited gambling establishments frequently. In April 1939, the federation denounced the “bars

⁵² Sindicato Industrial de Mineros, Mecanicos, Electricistas y Similares “Vicente Guerrero,” to the mayor of Santa Barbara, Pedro Aguirre, February 28, 1934, 1934/AMSB.

⁵³ Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 55.

⁵⁴ Sindicato Industrial de Mineros, Mecanicos, Electricistas y Similares “Vicente Guerrero,” to the mayor of Santa Barbara, Pedro Aguirre, February 28, 1934, 1934/AMSB.

⁵⁵ Mayor of Santa Barbara, Pedro Aguirre, to the Sindicato Industrial de Mineros, Mecanicos, Electricistas y Similares “Vicente Guerrero,” March 7, 1934, 1934/AMSB.

and other establishments [that] are breaking the law by having gambling on their premises; since this greatly damages the interest of our fellow workers adhered to this *Central*, we are requesting that you send people to watch these establishments and other public spaces so that this kind of gaming does not take place and those that are caught doing it are punished to the full extent of the law.”⁵⁶ These places in which gambling, prostitution, and other prohibited activities took place had a significant presence throughout the mining areas of Parral and Santa Barbara.⁵⁷ In fact, each city had a red-light district going back hundreds of years. Labor federations and authorities alike made efforts to regulate the areas in an effort to prevent these types of activities from getting out of control. After the Revolution, labor leaders sought to tame some of the worst abuses without condemning workers.

Conclusion

Workers formed local and statewide labor federations to increase their power in the workplace and beyond. As a result, workers sought a voice in almost every aspect of the cities’ future. Organized labor in Juárez successfully formed combative and radical labor federations like the CSO. This process was cemented once Cárdenas took office and by the Popular Front era. Moreover, the presence of communist organizations in this federation signified the radicalization of the movement in Juárez.

In the mining district, workers effectively projected their power throughout the community by organizing other workers into federations. Unions’ actions beyond the workplace allowed them to turn Parral-Santa Barbara into a union-friendly town in which organized labor had a voice in the everyday decisions of the community. They achieved this by forging alliances

⁵⁶ Frente Regional Revolucionario Obrero y Campesino to the mayor of Parral, Gustavo Chávez, April 25, 1939, 1939/AHMP.

⁵⁷ French, *A Peaceful and Working People*, 79-88.

with political elites. The nature of Parral-Santa Barbara as an enclave connected to the worldwide markets allowed officials to force concessions from ASARCO by taking advantage of the anti-foreign sentiment caused by Cárdenas' nationalistic policies. Local officials proved amenable to making the local community a place where workers felt they could expand their power as long as it did not question the elites' place in the economic structure. The next chapter will look at the way workers utilized the labor courts to enforce collectively bargained contracts, which also increased their power.

CHAPTER 3: COLLECTIVE CONTRACTS AND THE USE OF CONCILIATORY COURTS TO INCREASE WORKERS' POWER

Chapter two examined workers' efforts to establish combative and independent federations on the border and in the mining district, which increased workers' power beyond the workplace and into the communities. This chapter examines how unions and federations in Ciudad Juárez and the Hidalgo Mining District utilized collective contracts and the Conciliation and Arbitration Courts (*Juntas de conciliación y arbitraje*) as a cornerstone of their overall strategy to build greater strength in the workplace throughout the 1930s.

Scholars have emphasized the importance of the courts as “a significant political victory for labor,” in Mexico because the courts enforced collective contracts by obliging owners to comply with the law.¹ The power of these courts resulted in higher wages, hiring halls, job security, retirement benefits, and a sense of dignity among workers, which is difficult to measure. The Constitution of 1917 increased workers' power at the local level by giving organized labor the mechanisms necessary to take away crucial elements of the production process from managers and owners, including control of rate of work and the ability to hire and fire workers. At the same time, however, the labor rights granted by the *Carta Magna* also prevented workers from making demands beyond workplace and community-wide concerns. Daniela Spencer explains that “the constitution guaranteed that worker mobilization would shy away from attempting to destroy the established order and would instead concentrate on turning

¹ Kevin J Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 56.

the document's promises into realities."² Collectively-bargained contracts were one of these realities because they potentially gave workers control of the workplace through the provisions stipulated in them. This provided some of the legal ground rules to increase workers' power, but it was social activism around those legal rights, including solidarity strikes, boycotts, and mass protests that changed the labor-capital social relations.

Workers utilized the local and federal conciliation and arbitration courts to enforce contracts in situations where owners refused to honor them. The 1917 Constitution's article 123 had established labor tribunals to resolve conflicts. However, the actual enforcement of article 123 varied from state to state, since there was a lack of consensus until 1927 over whether states or the federal government should preside over labor conflicts. This created many inconsistencies affecting labor law, since individual states enacted various laws ranging from progressive legislation (in Yucatán, Veracruz, Chihuahua), to outright authoritarian versions (in Chiapas).³ As mentioned in chapter one, in an effort to standardize the enforcement of these laws at the national level, the Calles government, in 1927, established the Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje (Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Court), which took away the jurisdiction of local officials and gave the federal government control over the outcome of labor conflicts in certain crucial sectors including mining and electricity, two important industries in the Hidalgo district and on the border respectively. This immediately introduced federal authorities as mediators when any of the parties in conflict requested it, although in many instances, these conflicts were resolved at the local level. This increasing control of the national state over labor affairs reached its climax with the passage of the Federal Labor Law of 1931. As Kevin Middlebrook has argued, "the enactment of a Federal Labor Law in 1931 was a milestone in the expansion of state

² Daniela Spenser, "Radical Mexico: Limits to the Impact of Soviet Communism," *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2008): 61.

³ Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 8-10.

administrative authority over labor affairs. It symbolized the maturation of post-revolutionary political beliefs advocating active state interventions in socioeconomic affairs.”⁴ The 1931 Federal Labor Law placed real limits on workers’ ability to unionize and strike, a situation which allowed political elites to direct and tame radical labor movements.

At the same time, the Federal Labor Law also provided workers with legal rights, including collective bargaining and conciliatory courts, which irrefutably increased their power at the local level. Since the struggles over collective contracts took time, organization, and effort, extending for years, in the case of the mining region and Ciudad Juárez, business owners’ resistance to sign and abide by collective contracts galvanized workers into organizing and exerting their power. This meant that workers’ sense of class interest increased as business owners and operators refused to provide what workers considered essential revolution-granted rights. While Kevin Middlebrook and others have argued that tribunals eventually took agency out of workers’ hands, this dissertation suggests that at the local level, the tribunals were a vehicle through which workers expressed and expanded their class identity and struggle for power, especially in the short term.

Throughout the 1920s in Chihuahua, competing political and economic elites took turns controlling political power, which made establishing alliances with labor important in building popular support for elite efforts to hold on to power.⁵ Thus, political elites often made concessions to workers by providing them with legal mechanisms for articulating their demands. For example, the radical state labor law of 1922 enacted by Constitutionalist governor Ignacio

⁴ Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 51.

⁵ For information on Chihuahua’s political situation during the 1920s, see Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs: Elites and Politics in Chihuahua Mexico, 1910-1940* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993).

Enríquez was the result of his tenuous hold on power.⁶ The law provided workers with the mechanism necessary to solve conflicts under the protection of a pro-labor code. Workers in the Hidalgo mining district and Ciudad Juárez relied on the local conciliation courts to increase their power a decade before national political elites used the newly established Federal courts to increase workers' power after the armed phase of the Revolution. During the 1920s, workers in Chihuahua made the state one of the first in the nation to enforce friendly labor codes, including collective contracts and conciliation courts.⁷ For example, already in 1925, the "Ricardo Flores Magón" Miners' Union from Santa Barbara requested the establishment of conciliatory courts, primarily to defend workers against violations of collective contracts.⁸ In the 1925 case of a worker killed at his workplace, the union demanded enforcement of the Chihuahuan state labor law introduced in 1922, which provided mechanisms for redress of contract violations whenever unions represented a majority of workers exclusive of managerial positions. ASARCO had refused to pay the family of Maximino Avita compensation for his workplace death. The company attempted to use legal niceties to suggest the union had no grounds for bringing the case; it argued that "the union did not have Avita as a member in their most recent list, therefore,

⁶ Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs*, 36.

⁷ For information on the application of labor codes at the state level, see, Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 2-10. The following cases demonstrate unions' use of these state and local courts in both regions during the 1920s. Letter from the President of the State Conciliation court, A. Holguin, to the widow of Nieves Neyra, box number 1925, Archivo Municipal de Santa Barbara, July 13, 1925, Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as 1925/AMSB. Also, see the letter from the President of the Municipal Conciliation court, E. Fernandez, to Mr. E. A. Straut, Manager of the San Francisco Mines of Mexico, in San Francisco del Oro, April 21, 1925, in which the local conciliation court orders the mining company to pay \$400.00 pesos for the wrongful death of Tomás Payan, an employee of the company, found in 1925/AMSB. Throughout the 1920s, documents such as these, in which local conciliation boards intervened in labor conflicts, demonstrate their usage in the Hidalgo district and on the border a decade before its utilization at the federal level. Juárez, on October 8 1929, when the bakers threatened to strike against various bakeries, the local municipal board intervened at the behest of both parties. The bakers did not strike once the collective contract was ratified by all parties involved, see, *El Continental*, October 6-12, 1929.

⁸ Francisco García, secretary of the "Ricardo Flores Magón" union, to Genaro Martínez, mayor of Santa Barbara, March 17, 1925, 1927/Ricardo Flores Magón/AMSB, requesting the establishment of the conciliation courts to seek compensation for the wrongful death of Sabino Reyes; see also the letter from Francisco García, the secretary of the "Ricardo Flores Magón" union, to Genaro Martínez, mayor of Santa Barbara, requesting the establishment of a conciliation court for the unjustified layoffs of Irineo Silva, Antonio Castillo, Francisco Gadea, and Isidro Garibay, February 28, 1927, 1927/Flores Magón/AMSB.

Avita was not a member of the union.” The union responded that there was no law requiring unions to register every single new member to local officials. The courts ruled in favor of the union, and Avita’s family received compensation.⁹

The existence of the local courts and their coercive enforcement of contracts in favor of workers suggest that in the areas under study, workers’ power derived from their organized status, not from concessions made by political elites, which reacted to this massive organization of workers by their federations going back to the 1920s. The creation of collective contracts and the establishment of courts to enforce these contracts a decade before the federal government’s decision to do so nationally support this assertion. The continuous high turnover in gubernatorial politics that Chihuahua experienced during the 1920s, in which not a single state governor finished his term, allowed workers to exert their influence by using collectively bargained contracts and conciliation courts before President Lázaro Cárdenas’ rise to power in December 1934.

Once Cárdenas took office, negotiations around collective contracts led to radical action. In the Hidalgo mining district, conflicts over collective contracts resulted in important strike movements. In 1934 and 1935, Sections 9 and 11 (Parral and Santa Barbara respectively) of the National Miners’ Union started strike movements when ASARCO refused to sign a new collective contract demanding the final say in crucial aspects of the workplace, including higher wages. Miguel Felix, original founder of National Miners’ Union (Section 11) in Santa Barbara, years later recalled matter-of-factly that if “the company did not respect the contracts, we would

⁹ Case folder of Maximino Avita against ASARCO, 1925/Ricardo Flores Magón/AMSB.

strike (*pues nos íbamos a la huelga*).¹⁰ Workers' willingness to strike, as reflected in Felix's statement, captures the value that workers placed on these contracts as a means of expanding their authority. This was especially true after the election of Lázaro Cárdenas to the presidency in 1934 and the Popular Front era inaugurated in late 1935. An example of these enhanced expectations took place in 1935, when the statewide labor federation, the Cámara Regional del Trabajo, wrote to the local Conciliation and Arbitration Board arguing that "it was aware that some owners of local establishments in Santa Barbara have refused to sign the collective contracts formulated by our fellow workers. With that purpose we request that these merchants be forced to sign the contracts, since the majority of owners have already signed. This chamber wishes strong measures to be taken in defense of the working cause."¹¹ The fact that the CRT demanded the establishment of these contracts for the entire community showed its elevated expectations, as it felt emboldened by the struggle over these contracts, the arrival to power of Cárdenas, and the support of local authorities. This context turned collective contracts into a vehicle to increase workers' power.

Again, in the Hidalgo district, but also in Ciudad Juárez, strike movements grew out of the struggle over collective contracts. The strike movement of 1934 in Hidalgo was the result of solidarity in support of unionized workers at the AVALOS smelter in Chihuahua City over their struggle to establish a collective contract. In Ciudad Juárez, refusal of the local power company operators, the *Quevedos*, to abide by the collective contract proposed by the Electricians' Union in 1935 led to a three-year strike movement. These long conflicts over collective contracts

¹⁰ Author's interview with Miguel Felix, one of the original founders of Section 11 (Santa Barbara) of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, tape recording in Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, , July 16, 2010, in author's possession.

¹¹ Cámara Regional del Trabajo to the Junta Central de Conciliación y Arbitraje, March 15, 1935, box number 1935, Archivo Historico Municipal de Parral, Parral, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as 1935/AHMP.

illustrate the value workers placed in them as mechanisms that provided workers with the most power against owners and business operators.

Hidalgo Mining District

Unions and federations in the mining district used the conciliation courts to increase their power, beginning in the 1920s and reaching a high point during the Cárdenas administration. These contracts took significant control of the workplace away from business owners and operators, and placed authority in the hands of organized labor. They gave unions official recognition, raised wages, and established a closed-shop, which gave unions control of new hires and the ability to prevent unjustifiable layoffs, among other provisions allowing workers to control many aspects of the workplace. This section will focus on the largest and most important labor organizations in the district: these were the National Miners' Union (Section 9 and 11), and the Bakers' Union. In order to understand the miners' combativeness, one needs to go back to the pre-revolutionary era.

First, as mentioned previously, the Hidalgo region had a long tradition of bootleg mining, which created a culture highlighting independence, manliness, and a challenge to private property in the district. According to William French, miners in the mining district did not have a tradition of identifying themselves in terms of a single, homogeneous working class before the 1920s.¹² However, this did not mean they did not possess a long tradition of organizing. Mutual aid societies in Parral, like the Sociedad Mutualista de Obreros "Vicente Guerrero," formed by

skilled miners only, had existed since the turn of the last century.¹³ After the 1910-1920 Revolution, the “Ricardo Flores Magón” union in Santa Barbara was founded (sometime in the early 1920s), but it lost its official status throughout the decade in a couple of cases due to its inability to demonstrate that the union represented the majority of workers. Lack of recognition forced unionized workers from the Magón union to constitute a new union. Miguel Felix Camacho indicated that the union reconstituted itself because of the legal provisions and ASARCO’s challenge over the union’s rights to represent workers. He noted that ASARCO “was not respecting the contracts with the pretext that we did not have the majority when the contract was signed.” Workers decided to create “a new organization and made sure that this time the majority was registered with the proper authorities,” he recalled.¹⁴ Felix’s memories illustrate the importance workers placed on these contracts and their active attention to their legal rights. It also highlights the importance the conciliation courts had in balancing power structures, as owners were bound by the law to negotiate collectively with unions if the latter had more than fifty percent of the labor force excluding managerial positions. The Flores Magón union was replaced in 1932 by the Vicente Guerrero union for the same reason; the Magón union was dissolved after ASARCO had argued that it did not represent over fifty percent of the workforce. Another powerful mining union was the “Benito Juárez” Miners’ Union formed in 1922 in Parral. By 1934 in the newly established National Miners Union (STMRM), Section 9 and Section 11 of the new Union were founded with more than 3,000 members from the district.

¹³ Ruben Rocha Chavez, *Tres siglos de Historia, 1631-1978: Biografía de una ciudad Parral* (Taller Grafico del Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua, 1979), 325-328.

¹⁴ Interview with Miguel Felix, July 16, 2010.

Felix recalled that Section 11 in Santa Barbara alone had more than 2000 unionized workers in 1934.¹⁵

Along with regional developments such as the strengthening of mining unions in Chihuahua, at the national level the establishment of the CTM also made the achievement of labor contracts for all workers—not only miners—a priority. Established in 1936, the CTM, at its first National Committee hoped to build on the pro-labor political climate cultivated by Cárdenas and the Popular Front which “offer wide perspective to the masses.”¹⁶ Thus, the CTM’s decision to vigorously defend collective contracts among their adherents responded to a changed national political environment. However, labor’s use of the courts had a precedent, as we have already seen, in legislation in states like Chihuahua originating ten years earlier, but once the federal government adopted the idea, unions’ power increased again.

The Popular Front changed the way unions identified themselves and the way they conducted labor relations vis-a-vis capital. This power brought about by the alliance with the federal government augmented in 1934, when local organizations of miners across Mexico, including the two unions aforementioned, formed the National Miners’ Union, which also included those working outside the mines in other related industries, including smelters, carpenters, and electricians. After 1934, the Benito Juárez and the Vicente Guerrero unions became Sections 9 and 11 of the National Miners’ Union, the Sindicato de Trabajadores Mineros y Metalurgicos de la Republica Mexicana (STMMRM) respectively.¹⁷ According to Felix, in 1934, these two sections brought together more than 3000 workers into one federation. Its predecessors had established a blueprint regarding the use of the courts, collective contracts, and

¹⁵ Interview with Miguel Felix, July 16, 2010.

¹⁶ Joe C. Ashby, *Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 98.

¹⁷ Interview with Miguel Felix, July 16, 2010.

direct action to maintain the power brought about by the Revolution. Although the National Miners' Union joined the new CTM in 1936, it quickly abandoned the national confederation after the latter tried to impose a political alliance with the national government on its affiliated unions. Miners were not opposed in principle to the Popular Front. However, the undemocratic processes that came to dominate the CTM compelled unions like the miners and railroad workers to abandon the CTM in 1936.¹⁸

Moreover, whether it was the Benito Juárez union or Section 9, organized miners in the Hidalgo district had utilized the courts to increase their power despite the national context going back to the 1920s. Just months prior to the formation of Section 9 of the STMMRM in 1934, the Benito Juárez Miners union in Parral requested a hearing from the federal conciliation court to defend Alberto Falcón, a miner who had fallen victim to silicosis. Falcón's case was a typical one. ASARCO refused to pay severance packages to Falcón after he was no longer capable of working. The company argued that Falcón was already sick when he started working at ASARCO and denied that his sickness was due to employment as a miner given that he worked at the surface of the mine. The labor federation (CRT) countered that Falcón had worked inside the mines for more than a decade before being transferred to a surface job. It presented medical reports as evidence of the silicosis contracted by working inside the mines. The Conciliation Court ruled in his favor and Falcón was awarded the entire severance amount of \$1,606.50. The resolution took a bit over a year, but Falcón received what the law established.¹⁹ The collective contract guaranteed that Falcón would get a severance package, and the courts enforced the obligations stipulated in that contract. As a result, workers like Falcón received tangible benefits, extremely important in a community comprised mostly of workers. The fact that ASARCO

¹⁸ Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and the Revolution in Mexico, 1850-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 232-233.

¹⁹ Folder containing the file of Alberto Falcón vs ASARCO, 1934/AHMP.

would attempt to deny basic rights in a case involving silicosis, which was a virtual death sentence, went a long way in building loyalties along class lines. Although labor federations and unions in the mining area used the courts extensively, as the Falcón case shows, it took pressure from workers and their representatives to wrest concessions and keep government officials actively on their side. Labor federations possessed more influence than individual unions, and throughout the 1930s, labor federations gradually increased their political and economic influence throughout Mexico.

Immediately after its formation, Section 11 notified ASARCO that the contract negotiated by the previous local union was invalid because the majority of workers did not agree to it. This was not a condemnation of the contract signed by the previous unions as much as it was a reaffirmation of the newly increased power that the National Miners' Union brought to the local sections. The newly formed National Miners Union sought to ensure that ASARCO recognized that more militant demands could be expected from the new alliance being created across Mexico. National Miners' Union Federal Secretary, and a Communist,²⁰ Agustín Guzmán informed the company that "Vicente Guerrero" did not have "a true majority of workers," and that "despite the fact that the contract was fair, it lacked collective responsibility." In any case, the union cancelled the contract. The National Miners' Union announced that it represented "the majority of workers in this company," and that the former "Vicente Guerrero" local is now "extinct." Noting that the price of silver worldwide had recovered but that this had not benefitted workers of the mining centers, they demanded that a percentage of the profits be distributed among workers, "who are the producers." The miners' federation also informed ASARCO that Section 9 had the right to hire, that the "conditions for hiring must not be below those stipulated

²⁰ Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 36

in the existing contract,” and that “it must be done as a fair measure as the establishment of those prerogatives and conditions that have already been negotiated as irrefutable precedent in other ASARCO operations throughout Mexico.”²¹ In short, the national miners’ union made it clear that it controlled the hiring process and that it demanded standardization of wages and other benefits in all ASARCO operations.

This exchange shows a determination to challenge ASARCO even when a collective contract with them already existed. This challenge to ASARCO needs highlighting since the smelting giant had, for centuries, never acquiesced to labor’s demands when an existing contract was still valid. The letter also demonstrates the union’s cognizance of the global political economy and the argument that workers should benefit from the recovery of the price of silver. The STMMRM demanded an evaluation and implementation of the wage scale, which was also annexed from the previous contract. In the meanwhile, the union demanded a complete halt to all kinds of readjustments or new hires, the implementation of a wage scale, and a halt to layoffs until the rules were set to permit this. Moreover, Section 9 contested ASARCO’s efforts to divide the union by demanding recognition as the official representative of workers in the Chihuahuan plant.²²

The Popular Front era allowed Section 11 and 9 to continuously rely on the courts to protect their contracts. Several examples can serve to illustrate. On January 10, 1935, Section 11 in Santa Barbara again requested the establishment of the local conciliation courts in behalf of Nazario Barrera, who was laid off by the Compañía Minera Fundidora y Afinadora de Monterrey. The federal government intervened right away and set up the federal conciliation

²¹ Secretary of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana, Section 11, Nicolás Arellano to ASARCO and its superintendent, P.B. Lord, May 15, 1934, box number 1934, Archivo Municipal de Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as 1934/AMSB.

²² Secretary of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana, Section 11, Nicolas Arellano to ASARCO and its superintendent, P.B. Lord, May 15, 1934, 1934/AMSB.

courts to reinstate Barrera.²³ On November 18, 1936, Jesus Najera, Secretary of Section 9 in Parral, sent a letter to Jesús Sierra, the federal government's mediator, thanking him for the most recent verdict in favor of the widow of Ceferino Torres, a former union member who received \$1,123.00 for the wrongful death of her husband.²⁴ On December 24, 1937, Section 11 in Santa Barbara denounced the hiring of contractors not approved by the union bargained contract. The regional delegate of the National Miners' Union immediately sent a letter to the Labor Department in Mexico City asking them to put an end to this practice.²⁵

Contracts in one sector could also provide support for other workers in the area. The Miners' Union, for example, supported bakers, which allowed the latter to successfully negotiate with business owners and operators in the mining district. In its defense of the bakers, union leaders argued that capital's division of labor was its most effective mechanism for preventing radical pro-labor changes. The following pronouncement by the Miners' Union in 1930 shows support for the bakers and for the idea of collectively bargained contracts as a crucial component of this cross-union solidarity. Toribio Reyes, secretary of the Miners' Union, wrote that the union members, "after listening to our fellow bakers," were "driven to support the fair efforts by the Bakers' Unions that are doing this to fulfill their duty as organized workers." Reyes closed the letter by announcing that "this miners' union supports the actions of our fellow workers and will be forced not to recognize the actions of those that are betraying their fellow workers by unconditionally serving capital and intending to divide."²⁶ Reyes' use of the term "capital" to

²³ Case folder of Nazario Barrera against Compañía Minera Fundidora y Afinadora de Monterrey, January 10, 1935, found in 1935/Conciliación/AMSB.

²⁴ Secretary of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana, Section 9, Silverio Sierra, to Jesus Sierra, federal mediator, found in box number 1936, Archivo Historico Municipal de Parral, hereafter referred to as, 1936/AHMP.

²⁵ Tito Herrera, regional representative of the National Miners' Unions to the Federal Labor Department, December 24, 1937, found in 1937/minas/AMSB.

²⁶ Toribio Reyes Secretary of the Sindicato de Trabajadores Mineros "Benito Juárez" to Joaquin Aguirre the mayor of Parral, , July 8, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

identify adversaries demonstrates the influence class perspectives had in shaping the behavior of workers and unions alike, especially in the Miners' Union. Furthermore, in this manifesto, the miners responded to the interests of other workers, not just themselves. In its condemnation of "serving capital," the miners asserted a class awareness in the quest for a contract; it illustrates the extent of change in the identities of post-revolutionary miners in the Hidalgo Mining District. This transformation reveals itself again through the sense of solidarity that the miners expressed towards the bakers.

Bakers relied on the municipal and state-wide courts to enforce contracts even before Cárdenas' pro-labor regime came to power as there was not a national bakers union. Even the most radical unions, including the Bakers' Union, used the conciliation system. Bakers' historian Robert Weis has shown that bakers "were among the most radical and largest contingent of the post-revolutionary movement."²⁷ They were one of the original organizations which came out of the previously discussed Casa del Obrero Mundial, and they had significant anarchist tendencies. Bakers in the Hidalgo mining district were known for their radicalism. In Parral, the "Ignacio Zaragoza" bakers' union was formed on October 4, 1920, and located the Juan Rangel Street in downtown Parral. This made the bakers one of the first and only unions to acquire a space in which to congregate, and evidently they used it to promote radical visions of what the revolution should bring to all workers.

The bakers belonged to the national CROM labor federation throughout the 1920s, but adhered to the more radical CRT when the latter was created in 1933. Bakers had joined anarchist federations in large numbers after the 1910-1911 Revolution, but that did not preclude

²⁷ Robert Weis, *Bakers and Basques: A Social History of Bread in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 7.

their acceptance of government's intrusion.²⁸ Bakers in mining districts followed the path of other bakers' unions, including those in Mexico City, who combined radicalism with political alliances formed to secure contract enforcement. The fact that one of the unions with the most radical pedigree among workers nationally accepted local officials' role as mediators of labor conflicts indicates that they felt the alliance with the state would not diminish their quest for expanding workers' power. The bakers in turn pressured local officials to force owners to comply with the law.

In 1930, when the bakery owners refused regulations submitted by the union, the *Sindicato de Panaderos*, Ignacio Zaragoza called on the mayor of Parral to form a "local conciliation board to solve the conflict between some members of the union and the owners of local bakers [stores]." Citing the "current labor code," the mayor in turn appointed José Reyes as an owners' representative, ordering him to show up at the municipal offices at an appointed time, recognizing that he could pressure this particular owner to comply.²⁹ In 1930, when a rival Bakers' Union, formed by bakery owners, was established in Parral, the CROM denounced the rival union as a potential threat to worker unity and demanded that local officials take sides. Other unions, such as the mechanics' and chauffeurs' unions, expressed solidarity with the bakers as well. The mechanics' union pressured the Mayor of Parral, Joaquín Aguirre, who wrote to assure them that "this presidency is willing to support, within the limits of the law, the necessary assistance to the *Sindicato de Panaderos* Ignacio Zaragoza so that the conflict regarding the collective contract will be solved satisfactorily."³⁰ With this solidarity and as the

²⁸ Weis, *Bakers and Basques*, 100.

²⁹ Joaquín Aguirre, Mayor of Parral, to José A. Reyes, owner of a local bakery, July 8, 1930, 1930/sindicatos/AMSB.

³⁰ Joaquín Aguirre, Mayor of Parral, to Cartulo Ayala, Secretary of the *Sindicato de Choferes y Mecanicos del Distrito Hidalgo*, July 9, 1930, 1930/sindicatos/AMSB.

threat of a strike developed and local officials began to put pressure on business owners, the bakers signed a contract and the rival union was removed.³¹

The Parral mayor's response was consistent with most of the local officials' actions when it came to organized workers in the district throughout the latter part of the 1920s and the 1930s. In 1935, the Bakers' Union was still adhering to these strategies when it asked for assistance from local officials, while holding out the threat to strike; once again the bakers successfully pressured local officials to assign a business owner to represent the bakery owners and this eventually forced the rest of the area's business owners to sign the contract. Mediation resulted from the Bakers' militancy and capacity to mobilize their members to strike. Thus local authorities had to act or risk radicalizing them even further. In Santa Barbara, Lorenzo Magallanes of the "Benito Juárez" Bakers' Union also requested conciliation courts, especially in the late 1930s.³² More often than not, workers in the district found support from local officials, as well as federal officials, at least up until 1940. Workers' success in the court system during the 1930s caught the attention of the United States. In the U.S. consular report of June 1936, the American representative noted, "Labor continues to win practically all disputes going before the government authorities."³³

Local officials assisted workers by making sure owners and operators respected contracts, especially under Mayor Gabriel Chávez's tenure (1932-1933), and under the administration of Valente Chacón Baca (1933-1934).³⁴ The Chihuahuan governorship, controlled by the Quevedo family, also supported workers' establishment of collective contracts in the mining district. The

³¹ *La Voz de Chihuahua*, July 1-16, 1930.

³² Lorenzo Magallanes, Secretary of the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos "Benito Juárez," to Jesus Sierra, President of the Junta de Conciliación de Arbitraje, 1936-1938/AHMP

³³ Lee. R. Blohm, Labor Report, May, 1936, American Council in Chihuahua City, United States National Archives, College Park Maryland, record group 84.3, hereafter referred to as USNARG 84.3, 5/1936/ACCC.

³⁴ Charles E. Hershberger, "The Death of Borunda Alcalde of Ciudad Juárez: Chihuahuan Politics During the 1930s," *Arizona and the West* 8, no. 3 (Autumn 1966): 219.

defense of collectively bargained negotiations continued after Quevedo left the governor's office in 1936 and Gustavo Talamantes replaced him. After a decade of political turnover, a consistent policy to support miners against the global behemoth, ASARCO, had developed very clearly under Quevedo and Talamantes, who were also the first two individuals to finish their gubernatorial terms after years of political instability. Workers in the Hidalgo Mining District had, therefore, friends in the political arena, but only if they remained organized. Workers' use of the federal conciliation courts during the Cárdenas administration emboldened them because it increased their power vis-a-vis capital. Overall, organized labor's use of local and federal courts in the mining region to ensure respect of collective contracts demonstrates that these behaviors responded to class interests since the essence of these contracts remains collective in nature. These local histories also contribute to the ongoing discussion in Mexican labor historiography concerning the unforeseen consequences of accepting the state as an arbitrator. The experiences of workers in the Hidalgo and Ciudad Juárez areas of Chihuahua suggest that the outcomes of union negotiations with local, state and federal arbitration tribunals varied according to particular circumstances and, above all, the combination of combative unionism and the existence of sympathetic or politically weak authorities at all levels of government.

Ciudad Juárez

In Ciudad Juárez, workers used collective contracts to exercise a degree of control over the workplace. Collective contracts gave weaker unions comprised of less profitable trades the ability to exert a degree of control in the workplace and beyond. The struggles to ensure the fulfillment of collectively bargained contracts augmented workers' power: workers in the electric, textile, and baking industries utilized these contracts to eventually organize strike

movements in the 1930s. This section will focus on the efforts of the Cámara Sindical Obrera (CSO), the Gran Liga Textil Socialista (textile union), and the Bakers' Unions "Union de Panaderos y Similares," part of the CSO, the most radical organization on the border, and the Sindicato de Panaderos Libres, which was affiliated with the CROM.

After the Federal Labor Law of 1931, unions in Ciudad Juárez strove to master all of the various rules that could give more power to workers. For example, Juárez's bartender and waiters' union, members of the CSO federation, demonstrated their expertise in handling labor laws and their ability to navigate the courts as illustrated in a 1932 case against a local brewery. Union officials complained to Juárez Mayor Quevedo about the refusal of Tomás F. Blanco, owner of Cía Cervecera de C. Juárez, S.A., and Israel Chavira, manager of Cía, Cervecera's ancillary Juárez Beer Garden, to abide by a contract's provisions. From the union's perspective, the labor law made it clear that these workers should fall under the provisions of the general contract for the establishment. The union objected that the company would not comply with the agreement established by the Municipal Conciliation Board in an earlier case between the 'Cía. Cervecera de C. Juárez, S.A.' and the union in which the company had agreed to abide by the collective contract, including the provision of services to the business' Beer Garden. But because workers were already doing the job under a collective contract that the representatives of the Cervecera, through its dealers, refused to sign, workers appealed to the Municipal Conciliation Board to implement the agreement forcing the company to abide by the law. The courts forced the owners to abide by the contract and its stipulations.³⁵

³⁵ Sindicato de Cantineros, Meseros y Similares (CSO) to mayor of Ciudad, Juárez, Jesús Quevedo, April 8, 1932, box number 1932, folder 650, Archivo Municipal de Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, hereafter referred to as 1932/650/AMCJ and Jesús Quevedo, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, to the CSO, June 12, 1934, 1932/650/AMCJ.

Unions belonging to the CROM, like Juárez-based Sindicato de Empleados de Hoteles and the Restaurantes y Cantinas (SECHRC), are often considered more collaborationist; most consider that the CROM continuously collaborated with business and authorities alike and prevented radical action by their members.³⁶ But in Ciudad Juárez, the local unions belonging to the CROM mobilized their members to defend the sanctity of collective contracts in the early 1930s. At the local level, workers began to mobilize in defense of the contracts before the federal boards.

This unexpected shift in the behavior of supposedly conservative unions might have been anticipated earlier because by 1930 local unions representing employees from hotels, bars, and restaurants had rejected a tame approach, instead threatening direct action when contract violations took place. In April 1930, constituent affiliates of the FSON, or the “Unión de Empleados de Hoteles, Restaurants y Cantinas,” and the “Unión de Filarmonicos,” had struggled for two months with the bar and cabaret owners of the city in order to create a stable set of collective contracts. These unions in the entertainment sector wrote to Mayor Gustavo Flores: “Although until this date we have not been able to reach an agreement despite efforts through diplomatic means, we do not want to make use of the last resource which is given to us by the active Ley Federal del Trabajo in our state, which is to strike; we don’t want to go to that extreme, so with all our respect and with your attention, we turn to you asking for your cooperation, to avoid, if possible, reaching the last extreme, which is harmful to both parties.”³⁷ The CROM, as shown above, did not hesitate to strike, if necessary to protect its workers, further showing a rift between Mexico City CROM officials and local cadres in Juárez. Unions belonging to the CROM organized cross-union support for their cause in an effort to pressure the

³⁶ Clark, *La Organización Obrera en México*, 89-109.

³⁷ Isidro Prieto, Secretary of the Unión de Empleados de Hoteles, Restaurantes y Cantinas, to Gustavo Flores, mayor, April 24, 1930, 1930/676.1147/AMCJ.

mayor to intervene. CROM's unions gathered in the central plaza of Juárez to demonstrate against the performance of some authorities who "are enemies of organized labor" and from there walked along major avenues, finishing up at the building of the Unión de Cantineros on Abraham Gonzales Street.³⁸

Owners and business operators understood that these contracts affected their economic interests and undermined their presumptive authority over workers. As a result, contracts generated a considerable level of animosity among owners and business operators. For example, the Unión de Filarmónicos (Musicians Union) de Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua denounced its working conditions with language appealing to nationalism, thus condemning foreign employers that did not respect Mexican law and regulations. In 1933, the union condemned the attitude of Mr. Hugo Bonaguidi, owner of the 'Hugo's Café' night club (Río Grande) who refused to sign the collective contract, and instead answered back in an abusive and arrogant way to workers, and apparently insulted authorities by arguing that "not even the President of the Republic or any labor code will force him to sign a collective contract that was presented for him to study." Trying to put a stop to this behavior, he pushed a group of workers out onto the street.³⁹

The tone used by organized labor in their manifestos and contractual language grew more contentious and demanding as the 1930s progressed. Unions directly addressed these concerns to the owners by demanding "compliance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement." The loaders' union, the Sindicato de Cargadores de Almacenes y Similares, argued in 1935 that its contract stated that only union members could work in the Maderería Río Grande, a transport company. Thus, it was inserting itself into a fundamental relationship that businesses considered private.

³⁸ Esteban Flores, Secretary of the Federación de Sindicatos del Norte, to Baltasar Adame mayor, May 16, 1931, 1931/692.1191/AMCJ.

³⁹ Unión de Filarmónicos de Ciudad Juárez to the Municipal Conciliatory Court, April 25, 1933, 1933/735.1302/AMCJ.

For the union, the closed shop meant that it could ensure that the contract was enforced. A closed shop also meant that employers could not intimidate workers as easily because they would not be able to control firing procedures unless workers committed an act that violated the bargaining contract.⁴⁰

Workers sought closed shops, control of layoffs, and other provisions to control the workplace. Even unskilled workers realized the importance of having a closed shop. The ability to control hiring increased federations' power since the ability to control the hiring of non-unionized labor forces provided labor conglomerates with more ammunition to present in cases regarding unionization. A 1935 case by the Industrial Workers' Union, a CSO affiliate, against a local beer company that fired a worker without cause illustrates this phenomenon. The local brewery, Compañía Arrendataria de la Cervecería de C. Juárez, S.A., had enduring connections with local authorities, particularly the Quevedo clan, a political family who owned various bars in Juárez.⁴¹ The fact that the union confronted elite political power in the area in this case illuminates critical choices made by organized labor, including the decision to openly confront business elites' political connections. This boldness coincided with Cárdenas' entrance into national politics, demonstrating growing confidence by organized labor that had no precedent in the area.

Labor's efforts to establish collectively bargained contracts caused a reaction from political and economic elites. Business owners' and operators' strategies revolved around delaying the labor conciliatory process at the local level and taking the cases to the state level where perhaps more sympathetic officials would determine the outcome. This usually involved a

⁴⁰ Sindicato de Cargadores de Almacenes y Similares to Maderería Rio Grande, September 30, 1935, 1935/753.1347/AMCJ.

⁴¹ Unión Sindical de Obreros Industriales de Ciudad Juárez (CSO) to José Quevedo, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, October 2, 1935, 1935/753.1347/AMCJ.

long conflict that could take a year to resolve. This tactic of delaying the proceedings occurred in the case of the La Gran Liga Textil Socialista, the union representing workers at the Textile Mills Commission and Co. in Juárez.

La Gran Liga, created on March 26, 1929, originally was affiliated with the CROM, but quickly changed allegiance once the CSO, more radical than the CROM, was formed in 1931.⁴² Throughout the 1930s, the Liga had a history of conflict with the Textile Mills Commission and Co. due to the latter's refusal to accept a collective contract. In 1930, the company laid off workers in violation of the contract and then locked out the workers. The union secretary, Antonio Castro, wrote to seek assistance from the local arbitration tribunals as part of a strategy to defend collective contracts and to subvert the mill's anti-labor policies. The company, represented by a Mr. Murguía, apparently the company owner, had argued that the local arbitration board had no right to rule on the issue because the local boards lacked legal standing. To justify his argument, Murguía argued that the municipality had the authority to decide the legality of the board only, but did not have the power to make a decision about specific cases.⁴³

In the La Liga conflict, owners' delaying tactics did not succeed since the board agreed with the workers and announced that the "Municipal Board will give a verdict of legality or illegality of the business lockout."⁴⁴ In 1932, La Liga again used the courts to force the Textile Mills Co. to honor its collective contract, and threatened to strike if the company failed to comply. The latter defended itself in the tribunals and was granted a temporary injunction; however, La Liga rapidly demanded the nullification of this injunction and the company was

⁴² *El Continental*, June 6, 1931.

⁴³ Antonio Castro, Secretary of the Gran Liga Socialista, to Jesús Quevedo, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, September 22, 1930, 1930/679/AMCJ.

⁴⁴ José Borunda, president of the local conciliatory court addressed "To all involved parties", September 18, 1930, 1930/663/AMCJ.

forced to recognize the contract.⁴⁵ In 1934, La Liga again requested the intervention of the local conciliation courts against the Textile Mills Co. for damages incurred by worker, Francisco Martínez, and invoked articles 460, 500, and 501 delineating workers' compensation of the federal labor law to justify their demand.⁴⁶ In 1935, La Liga charged the Textile Mills Co. and the company union, "Industrial Rio Bravo," for infringing on the existing contract by failing to recognize La Liga as the only official union. The case went all the way to the federal conciliation courts once the local courts could not resolve the issue. This decision automatically placed the federation representing La Liga, the CSO, and the CRT in the state, which was the Cámara de Obreros y Campesinos del Estado de Chihuahua, as workers' representatives.⁴⁷ Months later, La Liga again requested the intervention of the local conciliation courts to denounce the unjustified layoff of Francisco Martínez, which demonstrates that La Liga prevailed over the other union.⁴⁸ La Liga's ability to take the Textile Mills Co. to court and win increased the union's power. Collective contracts and the conciliation courts allowed La Liga to defend its status as the official union. La Liga forced owners to negotiate collectively, nullified injunctions, and ensured that their workers received the benefits accorded by the law.

As in the mining district, the bakers in Juárez were also known for their reliance on courts to increase their power. The bakers were represented by the CROM's "Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos de Ciudad Juárez," and by the CSO's "Unión Sindical de Panaderos y Similares." Throughout the 1930s, these two organizations worked in concert to increase Bakers' power through alliances, which allowed them to present a united front against business owners

⁴⁵ Gonzalo Molina, Secretary General of La Gran Liga Socialista, to mayor of Juárez, Jesús Quevedo, January 27, 1932, 1933/731/AMCJ.

⁴⁶ Antonio Cuevas, Secretary of the La Gran Liga Socialista, to Daniel Quiroz Reyez, mayor of Juárez, August 8, 1934, 1934/1323/AMCJ.

⁴⁷ Manuel Pineda, Secretary of the Cámara de Sindicatos Obreros y Campesinos del Estado De Chihuahua (representing La Gran Liga), to Daniel Reyez Quiroz, mayor of Juárez, May 28, 1935, 1935/1349/AMCJ.

⁴⁸ Antonio Castro, Secretary of the Gran Liga Socialista, Daniel Quiroz, to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, December 4, 1935, 1935/1323/AMCJ.

and operators. Again, the CROM in Juárez defended collective contracts through the use of local tribunals much like the other federations in the area.

The radical Unión Sindical de Panaderos y Similares, part of the CSO, and the Cámara Sindical Unitaria de México, a known Communist organization, which had as its letterhead the slogan, ‘Against Capitalist Oppression: The United Peasant and Workers Front,’ sought to use the Conciliation Courts early in the decade. On October 8, 1929, Miguel Oaxaca, the Bakers’ representative, threatened to strike if bakery owners continued to reject recognition of the Unión de Panaderos y Similares as the official union representing the majority of workers laboring in bakeries on the border.⁴⁹ The threat of a strike forced local owners to recognize the union weeks later.⁵⁰ At the same time, even the most self-proclaimed radical unions seemed not to fear negotiate with the state or to prefer direct action rather than work within the state. Instead they followed the legal mechanisms available to them to resolve labor conflicts peacefully, as the following case demonstrates: “The Bakers’ Union of the city, according to the Ley Federal del Trabajo active in the state, which in chapter 13, article 144, gives us the right, request of you a Conciliation Municipal Court formed by workers and employers. It is left to your judgment for its establishment.”⁵¹ But again, when collaboration did not work, bakers acted. On August 28, 1934, the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos lifted the threat of an eventual city-wide strike only after owners accepted the new collective contract.⁵² This new strike threat took place four years after the previous strike threatened to stop bread production in the city. The local conciliation

⁴⁹ *El Continental*, October 8, 1929.

⁵⁰ *El Continental*, November 3, 1929.

⁵¹ Felipe Hernandez, Secretary of the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos de Ciudad Juárez, to Baltasar Adame, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, September 3, 1931, 1931/692.1190/AMCJ.

⁵² Secretary of the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos de Ciudad Juárez, Miguel Martinez, to mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Daniel Quiroz Reytez, August 28, 1934, 1934/1323/AMCJ.

court defended the contract by forcing owners to comply with the law but this would have never taken place if workers did not pressure the courts.

The municipal archives in Juárez provide evidence of many factors that led unions and federations to request assistance from conciliation courts; one was unjustified layoffs. This particular aspect of collective contracts generated significant tension between owners and workers since business owners and operators felt it was their managerial prerogative to hire and fire employees. But organized labor clearly felt it was their prerogative to control layoffs. This was the case when Máximo Montañez and Trinidad Olibares, from the “Sindicatos de Panaderos Obreros” (CROM), were fired from the La Espiga de Oro bakery. The union argued that it was without justifiable cause and without consideration of the requirements of the Federal Labor Law. The union immediately protested the unjustified layoffs by arguing that they would never have taken place if these contracts were honored.⁵³ The Bakers’ Union also requested intervention of arbitration tribunals when a business owner refused to pay his workers’ severance benefits. When the owner of the La Antigua bakery, Juan Gonzales, closed the business without giving his employees their severance packages guaranteed by law, the union immediately requested that the mayor, Jesús Quevedo, set up a hearing by the Municipal Conciliatory Court.⁵⁴

Bakery owners used the same tactics that the textile mills relied on to delay these procedures. Baltasar Adame, owner of the La Fama bakery, wrote to the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos, challenging the jurisdiction of the local conciliatory boards: “in view of the fact that the Labor Code has just been put in place throughout the country but still lacks confirmation by the Cámara Local de Diputados del Estado of the appropriate sanctions and clauses deemed

⁵³ Felipe Hernandez, Secretary of the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos de Ciudad Juárez, to mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Jesús Quevedo, March 16, 1932, 1932/1256/AMCJ.

⁵⁴ Manuel Torrero, Sindicato de Obreros y Panaderos de Ciudad Juárez, to Jesús Quevedo mayor of Ciudad Juárez, March 31, 1936, 1936/761.1369/AMCJ.

necessary, and as long as this does not happen we cannot take any steps regarding labor issues.”⁵⁵ These delays, although bothersome and lengthy in some cases, did not preclude workers from relying on the courts as an instrument to increase their power.

On January 2, 1936, the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos, citing articles 501 and 502 of the federal labor law, requested the establishment of the local conciliation courts for the unjustified layoff of Clicertio Velázquez by the owner of the Antigua bakery, Juan Gonzales.⁵⁶ On March 31, 1936, the owner of the Antigua closed the establishment without notifying his employees. As a result, on April 3, 1936, the Communist Cámara Unitaria del Trabajo in Ciudad Juárez sent a letter to the local Conciliatory Courts supporting the bakers of the local “Antigua” bakery over the violations they suffered as a result of actions by the Antigua owner, including the unjustified layoff of the entire workforce.⁵⁷

On May 27, 1936, the CSO demonstrated its power against bakery owners when the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos y Similares Libertad accused the bakery employers of violating the collective contract regarding issues of workplace control. The CSO made it clear that the contract stipulated that the unions had control over the price of bread. They also insisted on the “removal of the local inspector who has neglected his job and has made grave errors”⁵⁸ On May 25, 1936, the Bakers’ “Libertad” union demanded the removal of the local labor inspector in charge of bakers due to his inability to enforce the contract upon owners.⁵⁹ On February 20, 1938, the CROM and the CSO joined together and threatened to strike local bakery owners if “a

⁵⁵ Baltasar Adame, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, to Felipe Hernández, secretary of the Sindicato de Obreros y Panaderos de Ciudad Juárez, September 3, 1931, 1931/692.1190/AMCJ.

⁵⁶ Antonio Moreno, Secretary General of the Sindicato de Obreros Panaderos, to José Quevedo mayor of Ciudad Juárez, January 2, 1936, 1936/1369/AMCJ.

⁵⁷ Secretario general de la Cámara Unitaria del Trabajo de Ciudad Juárez, B. Palacios, to the local conciliation courts, April 3, 1936, 1936/AMCJ.

⁵⁸ Secretary general of the Cámara Sindical Obrera, Pedro Díaz, to José Quevedo, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, May 27, 1936, 1936/1374/AMCJ.

⁵⁹ Secretary of the Sindicato de Panaderos y Similares “Libertad”, to Jesús Molina, the interim mayor of Ciudad Juárez, May 25, 1936, 1936/1374/AMCJ.

new collective contract was not established.”⁶⁰ On February 24, the strike was averted once the bakers got a new contract.⁶¹

Conclusion

Collective contracts increased workers’ power. The usage of the courts, a product of the Revolution, allowed workers to enforce these contracts. The main source of conflict between organized labor and business owners and operators in Ciudad Juárez revolved around the issue of collective contracts.⁶² The struggle for collective bargaining rights in Ciudad Juárez and in the Hidalgo Mining District upended power hierarchies and pointed the way to a more radical direction for labor unions that used the new constitutional provisions. However, these provisions began to be asserted well before Lázaro Cárdenas came to power. The cases examined in this chapter show that workers’ utilized the local and federal Arbitration Courts to protect these contracts.

In some instances, contracts radicalized workers and this radicalization took place both on the border and with the miners in the Parral-Santa Barbara region. On the border, the rise of worker militancy generated a reaction from local political and economic elites that took a violent turn. And this response significantly weakened organized labor’s capacity for resistance when employers used force to in the internal processes of certain unions, especially those with a reputation for being combative. Chapter Four will examine how unions responded with direct action on the border and in the mining district.

⁶⁰ *El Continental*, February 20, 1938.

⁶¹ *El Continental*, February 24, 1938.

⁶² Manuel Pineda, Secretary of the Labor Federation to Dr. Daniel Reyes Quiroz, March 16, 1934, exhorting him to accept the invitation to attend the first state-wide labor congress due to the fact that that 80% of labor conflicts in the state came from Ciudad Juárez, and that the vast majority of them had to do with violations of collective contracts, 1934/1323/AMCJ.

CHAPTER 4: DIRECT ACTION AND CO-OPTATION

Throughout the 1930s, workers used strikes to pressure owners and operators into signing labor-friendly collective contracts, which allowed the former to dictate conditions in the workplace thus tilting the balance of power towards workers. For example, the Miners' Union forced the American Smelter and Refining Company (ASARCO) to sign new collective contracts in 1933, 1935, and 1937; threats and strikes preceded each new contract by Section 9 and 11 of Parral and Santa Barbara respectively. As shown in the previous chapter, these contracts increased workers' power because they allowed them to control crucial elements of the labor-capital relationship previously controlled by foreign interests, including the hiring hall, removal of foremen, and workers' compensation. In some instances, strikes turned radical once the Miners' Union demanded universal contracts throughout all ASARCO units in 1937. In Ciudad Juárez, the Electricians' efforts to force company operators into accepting the contract (1933-1938) turned radical when the union increased the scope of their demands to include taking away control of the means of production from local political and economic elites. Direct action in the workplace encouraged workers to undertake activities that threatened the power structures of crucial industries like mining and electricity generation. In the Hidalgo district, this union pressure forced elites to intervene in favor of workers in three cases where threats of strikes, thereby creating a form of hegemony coming from workers themselves. In Ciudad Juárez, by

contrast, there was no working class hegemonic process; political and economic elites used violence to control workers.¹

On the border, strikes exposed political and economic elites' lack of control over workers and delegitimized their authority. Moreover, the Electricians' demands turned radical and affected the economic and political interests of local elites, who responded with violence to defend themselves. In the mining district, local political and economic elites made sure the Miners' Union demands were met because it was in their best interest to do so, or risk further radicalization.

Workers' Power in Parral-Santa Barbara

Workers' power and potential for further radicalization in Parral-Santa Barbara showed in the frequency and magnitude of strikes, walkouts, boycotts, and other radical methods of labor resistance throughout the 1930s. As a response to this newfound radicalism among workers, local and state-wide authorities sided with workers in an effort to prevent them from radicalizing further.

The Transportation Workers' Union strike threat in 1930, illustrates the potential for radicalism in the early 1930s among workers in the district, since the strike threat responded to the needs of workers in other cities. The importance of these workers' actions lay in the fact that they transported the entire labor force throughout the various mines connecting Santa Barbara and Parral. In the absence of transport workers, mine workers could not get physically to the

¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), for a discussion of hegemony in the Mexican context, see Bortz, *Revolution within the Revolution*, 1-2 and Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

mines. This strike threat took place in February 1930, four years before the Cárdenas presidency, which shows that unions in the mining district relied on direct action to pressure local elites long before federal authorities supported unionized workers in most of their strikes. The union announced in a circular to the public, “We are forced to support our fellow workers from Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez, so we will suspend service for that reason in a show of protest. We are encouraging transportation owners to support this demand; otherwise we will remove their vehicles from the street.”² The union warned that if owners replaced them with non-union drivers, they would remove them forcibly. A day later, the union made the decision to strike. In doing so, they defied the pleas of the Chihuahua state governor, who had urged workers not to strike. This showed workers’ resolve to flout authority by supporting their fellow members of the working class against civil authorities’ attempt to temper their demands. Perhaps more notably, it shows workers’ willingness to strike before President Cárdenas’ support was available. Solidarity strikes like the one above took place throughout the district early in the 1930s. Such actions illustrate the level of unity obtained by workers who willingly risked their own security for the benefit of others, which made elites uneasy. Transportation workers’ threats of strike resonated across the community due to the crucial role they played in the local economy. However, their power and influence did not compare with that of the more than 4000 workers belonging to the two local Miners’ Unions in the district.

The “Benito Juárez” and “Vicente Guerrero” unions threatened to strike in 1933, before ASARCO ceded to workers’ demand for a new collective contract. In 1935 and 1937, after the formation of the National Miners’ union, Section 9 (Parral) and Section 11 (Santa Barbara) threatened to strike again if the company refused to sign new contracts. These threats forced

² Sindicato de Chóferes y Mecánicos del Distrito de Hidalgo to the public, February 16, 1930, box number 1930, Archivo Historico Municipal de Parral, Parral, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as 1930/AHMP.

ASARCO to renegotiate its existing collective contracts, which among other things, included raising workers' wages and ceding crucial aspects delineating control of the workplace. More notably, the unions' successes showed the community and the local elites that workers were able to rely on radicalism for the first time.

The first strike threat took place in 1933. The Cámara Regional del Trabajo (CRT), representing the "Benito Juárez" Miners' Union, voted to strike against ASARCO in Parral. The twelve hundred striking workers demanded an increase of twenty percent in their wages. The CRT argued that this demand was justified because a year earlier the federation had accepted a twenty percent reduction in wages corresponding to the decrease in the price of silver; however, now that silver prices had gone up, workers wanted to return to the wages paid prior to May 1932. The CRT in the "presence of 300 workers, the municipal authorities and the federal labor inspector approved the strike unanimously."³ Governor Rodrigo Quevedo intervened and personally led the workers' negotiations with ASARCO. When the corporation acquiesced, workers halted the strike threat.⁴

In 1934, miners' unions across Mexico founded the National Miners' Union in Pachuca, Hidalgo, with the presence of Section 9 and 11 as original founders. Their two locals represented over 4,000 workers. The National Miners' was a diverse organization, but most of the local sections had a long history of independence and use of direct action to pressure elites, including the sections in Sonora, Guanajuato, Chihuahua, and Nuevo León.⁵ The Miners abandoned the

³ Cámara Regional del Trabajo (CRT) to the president of Mexico, Abelardo Rodríguez, October 23, 1933, in Grupo Documental: Abelardo Rodríguez, Vol. 199, Exp. 561.4128.31, Archivo General de la Nación, located in Mexico City, hereafter referred to as 199/561.4128.31/AGN.

⁴ Gabriel Chávez, mayor of Parral to President Abelardo Rodríguez, October 27, 1933, Grupo Documental: Abelardo Rodríguez, 199/561.4128.31/AGN.

⁵ Michael Gonzales, "U.S. Copper Companies, the Mine Workers' Movement, and the Mexican Revolution," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (1996): 506, Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in*

CTM in 1936, after the latter's co-optation by conservative labor leaders, but the Miners' gladly embraced the Popular Front both at the local and national level.⁶ The Popular Front increased local sections' power once federal authorities supported them in return for labor's acceptance of their place in the economic structure as subordinate to capital. However, at the national level and in some sections, some of the unions' leaders' rhetoric, and in some instances, actual demands bordered on radicalism.⁷ If unchecked, this radicalism could have spilled out of control and exposed the elites' lack of hegemony. Again, Section 9 (Parral) and Section 11 (Santa Barbara) engaged in various strike movements against ASARCO throughout the 1930s, which brought workers tangible benefits. Governor Quevedo realized the potential for further radicalization, so he immediately intervened in favor of workers by enforcing existing labor laws. This placated workers. Miguel Felix, one of the original founders of Section 11 in Santa Barbara, explains that workers "focused on our rights provided by the Constitution." When asked about ASARCO's place, he recalled "we were not going to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."⁸ Felix, despite his revolutionary spirit, was not able to perceive a world without ASARCO.

Nevertheless, conflicts persisted and while the aggressive tone also increased, workers' demands never questioned the capital-labor relationship. For example, another strike threat took place during October in 1934. Section 9 (Parral), took advantage of a strike threat from workers of the ASARCO-owned AVALOS smelting company, located in the state's capital, to propose changes to the existing collective contract previously agreed to by both sides. Section 11 in Santa

Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and the Revolution in Mexico (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 34-49.

⁶ Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995), 90.

⁷ Carr, *Marxism and communism in twentieth century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 32, and Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterey*, 179.

⁸ Author's interview with Miguel Felix, one of the original founders of Section 11 (Santa Barbara) of the Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, tape recording in Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, , July 16, 2010, in author's possession.

Barbara followed suit. Workers demanded an increase in their wages ranging from forty to seventy percent and the construction of housing for 1,800 workers.⁹

ASARCO was perplexed at the new militancy of workers, despite the fact that workers' demands never questioned ASARCO to begin with. The company objected that "these increases would significantly affect the yearly company's profits and the cost of housing construction would be in the millions of pesos."¹⁰ Finding no sympathy from local and state-wide authorities, ASARCO appealed to the federal level, requesting help from President Abelardo Rodríguez, whom they thought, might sympathize with the company. The President had issued support for "harmonious" relationships throughout his brief tenure. ASARCO's legal representative wrote: "We beg you to intervene so that workers will stop their strike threat, since workers hastily acted by giving us only a 16-day deadline. This contravenes your wishes regarding the avoidance of labor agitation disrupting the harmony between capital and labor."¹¹ The fact that ASARCO requested presidential assistance before the Cárdenas regime took office means that foreign corporations expected assistance from the federal government against workers' direct action. The entrance of Cárdenas into national politics changed this presumption.

During the 1934 strike threat however, ASARCO found that the federal government's role in the negotiations was minimal; state governor Quevedo's political and economic clout trumped the national government's authority in the state. Once Quevedo intervened, the conflict ended. The negotiations also illustrate that ASARCO failed to ensure the assistance of local or state authorities to fend off workers' increasing power. ASARCO eventually accepted the workers' demands. This outcome also demonstrates local and state high-ranking officials'

⁹ Ricardo Mora, legal representative of ASARCO, to President Abelardo Rodríguez, September 11, 1934, Grupo Documental: Abelardo Rodríguez, 199/561.4128.31/AGN.

¹⁰ Ricardo Mora, legal representative of ASARCO, to President Abelardo Rodríguez, September 11, 1934, Grupo Documental: Abelardo Rodríguez, 199/561.4128.31/AGN.

¹¹ Ibid.

hostility to ASARCO and other foreign transnationals in the mining region, a stance which evidently brought them popular support. More notably, by merely enforcing existing labor codes, governor Quevedo effectively placed himself as an integral part of the negotiation, which in turn deradicalized workers who did not feel the need for further militancy once they had the support of high-ranking officials.

In this particular conflict, the presence of Governor Quevedo as arbitrator convinced workers to backtrack on their strike threat. A telegram details workers' intentions to end the strike threat once the authorities named an arbitrator whom they thought was favorable to workers' demands: "We inform you that workers have proposed the following arbitrators to avoid movement of strike, the President, the chief federal labor inspector, or General Quevedo."¹² The 1933 and 1934 threats of strike against ASARCO are two examples of how high-ranking officials intervened in labor conflicts on behalf of workers. In both instances, these conflicts ended when ASARCO agreed to renegotiate the existing contract with Quevedo as arbitrator. The outcome placed state governor Quevedo as one of the beneficiaries because it allowed him to build popular support by picking and excluding labor federations in a way that would advance his political career. However, pressure from organized workers from the mining sector, and the Cárdenas pro-labor presidency, also forced the governor to acquiesce. Ideally, he would have never ceded to workers, considering his conservative credentials.¹³ His pro-labor initiatives in the mining district showed President Cárdenas that he supported his labor policies and his overall mandate. As mentioned previously, Quevedo was a political and military ally of former President Calles, Cárdenas's main political adversary, so after December 1934, he needed

¹² Agustín Guzmán, secretary general of the National Miners' Union, to Javier Gaxiola, chief of staff of President Abelardo Rodríguez in Grupo Documental: Abelardo Rodríguez, 1931, 199/561.4128.31/AGN.

¹³ Nicole Mottier, "Drug Gangs and Politics in Ciudad Juárez, 1928-1936," *Estudios Mexicanos* 25, no. 1 (2009): 43

to demonstrate his loyalty to the new president. Therefore, labor peace in the mining districts remained a priority, and while conflicts continued, they never reached radical proportions.

On December 14, 1934, General Quevedo sent a telegram to Cárdenas explaining that miners in San Francisco del Oro, located between Parral and Santa Barbara, had threatened to strike against ASARCO if the latter did not match workers' wages with those of the rest of their operations in the state. Quevedo highlighted the fact that a strike would affect "2,500 organized workers...The company claims that it is losing money, but in my view and that of other experts in the mining business, this might not be the case, thus, I will personally go, or name a representative to see if the company accepts and we can avoid the strike."¹⁴ The strike was averted and ASARCO ceded to workers' demands again, including having to match wages among all its labor force in the state.¹⁵ The outcome demonstrates that Quevedo's intervention on behalf of workers placated them to the point that it prevented them from striking. This shows workers' power because their pressure forced Quevedo to act. But, it also shows the shrewdness of Quevedo and his political operatives at the local level. They intervened in a pre-emptive way to stop the conflict from escalating in 1933, 1935 and 1937.

Parral Mayors Gabriel Chávez (1932-1933) and Valente Chacón Baca (1934-1935) supported local federations in the majority of their strike movements against ASARCO and other businesses in the Hidalgo Mining District by taking part in the negotiations with the smelting giant and by pressuring Quevedo to intervene. The support of local and state-wide government officials in the Hidalgo Mining District unequivocally assisted in ensuring that the majority of threats and actual strikes, especially those against ASARCO, did not spill out of control.

¹⁴ General Rodrigo Quevedo, Governor of Chihuahua to President Lázaro Cárdenas, December 14, 1934, Grupo Documental: Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Volumen 394, Expediente 432.11.3c, hereafter referred to as 394/432.11.3c/AGN.

¹⁵ *El Paso Times*, December 21, 1933.

Officials intervened to prevent unrest when workers at AVALOS (located in the state's capital, Chihuahua City, north of the Parral-Santa Barbara mining area) first threatened and then went on strike. This conflict north of the district, brought the two local sections into another clash against ASARCO. The strike movement (1935-1937) by ASARCO unionized workers throughout Chihuahua remains the largest strike movement in the state during this century because it galvanized thousands of workers in different locales against the smelting giant. This strike movement started as a solidarity strike in support of AVALOS' workers. Mobilizing thousands of workers willing to confront this industrial behemoth shows the potential for radicalization. As workers engaged in these direct actions by the thousands, they set forth a new definition of rights and ideals as a component of the Revolution. This conflict resonated throughout the other mining districts in Chihuahua once all of ASARCO units throughout the state also threatened to strike against the company if the latter continued to refuse negotiations for new collective contracts, which led to a threat of a general strike.¹⁶ Anti-imperialist sentiment during and after the Revolution made ASARCO an easy target as well, which allowed local officials to posture pro-labor sympathies and still keep their conservative credentials by appealing to nationalism. Silverio Sierra, secretary of the miners' union Section 9 in Parral, stated clearly and directly in a letter to Parral Mayor Valente Chacón Baca that "the intransigence of American Smelting and Refining Company towards the AVALOS workers forced them to radicalize their movement."¹⁷ Chacón Baca, despite his conservative credentials as a Quevedista, supported workers with the ultimate purpose of containing them. Here we can see that what started out as a local issue turned into a state-wide movement to establish new contracts throughout the state and eventually the nation. This situation would have exposed

¹⁶ *La Voz de Chihuahua*, December 7, 1934.

¹⁷ Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana, Section 9, Silverio Sierra to the mayor of Parral, Valente Chacón Baca, February 19, 1935, 1935/AHMP.

elites' lack of control and support of workers in the eyes of the Cárdenas regime. Workers' consciousness of the need to act as a united working class was growing in this period, and instead of reacting with violence, political elites supported workers and defused an already tense situation.¹⁸

Political elites sided with labor in the Hidalgo region not out of an inherent sympathy towards their cause once the Revolution ended, but because they realized that the miners' use of direct actions could easily exceed the reach of their control and become politically damaging. This potential for radicalism among workers existed since the Miners' Union had sections throughout Mexico with the ability to significantly affect a crucial industry of the Mexican economy. Thus, their source of labor and their high degree of unity made them dangerous. Parral Mayor, Valente Chacón Baca, responded to the threats of strike by making it clear to the miners that "this municipality over which I preside has resolved to express to you that in response to the exchange of ideas that it had with the union, local authorities sympathize with the agreement taken by miners of this locality to strike against ASARCO."¹⁹ This favorable response to the strike movement illustrates how local elites gave up some things in order to keep miners from turning further to the left.

Local authorities did more than offer verbal support; they backed it up with actions designed to support the strike in other ways. Furthermore, the mayor added that he would provide the necessary guarantees to ensure the success of the movement by agreeing to a total closing of bars and billiard halls in Parral for as long as the strike continued. Critically, the mayor "ordered that each one of the local government employees assist with one day's wages

¹⁸ Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana, Section 9, Silverio Sierra to the mayor of Parral, Valente Chacón Baca, February 19, 1935, 1935/AHMP.

¹⁹ Valente Chacón Baca, mayor of Parral, to Silverio Sierra the Secretario General de la Sección 9 del Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana, June 13, 1935, 1935/AHMP.

from their monthly checks; we have also requested monetary assistance from the local aldermen as well as the support and cooperation of local merchants so that they will not raise prices of first-necessity items.”²⁰ Given that ASARCO paid significant taxes to the local government, which was critical to the municipality’s daily functioning, local officials’ positions need highlighting. Officials’ support for this strike went a long way in expanding the unions’ power in the area, since it left ASARCO with no other recourse than to agree to workers’ demands throughout the state. Their previous allies, who were local authorities, now supported workers.

In 1935, Section 9 in Parral and Section 11 in Santa Barbara supported this state-wide general strike against ASARCO, which briefly paralyzed the mining industry - the state’s main economic source of profit. As a response to the potential threat surrounding the general strike, the governor acted immediately. Governor Quevedo arrived at the Hidalgo Mining District promising workers new contracts if they stopped their efforts to paralyze the industry, but this time ASARCO did not stop there.

As previously mentioned, ASARCO’s long and profitable presence in Mexico allowed them to have direct communication with the highest ranking officials in the Mexican government. They considered the labor situation in Chihuahua so dire to capital that in 1937 they sent a letter to President Cárdenas denouncing the National Miners’ Union. ASARCO argued that workers demanded the establishment of one contract for all of ASARCO’s operations in the nation; otherwise, they threatened to strike. The company explained to the president that the existing contract was previously negotiated only a few months earlier, and that it was not set to expire until sixteen months later. ASARCO also flexed its muscle by telling Cárdenas that it

²⁰ Valente Chacón Baca, mayor of Parral, to Silverio Sierra, the Secretario General de la Sección 9 del Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana, June 13, 1935, 1935/AHMP.

employed 18,810 workers and that wages had gone up fifty percent since 1934.²¹ As it happened with the powerful oil companies and railroad corporations, Cárdenas did not succumb to their pressures. This radical positioning provided workers with resounding victories. A 1937 report from the U.S. consul in Chihuahua reveals how the threat to strike and the show of solidarity among workers forced ASARCO to comply and meet the union's demands: "On July 27, 1937, labor leaders through the local press announced that a general strike involving some 17,000 employees of this concern would be called if the company should fail to meet their demands."²² As a result of this state-wide threat of strike, workers won their new contract in 1937. The U.S. Consulate in Chihuahua underscored labor's victories: "Other new contracts with labor were signed by the Santa Barbara unit of the same company and the San Francisco Mines of Mexico in Parral, both contracts calling for an increase in wages and other concessions."²³

ASARCO's efforts fell on nationalistic ears with Cárdenas, as had happened with the oil companies' cries not to nationalize the industry.²⁴ On March 18, 1938, Section 9 workers at ASARCO's Parral operations walked off their jobs for four hours in what they called a "revolutionary walkout" in support of Cárdenas' order to nationalize the oil industry. Operations at the plant were completely suspended.²⁵ The fact that miners called this walkout "revolutionary" shows how workers connected radicalism with the Revolution and the Cárdenas regime. More notably, it shows the potential for radicalization if miners suddenly emulated their

²¹ A.A. Brown, ASARCO's superintendent, Unidad Parral, to President Lázaro Cárdenas, July 22, 1937, found in Grupo Documental: Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Archivo General de la Nación, Volumen 379, Expediente 432.188/cc, hereafter referred to as 379/432.188/cc/AGN.

²² Leo Blohm, Consular Report, June 1937, USNARG/84.3, 700/6/1937:6/ACCC.

²³ Leo Blohm, Labor Notes, March, 1937, USNARG/84.3, 700/6/1937:3/ACCC.

²⁴ For more on Cárdenas' stance on foreign companies, see Adolfo Gilly, *El cardenismo, una utopia Mexicana* (Mexico, D.F.: Cal y arena, 1994).

²⁵ A.A. Brown, ASARCO's superintendent, Unidad Parral, to President Lázaro Cárdenas, March 18, 1938, Grupo Documental: Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, 379/432.188/AGN.

oil industry counterparts. Historian Myrna I. Santiago argues that the unions in the oil industry were significant contributors in the nationalization of the industry in 1938.²⁶

The success of workers in the Hidalgo district did not result only from authorities' support, but from their degree of organization, unity, and class identification, which matured when local authorities did not engage in violence because it was personally beneficial not to do so. Without the federations' and unions' abilities to mobilize constituent workers along class lines, utilizing direct action as their main instrument to generate pressure, local officials' interventions would not have reached the level they did.

As emphasized early, Governor Rodrigo Quevedo's significant economic, including numerous bars, distillers, the local power company, restaurants, gambling establishments, and political interests in Ciudad Juárez, meant that in this border city, workers' power threatened his own personal and family profits. Ironically, Quevedo's assistance to the miners in Hidalgo gave him leeway to exercise violence against workers in Juárez. In this respect, the two areas are critically linked, and a comparison of the state governor's behaviors towards worker actions in both areas provides us with grounds to consider the ultimate limit of workers' solidarity in this period. Local and state authorities' responses to workers were different in the two areas under study despite comparable levels of workers self-activism.

Ciudad Juárez: Radicalism, Violence, and the Elites.

Workers in Ciudad Juárez used many dramatic strategies, including strikes and boycotts, actions that paralleled and in some ways exceeded the level of class consciousness of their

²⁶ Myrna I. Santiago, *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 340.

comrades in the Hidalgo mining district. Textile workers, the Cámara Sindical Obrera (CSO), the Sin Trabajo union (Unemployed Workers' union), and the bakers engaged in strike movements throughout the decade which pressured local political and economic elites into ceding to workers' demands. For example, the textile boycott in April 1935, against the "*El Progreso*" manufacturer illustrates the types of actions the CSO engaged in at the border to pressure local merchants. The CSO supported the boycott of the 'El Progreso' for the unjustified layoff of 32 workers and encouraged all of its members to abstain from buying any of its products; they "invited" workers to stop buying goods from that manufacturer.²⁷ In order for boycotts to work, unions and federations mobilized class sentiment and interests, including mobilizing against layoffs, and garnered wide class support for union demands. The use of boycotts by the CSO demonstrates the level of unity reached by the working class on the border, and the way workers utilized direct action to ensure tangible benefits. The use of boycotts complemented the utilization of strikes, which generated more pressure than any other form of direct action.

The 1938 Bakers' strike movement, seeking one universal contract throughout all bakeries on the border, remains one of the more important movements at the time. It galvanized both the CROM and the CSO in support of this demand. The bakers threatened to close all bakeries in the city if their demands, including the ability to control bread prices and sales in the community, were not met. They announced their demand on February: "At 3' o'clock of the 27th we will decree a work stoppage in all bakeries in Juárez. We are demanding that the bread be sold in spaces made exclusively for this purpose, and that none of the bakeries share that same space with other businesses. We are also asking to revise the existing contract, a code of regulation for the industry, and have Sundays off with pay."²⁸ The union protested that other

²⁷ *El Continental*, April 3, 1935.

²⁸ *El Continental*, February 20, 1938.

businesses not licensed as bakeries were selling bread, which affected bakeries' ability to compete. The Bakers' Unions from the CSO and the CROM, when combined, had the ability to paralyze the entire community's food supply, which depended heavily on bread, and they used this power accordingly. The threat was averted once local bakery owners acquiesced to the united bakers' demands.²⁹ The fact that bakers forced owners to comply after paralyzing the industry shows workers' power in the late 1930s.

Although most of the strikes took place in the private sector, Juárez did experience a strike movement by public employees, which affected crucial areas of the city. In 1935, one strike occurred under the presidency of Cárdenas, who made concerted efforts to exclude government workers from unionizing.³⁰ In 1935, a local water company employees' strike threatened the city's water supply. Workers demanded better working conditions, higher wages, and the removal of the existing contractor. In this case, workers launched a hunger strike to achieve their demands. This dramatic action culminated with employers' acceptance of most of the workers' demands, including the removal of the contractor.³¹ The fact that even government employees had a union shows the magnitude that the culture of unionization achieved on the border by using direct action as their primary weapon.

However, Communists conducted the most notorious, energetic, and radical actions in Juárez. On the border, the presence of Communists launching strikes, organizing sit-ins and walkouts, and engaging in mass protests reveals the significant influence radicalism, even under the Popular Front which attenuated it, had on the border. The height of Communist presence in Juárez came in the last years of the 1930s, which coincided with the Popular Front. In 1937, the

²⁹ *El Continental*, February 22, 1938.

³⁰ Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 63.

³¹ *El Continental*, June 21, 1935.

CSO openly allied with the Cámara Sindical Unitaria del Trabajo and the Comité Seccional del Partido Comunista de Mexico (Mexican Communist Party).³² This alliance formally came after years of working de facto on the border to organize workers in solidarity. However, the Communist presence on the border goes back to the beginning of the decade. In 1930, Chihuahua Governor Andrés Ortiz issued a manifesto regarding the presence of Communists within the CSO in Juárez, which illustrates the fear that Communism inspired, and how politicians used it as a scare tactic to misrepresent organized labor in the state. Ortiz noted at the time that the CSO member organizations had “no communist elements” and warned that “those that will be discovered will be terminated from the organization eventually.”³³ In reality, Ortiz’s announcement contradicted the reality in Ciudad Juárez. Two important local labor organizations with communist affiliations, the Centro Agrícola e Industrial and the Cámara Sindical Unitaria del Trabajo, greatly influenced the city during the early 1930s through political manifestos published in local newspapers and through the distribution of “El Machete,” the national Communist newspaper created by the Mexican Communist Party. This union and federation formed alliances with other workers’ organizations in the area, including the CSO later in the decade, which increased their visibility and made them widely accepted throughout the community. Chapter two has already demonstrated the massive show of support from workers in those instances, including marches, meetings, strikes, and others, in which the CSO called for their support.

The Communist-led Cámara Sindical Unitaria, which had been part of the Confederación Sindical Unitaria de México, the national federation of Communist-led unions- until 1936, was active in Juárez throughout the 1930s. It had twelve organizations by 1937, including the radical

³² USNARG 84.3, 6/1937:4/ACCC.

³³ *El Continental*, February 18, 1931.

Centro Agrícola Industrial (Peasants and Industrial Workers' union), Plumbers' union, the Unemployed committee, the Deportivo Juvenil Unitario (Youth Athletic League), the Sociedad Femenil de Izquierda (Women Leftist Association) and others.³⁴ In addition to the Cámara Unitaria, the other, and larger federation, the CSO, allied with Communist, Socialist, and anarchist organizations. Both federations utilized widespread direct action in the form of strikes, walkouts, wildcat strikes, boycotts, massive protests, and public manifestos to increase workers' influence. These actions provoked intense reaction from political and economic elites on the border. The CSO was the most important federation in Juárez in terms of membership, boasting thirty-two unions among their ranks, and perhaps more importantly, it galvanized the most radical groups at the border, including the Mexican Communist Party.³⁵

Pascual Padilla was the best-known Communist organizer on the border. He initially belonged to the CSO and later headed the Centro Agrícola e Industrial (1932-1937) as well as the Unemployed Committee (1932-1940). The presence of individuals like Padilla assisted the CSO in its rise as a political force at the border due to the visibility its tactics garnered, which emphasized direct action. Historian Barry Carr has argued that "the Mexican Communist Party played a vital role in the spectacular mobilizations achieved by popular sectors during the middle and late thirties."³⁶ Pascual Padilla, also known in Juárez as the 'apostle of the proletariat' led numerous protests, marches, boycotts, and sit-ins on the border. His eloquence and energy attracted workers towards him and the communists' cause, at least according to local media.

After one of his multiple arrests, workers identifying themselves as communists came out to

³⁴ Bibiano Palacios, Secretary of the Cámara Sindical Unitaria, to the rest of the sections of the Confederación Sindical Unitaria de Mexico announcing the new executive committee of the local section in Juárez, 1936/1376.766/AMCJ.

³⁵ Charles Hershberger, "The Death of Borunda: Alcalde of Ciudad Juárez: Chihuahuan Politics During the 1930s," *Arizona and the West*, 8, no. 3 (1966): 210.

³⁶ Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 48.

protest: “Yesterday in Juárez, a colorful manifestation of Communists took place to protest the arrest of Pascual Padilla,” noted *El Continental*.³⁷ The article suggested that Padilla’s attraction had to do more with his ‘blue eyes’ than with his communist ideology, but local authorities did not think so lightly of his potential to further radicalize workers on the border, so they arrested Padilla more than twenty times from 1930 to 1935.³⁸

Finally, and perhaps in an effort to get rid of him permanently, state authorities in Jalisco, where he apparently also organized, charged Padilla with murder in 1935, suggesting collaboration between governors at the time to tame workers. This explanation seems more plausible when one looks at the fact that the local federal military commander, Major Loyo, refused to serve the warrant, which suggests that perhaps some federal officials supported Communists in Juárez as a counterweight to the Quevedos’ power; this was after all, the Popular Front era. These repressive actions demonstrate the level of violence that local authorities exercised against organized labor in general, but specifically against individuals promoting communist ideology in the state of Chihuahua, whose persecution by the Mexican state extended into the 1960s.³⁹

Communist leaders like Pascual Padilla made crucial contributions to the process of radical class formation at the border. They achieved this primarily through the distribution of the PCM’s national newspaper, *El Machete*, among workers and by engaging in massive protests. The following case, led by Padilla, gained notoriety on the border due to the extended media coverage it received. As previously mentioned, Dr. Daniel Quiroz Reyes, Juárez’s Mayor in 1934, responded to Quevedistas’ interests. In 1934, months after taking office, he ordered the

³⁷ *El Continental*, September 20, 1935.

³⁸ *El Continental*, October 18, 1935.

³⁹ Carlos Montemayor, *La Guerrilla recurrente* (Mexico: Debate, 2007).

repression of workers even after providing verbal permission for workers to protest in the first place. This authorization meant that they should have been able to protest without the harassment of the police; however, despite being granted permission, the police still acted violently.

A November 1934 Juárez district attorney official's report illustrates the persecution that Communists experienced on the border from local authorities who accused Communists of rebellion for merely delivering their newspaper to the public at a political rally: "Relating to the warrant that you will serve on Pascual Padilla, José Gonzales, Cenaido Valle, Gilberto Rubalcaba, Julián Meléndez, y Jesús L. Oñate, allow me to express to you that I have dispatched the aforementioned persons to the second district Court as alleged perpetrators of the crime of rebellion. Likewise, I communicate to you that we received in this agency under my direction the copies of the newspaper, *'El Machete,'* the fliers, and letters that you refer to in the memo."⁴⁰ The police report never mentions the specific reason that necessitated police presence at the rally and the subsequent arrest of Communist operators. The following report from the local police explains that they arrested these individuals for having disseminated Communist publications: "Yesterday during the demonstration organized by the Partido Nacional Revolucionario with the purpose of celebrating the 24th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution, the police arrested the same individuals that were distributing Communist propaganda, and whose names are the following: Pascual Padilla, José Gonzales, Cenaido Valle, Gilberto Rubalcaba, Julián Meléndez, Jesús L. Oñate. The propaganda consisted of some editions of the *Machete* newspaper, as well as fliers targeted to workers, peasants, students, intellectuals, and teachers."⁴¹ With regards to the

⁴⁰ Juan Manuel Fabela, federal district attorney to Dr. Daniel Quiroz, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, November 21, 1934, 1934/749.1335/AMCJ.

⁴¹ Gilberto B. Martínez, chief of police to Dr. Daniel Quiroz, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, November 19, 1934, 1934/749.1335/AMCJ.

arrest of Pascual Padilla, the police attested that Padilla tried to burn the evidence.⁴² The newspaper article covering this same incident goes into more detail regarding the types of propaganda that the alleged Communist individuals had in their possession. The confiscated manifesto attacked corrupt labor leaders, the religious upheaval in central Mexico (Cristero rebellion), and the socialist education promoted by the federal government, which in the local Communists' minds, did not represent true socialist values.⁴³

In addition to distributing propaganda on the streets, Communists at the border made efforts to inculcate a sense of internationalism among workers. In 1934, the Centro Agrícola, led by Padilla, issued a manifesto to the federal government, promoted in the local media, asking for the re-establishment of relations with the U.S.S.R. Padilla requested “that the federal government restore diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R as indication that Russia has provided a unique example by showing that workers can hold national political power, which is a slap in the face for Imperialist nations.”⁴⁴ The manifesto exhorted certain segments of organized labor on the border to have the confidence to take control of the national government through direct action and strike techniques; such demands exposed them to violence by local authorities. Radical unionists associated with the Communists in the Centro Agrícola e Industrial wrote to Josephus Daniels, the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, in support of local textile workers: “In our rally celebrated by this organization of workers on the 17th, we agreed as a majority to energetically

⁴² Gilberto B. Martínez, chief of police to Dr. Daniel Quiroz, the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, November 19, 1934, 1934/749.1335/AMCJ.

⁴³ *El Continental*, November 19, 1934. For information on socialist education in the state of Chihuahua, see F. Pérez y G. Hernandez, “La Escuela Normal y la Educación Socialista en Chihuahua, 1934-1940,” *Memoria* (Enero-Marzo/2010)

⁴⁴ *El Continental*, August 2, 1934.

⁴⁴ *El Continental*, August 2, 1934.

protest against the hostile actions that our comrades in the textile industry on strike are suffering. As a result, we express solidarity with our partners and unconditionally support the strike.”⁴⁵

After the Popular Front was inaugurated (end of 1935) Mexican Communists modified communist objectives somewhat and they no longer called for the takeover of the means of production as their ultimate goal. In 1937, therefore, the U.S. consulate observed that “Labor in Chihuahua is not manifestly communist in principles, and confiscation of property with or without indemnification is not the present design of labor leaders. Many of the latter are, however, radical Socialists and have indicated their views by expressing frequently sympathy with the Russian and Spanish (loyalists) ideology.”⁴⁶ This examination of Communism in Mexico responded to the Popular Front era, which saw an alliance between the Cárdenas presidency and the Communist party, which inevitably led to a gradual decrease in tone and substance of the latter’s demands, something the Consulate picked up on.

As mentioned previously, the Popular Front created a rift in the labor movement that saw the strongest and largest industrial unions, including the National Miners Union and the Railroad Workers Union, briefly leave the CTM. The Popular Front weakened the labor movement by forcing the newly created industrial unions to leave the recently formed CTM after the latter’s undemocratic practices became more apparent. Juárez had no industrial unions, except for the electricians’, and their influence, although significant, did not compare with that of the Miners. The Popular Front on the border worked, as it was young communist operatives who injected life into the movement and symbolized Cárdenas’ government efforts to increase workers’ power.

⁴⁵ Labor Notes, July 1934, USNARG 84.3, American Consulate in Ciudad Juárez, hereafter referred to as ACCJ, 7/1934/ACCJ.

⁴⁶ Labor Notes, February 1937, USNARG 84.3, 15/1937/ACCJ.

This support was not reciprocated fully by the national government since Cárdenas never made concerted efforts to stop state governor Quevedo's violence.

In 1937, the general secretary of the Communist party (PCM), Hernán Laborde, visited Juárez from Mexico City. The U.S. consul noted that Laborde talked to a rally about, "the urge to join in masse the Communist Party in Mexico." The consular report also highlighted the presence at the rally of SIMMR (National Miners' Union) Secretary, Agustín Guzmán, and the Chihuahua City's mayor, Manuel López Dávila, a known radical and an ex-member of the teachers' union. Their presence alongside Laborde reminds us of the influence Communists had in certain spheres of the state government, including the municipality of Chihuahua, and in the teachers' unions. Finally, the report emphasized that participants ended the rally by singing the 'International' and delivering the communist salute, which also supports the argument regarding the use of class elements by labor leaders to educate the masses.⁴⁷ The presence of high-ranking communist officials in government position at a labor rally in Juárez signified the Popular Front's victory on the border.

Communists in Juárez made efforts to forge alliances with their counterparts in El Paso, Texas as well. On March 9, 1940, a committee investigating subversive activities in El Paso, Texas revealed a letter in which Fran Sener, a Communist Party organizer for the Southwest, expressed the necessity to form alliances with Juárez's workers and their federations: "In line with the general policies of our party today... urging the establishment of an International CIO-CTM committee to have the CIO seat one fraternal delegate from the CTM in their inter local committee and vice versa...urging organizers to promote more house to house agitation and to

⁴⁷ Report on the political situation in Chihuahua, USNARG 84.3, 5/1937/ACCJ.

promote small meetings at workers' homes."⁴⁸ The U.S. communist party had a strong influence in some CIO-affiliated unions in the United States.

Workers' efforts to organize labor transnationally were met by American officials with hostility. On March 11, 1940, local authorities in El Paso arrested Miguel Oaxaca, a CTM organizer in Juárez and former leader of the Bakers' Union, and turned him over to immigration officials for deportation. According to the Mexican Consul in El Paso, immigration officials held Oaxaca without probable cause.⁴⁹ CTM officials in Juárez clarified that Oaxaca was in El Paso at the invitation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which wanted him to help them organize Mexicans in El Paso. Apparently, none of the current organizers spoke Spanish. On March 12, 1940, immigration officials released Oaxaca and he returned 'voluntarily' to Juárez.⁵⁰ The arrest of Oaxaca and the letter by Sener in which he reveals the attempt to establish a transnational Communist organization demonstrate the importance that Communism had in transforming workers' identities at the border. Historian Monica Perales has shown the importance transnational collaboration among workers had in transforming workers at ASARCO in El Paso. In fact, U.S. workers changed the way ASARCO perceived them by organizing into unions.⁵¹ In the political and economic elites' mind, this transnational collaboration threatened their power.

In April 1937, the CSO and the Centro Agrícola Industrial sent letters to Antero Torres, interim mayor of Juárez, clarifying that Pascual Padilla no longer belonged to the CSO or the

⁴⁸ *El Paso Herald Post*, March 9, 1940.

⁴⁹ *El Paso Herald Post*, March 11, 1940.

⁵⁰ *El Paso Herald Post*, March 12, 1940.

⁵¹ Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010), 45-55.

Centro Agrícola.⁵² Padilla immediately formed the Genuino Centro Agrícola Industrial, which quickly adhered to the Cámara Sindical Unitaria. He also continued his involvement with the Unemployed Committee and the Sindicato de Carboneros (coal workers). The importance of the Centro Agrícola's statement distancing itself from Padilla, who throughout the 1930s remained a valuable member of the union, signaled the beginning of the co-optation of the CSO and the Centro Agrícola by local elites. Padilla's removal coincided with the abandonment and eventual coercively induced return of the PCM to the CTM in 1937, which eventually led to the first serious rift in the radical labor movement that saw the Miners' and the Electricians' unions walk out. In Juárez, the Electricians' struggle against the local power company needs highlighting due to its length, magnitude, and eventual outcome.

Electricians Union's Strike Movement

The efforts by the Electricians' Union to compel company operators to honor an existing collective contract and the union's eventual demand to establish a different contract serves as an effective case which illustrate how radicalism shaped workers' attitudes. It also reveals the level of violence that some labor-capital conflicts reached in Juárez. In 1930, the local Electricians' Union proclaimed that its purpose in establishing the local section in Juárez was "for the rights and justice of the workers." The *Confederación Nacional de Electricistas* emphasized to authorities that the union represented the nationwide conglomerate of electricians in Juárez: "the section will be the only representative in this capital before the corresponding authorities for the solution of all the issues that are required through this Executive Committee."⁵³ The local section

⁵² Miguel Lopez Valencia Secretary of the Cámara Sindical Obrera, to Antero Torres, interim mayor of Juárez, September, 13, 1937, 1937/1392.733/AMCJ.

⁵³ Confederación Nacional de Electricistas y Similares to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Gustavo Flores, October 8, 1930, 1930/156/AMCJ.

resisted anti-labor measures and garnered the support of its members by promoting class identification to shape workers' behavior through unity. In fact, in its first pronouncement to the border community, the union expressed precisely these concerns to justify its formation. The conflict between the union and the local power company in Juárez began in 1933 when company operators and owners, in this case the Quevedos, refused to recognize the new collective contract presented by workers from the local union representing electric workers. This standstill lasted for three years until 1936, when the Confederación Nacional de Electricistas organized a strike movement against business operators who refused to sign the new collective contracts in certain sections of the country, including Mexico City. This quasi-national strike added to the already existing tension between operators and the unions over their own contracts. It conveniently complemented the local section's desire to establish new contracts as well, which had taken place for three years already without any sign of ever getting completed. The strike began in the central part of Mexico and quickly spread throughout the nation.⁵⁴

In Ciudad Juárez, after years of going back and forth, the negotiations took a violent turn since the Quevedos operated and owned the power company while simultaneously occupying high-ranking positions in the local and state government, including the governorship and the office of mayor. The electrical workers' union's main demand centered on honoring the existing collective contract which the union felt the Quevedos ignored. The union's leadership used strike threats in addition to manifestos published in local newspapers, which exposed the Quevedos' ability to control workers, especially those employed directly by them. This only exacerbated the animosity between both parties since union members staunchly refused to compromise on what they considered essential rights, including the ability to have a closed shop and higher wages.

⁵⁴ *El Continental*, July 16-17, 23, 1935 and February 15, 1935.

Moreover, as high-ranking officials, the Quevedos could not afford to look weak, so they determinedly refused to cede.

This particular labor conflict between the Quevedos and the electricians remains unique because of the Quevedos' simultaneous presence in local business and government, which allowed them to repress the union without any consequences. Jesús Quevedo, one of the governor's siblings and a former mayor himself, and José Quevedo, Juárez's mayor at the time, sought to undermine the collective contract by infiltrating and placing trusted individuals in crucial positions throughout the company without the union's approval. The union had a hiring hall and wished to control new hires; the company opposed the union's attempts to control who was hired and fired, no doubt feeling this should be their prerogative.

The specific disagreement began when the company's operator, Jesús Quevedo, hired his stepson as an accountant and Juan Montes to perform jobs requiring prior union approval. The union announced to "the Federal Conciliatory Court, that the Cía. Mexicana Productora de Luz y Fuerza S. A. has again violated the agreement made between that Company and this Union, since it has allowed two persons to work in the Company. You [the federal court] told the Manager, Mr. Jesús Quevedo, the seriousness of this violation."⁵⁵ Jesús Quevedo promised to withdraw these two individuals, but that was just for a few days, "since it has allowed Mr. Juan Montes to make charges and cut-offs to the services, and a stepson of Mr. Quevedo, whose last name is Martínez, works the account books of the clients, and all this with full labor rights."⁵⁶ The union utilized the collective contract as the basis for its threats; however, the unions' protestations and the labor code made no difference to the company's operators who still continued to hire

⁵⁵ Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Electrica en Ciudad Juárez to Mr. Enrique Martinez Becerra, president of the Federal Conciliatory Court #13, February 28, 1938, 1938/786/AMCJ.

⁵⁶ Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Electrica en Ciudad Juárez to Mr. Enrique Martinez Becerra, president of the Federal Conciliatory Court #13, February 28, 1938, 1938/786/AMCJ.

whomever they wished: “As is well known to you, the agreement signed between this *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica de Cd. Juárez* and *Cía. Mexicana Productora de Luz y Fuerza S. A.* with your intervention as federal authority of Labor clearly establishes that the company cannot hire anyone who is not proposed by the Union. Therefore, this union exposes the violation of the agreement by the Company.”⁵⁷ The union later added that those individuals will not be recognized as part of the union: “The union does not recognize labor rights for Mr. Montes and Mr. Martínez, nor anyone that the company employs in violation of the Agreement. The Company conducts business with lack of respect, despite your being a federal authority with which all other companies comply.”⁵⁸ Again, this letter shows the significant animosity present between union members and the Quevedos in Ciudad Juárez over control of the workplace. However, these same individuals operated the power company and held high-ranking positions locally and state wide, augmenting the tension since the company’s operatives had a carte blanche to use state resources to solve this conflict to their advantage. On the other side, it shows how unions utilized the existing laws to safeguard their rights despite hostile authorities.

Despite this imbalance of power, the union frequently used the threat of direct action to pressure the company to accept the new collective contracts presented to them at various instances throughout the 1930s, albeit to no avail.

Weeks later, operators in the Chihuahua City’s power company refused to sign the new collective contract proposed by the local section there, which caused the threat of a strike to resurface in Juárez. Therefore, in addition to their show of solidarity towards their fellow laborers in Chihuahua, workers in Juárez eventually demanded a new contract for the third time in the 1930s. Power company operators initially refused for the third time, which initiated

⁵⁷ Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Electrica en Ciudad Juárez to Mr. Enrique Martinez Becerra, president of the Federal Conciliatory Court #13, February 28, 1938, 1938/786/AMCJ.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

another strike movement and ended with the eventual acceptance of the contract by Jesús Quevedo. At the beginning of the conflict, the company defended its position through the local media: “It is inexact what the union claims regarding our lack of observance with the labor codes delineated in the Federal Labor Law, since this would constitute an act of rebellion, and a lack of respect for our laws.”⁵⁹ Operators from the company later added that the demands made by the union went beyond those stipulated by the law. The union kept up the pressure and announced in the local newspapers that they would strike if the power company did not agree to the provisions delineated in the collective contract sent to them months earlier: “The Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica in Ciudad Juárez made the company, Productora de Luz y Fuerza, aware that they will strike if the collective contract was not signed by the 27th of February at 12 am.”⁶⁰ Armando Pórras led the negotiations with the power company, acting as the union’s representative. He was later killed by Quevedo’s operatives in front of his family. His eloquence and energy in many ways symbolized the entire labor movement of the era.

The following excerpt captures the conflict from the perspective of workers, who felt that the company did not listen to their concerns and so striking remained the only viable option: “The company has shown complete intransigence since it refuses to accept any of the petitions made by workers who have shown themselves to be more than willing to reach an agreement and since it has not been possible, they deemed it necessary to strike.”⁶¹ On March 6, 1938, days before Cárdenas nationalized the oil industry, the union announced that it would no longer strike since the power company had accepted the majority of the provisions delineated in the collective contract presented to them months earlier. It also thanked other organizations, including the CSO, for their support. The federation argued that “This union has decided to suspend the strike,

⁵⁹ *El Continental*, February 14, 1938.

⁶⁰ *El Continental*, February 17, 1938.

⁶¹ *El Continental*, February 13, 1938.

since we are aware that the company's representative has accepted most of the provisions found in the contract and as a result we have lifted the movement of strike. We would like to thank the Cámara Sindical Obrera and other organizations for their cooperation."⁶² However, this apparent victory for the union did not last. Weeks later, the Sindicato de Trabajadores of the Industria Eléctrica stopped working for an hour to protest the "lack of compliance with the collective bargaining agreement."⁶³ The electricians used walkouts to pressure the Quevedos, in this case Jesús Quevedo, despite the Quevedos' important positions in local and state government.

The union's actions and especially those of its leader, Armando Pórras, enraged the Quevedo clan to the point that individuals closely associated with the clan murdered Pórras four months later. The murder of Pórras effectively ended the union's decade-long struggle to garner respect for the collective contract devised by the workers, and their subsequent use of direct action to enforce the contract once new leadership was introduced at the behest of Quevedo.

A year after the murder, Jesús Quevedo, the power company's operator, made the following announcement: "There will be no strike at the company. The first act of the new leadership will be to make sure all previous contracts of the old leadership will be revoked. The majority of workers voted for this."⁶⁴ One can only infer how many of the so-called workers' votes really happened. More notably, after the assassination of the union's negotiations leader and with a climate of fear enshrouding the elections, one can question the validity of such a process at the very least. In addition, Jesús Quevedo pressed charges against Conrado Alvarez,

⁶² *El Continental*, March 6, 1938.

⁶³ Octavio Escobar, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, to Francisco Chávez Holguín, Secretary of the municipality, May 28, 1938, 1938/74/AMCJ.

⁶⁴ *El Continental*, February 2, 1938.

the treasurer and a known union sympathizer, for corruption, and instead appointed one of his relatives, Arturo Quevedo, to the position of treasurer.⁶⁵

Furthermore, while the local union had previously championed Pórras as their representative, after Pórras' murder, the local section in Juárez quickly changed position, now denigrating Pórras and others who challenged business operators by labeling them 'rebellious' and seeking to 'delegitimize the new leadership.'⁶⁶ The new leadership of the union dissipated any doubts regarding the Quevedos' ability to control the new union leadership: "The Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica de Ciudad Juárez does not recognize the National Electricians Federation for supporting a few rebellious members of the section in Juárez, who have blatantly ignored the laws of this organization and far from trying to improve it, have buried it by trying to delegitimize the new leadership."⁶⁷ This decision to distance themselves from the national federation resulted from the arrival of national inspectors in Juárez to investigate the election, during which the new union leadership overthrew the old one. However, this decision by the new leadership of the Juárez section to sidestep their national federation went deeper than the presence of inspectors in the area questioning the election's results. The failure of the local section to recognize one of the most radical and worker-friendly unions in the nation signaled to the rest of the workers in Ciudad Juárez that times had changed.

Conclusion

The threat of strikes, actual strikes, walkouts, boycotts, and other manifestations of direct action shows workers increasing power, and the limits of this new found agency. The mining

⁶⁵ *El Continental*, March 3, 1938.

⁶⁶ *El Continental*, March 3, 1938.

⁶⁷ *El Continental*, February 8, 1939.

district workers' alliance with high-ranking local and state-wide politicians brought important victories to workers in their strike movements against ASARCO. However, this alliance also prevented their further radicalization once authorities at all levels acquiesced to workers' demands leaving them without justifications to further radicalize. They also turned the other way to the violence workers experienced in Juárez.

On the border, Communists, the CSO and unions representing the bakers and the electricians engaged in strikes, which paralyzed the city. Throughout the 1930s, organized labor in Juárez utilized direct action frequently and effectively, which helped develop a strong labor movement based on class interests for the first time in the border city.

This militancy was met with violence from local government officials. The latter had powerful economic interests in the city who used their positions to unleash an aggressive campaign against some radical segments of Juárez's organized labor, including the CSO, the Communists, and the Electricians' Union. As a result, the role local and state authorities played in both regions ultimately decided outcomes for workers regardless of the latter's militancy and use of direct action. The comparison between the National Miners' Union in the Hidalgo Mining District, and the Electricians' Union in Juárez, illustrates this assertion. At the same time, the level of state-wide unity that miners achieved, and the importance of the industry for the state's economy curtailed the Quevedos and other political elites' ability to violently repress them. Miners had more than 10,000 workers state-wide adhering to the SIMMR, and had shown a willingness to strike to help other sections. However, they traded benefits at the expense of radicalism and solidarity with workers other than miners. The Electricians' Union in Juárez, despite the support of its national federation, the CSO, and other organizations, never achieved the degree of unity at the state-wide level that their counterpart in the mining district achieved

and this made their violent repression and eventual co-optation by authorities easier to achieve. The same held true for the Communists, who failed to garner any assistance from the pro-labor Cárdenas regime and the Popular Front and also experienced violence and arrests. This chapter examined the way direct action increased workers' power. The next chapter will analyze workers' political alliances with economic and political elites locally, statewide, and nationally.

CHAPTER 5: LABOR'S POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND ITS LIMIT—A SPECTRUM FROM COOPERATION TO REPRESSION

Political alliances operated in vastly different ways for organized labor in the two communities under examination in this study, mirroring the way these coalitions functioned throughout Mexico during the 1930s. In the Hidalgo Mining District, workers formed alliances with local and state-wide high-ranking political elites and with the Cárdenas regime. They did so to promote their pro-labor agenda and to offer workers access to local, state, and national political power structures for the first time in the nation's history. These political alliances brought tangible benefits to organized workers in the district. Once high-ranking officials forced owners and business operators to comply with the law, workers' power increased. At the same time, the mediation of high-ranking officials prevented the conflict from radicalizing since workers saw immediate and significant gains once the state became involved. This diminished the movement's ability to further its demands beyond control of the workplace to include issues of power and self-determination.

By contrast, Ciudad Juárez organized labor remained remote from the key bastions of private and public power. This reality forced labor to establish coalitions with oppositional political forces in the city, including an alliance with a large sector of the middle class affected by the Quevedo monopoly on local power, in an effort to dismantle the Quevedista political machine in the municipal elections of 1931, 1933, and 1936. After each election, this coalition

continued to pressure elected municipal officials to uphold the law forcing owners to abide by the collective contracts.

Historians have demonstrated the power that high-ranking local and state-wide officials had on organized labor's ability to articulate their demands and eventually obtain access to power structures. Historian Adrian Bantjes demonstrated such dynamics in the case of neighboring post-revolutionary Sonora during the 1930s. There high-level state-wide officials prevented organized labor from increasing their power at the expense of longstanding elites, even when federal officials supported organized labor.¹ In the same state, but during the late 1910s and early 1920s, other historians have shown that alliances between the radical wing of organized labor and political and economic elites resulted in tangible improvements for workers.² Statewide elites ceded once workers' pressure forced them to do, just as happened with the miners in the Hidalgo region. But most of the time, elites made efforts to curtail workers' militancy without relinquishing anything as took place in Juárez.

Political and economic elites in post-revolutionary Chihuahua utilized a wide array of mechanisms to curtail workers' potential for radicalization. The Federal Labor Law of 1931, while it gave workers the ability to organize and mandated conciliation mechanisms, limited unions' and federations' independence by barring them from "intervening in political and religious affairs."³ These electoral restrictions prevented unions from running candidates independently of political parties. Thus, organized labor sought out coalitions with political parties since they were the only channels available to articulate their political aspirations. This

¹ Adrian Bantjes, *As If Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Willington Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998) argues that workers did not balance power structures in Sonora despite the support of federal officials. The presence of local elites enjoying the support of the state's governor prevented workers from increasing their political and economic power at the expense of theirs.

² Michael Gonzalez, "United States Copper Companies, the Mine Workers' Movement, and the Mexican Revolution: 1910-1920," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 76, no 3 (August 1996): 503-533.

³ Mexican Federal Labor Law of 1931, Article 249, found in *El Continental*, June 13, 1934.

also led labor leaders to step away from their union's position, join an official political party, and run for office, which also exposed them to conflicts of interest and patronage once political office entered the equation. Thus, labor legislation like the 1931 labor law granted organized workers access to political power, but it also extended the government's power over labor by limiting their ability to strike and perform other forms of direct action.⁴ Moreover, it effectively established the state as the main channel by organized labor could present and resolve its demands. As a consequence, a lack of uniformity (usually the product of elites' economic and political interests) determined the way political elites dealt with workers. The contrast between the mining region and Ciudad Juárez lies in the reactions of local officials to the federations' rising political influence. This reaction generated extraordinary amounts of violence at the border, something that did not happen in the Hidalgo Mining District.

The Benefits of Cooperation

The Hidalgo Mining District did not experience significant electoral conflict during the 1930s in municipal elections which took place every two years, suggesting that workers in the area did not perceive the election winners as an imposition by political and economic elites. The candidates running for mayor in Parral and Santa Barbara throughout the 1930s supported organized labor in their numerous strikes because it was in their best political and economic interest to do so. Workers' use of direct action certainly shaped this political context.

The relationship between political elites and unions in the mining area after the Revolution helps explain how organized labor there attained so many victories in their numerous strikes, including those against foreign giants such as ASARCO. This was especially true during

⁴ Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 51.

the administrations of Gabriel Chávez and Valente Chacón Baca, known Quevedistas, who supported organized labor's quest for collective contracts and their numerous strikes which took place during their tenure. In turn, organized labor supported Quevedistas during their respective campaigns, and did not question the validity of their victories after the elections. Chacón Baca was a state representative for the Hidalgo Mining District before winning the election in 1933 for mayor of Parral, which also reaffirms the argument that workers supported those who had previously supported them. In short, in the mining region, organized labor helped individuals who had shown solidarity with workers get elected.

The mining district was one of Governor Rodrigo Quevedo's political bastions, and he enjoyed widespread support from organized labor in the area. He intervened in favor of workers during the strike threats to establish new collective contracts against ASARCO. In both instances, Section 9 and Section 11 credited Quevedo as a "true revolutionary."⁵ Gustavo Talamantes, who succeeded Quevedo as state governor, also won workers' endorsement in the Hidalgo Mining District by supporting their continuous negotiations of collective contracts. In fact, during one of his numerous trips to the region, Talamantes was called a "friend of workers" by local labor organizations, including Sections 9 and 11.⁶

Organized labor continued to cultivate its relationship with local officials after they were sworn into office. Undoubtedly, organized labor realized that the next individual running for mayor would have some kind of political or economic connection with the incumbent official. This was true even among those federations considered radical, like the CRT.

The Cámara Regional del Trabajo (CRT) supported local authorities in an effort to build political capital. This context facilitated the CRT's continuous litigation in the local courts. The

⁵ *La Voz de Chihuahua*, June 19, 1934.

⁶ *La Voz de Chihuahua*, February 11, 1937.

CRT gave credit to local officials for the improved conditions of the working class throughout the 1930s. Community celebrations became a vehicle to highlight the benefits brought about by the mutual relationship between labor and politicians. In the short run, this closeness brought organized labor tangible benefits; however, in the long run, it pushed them further into the realm of collaboration and patronage.

Prior to the Revolution, ASARCO organized most of the community gatherings and celebrations. Evidently, the majority of the community did not participate in these elitist gatherings; only foreigners and trusted Mexican nationals, including local officials, participated in them. At the time, foreigners had their own facilities, including schools and housing, enclosed in an area close to the mines and isolated from the rest of the community.⁷ The Revolution changed some of that. Throughout the 1930s, local authorities invited unions and federations to different events organized by the municipality, which evidently benefited them as well. Organized labor attended these events in significant numbers as a show of strength and reciprocity, including the fourteenth anniversary of the Revolution: “The Cámara Regional del Trabajo recommends to all its organizations to attend to the invitation made by our mayor to celebrate the anniversary of the Revolution on November 20. We have no doubt that our organization will cooperate to make this a great showing.”⁸ In the same letter, the CRT connects local officials and the union as representatives of the Revolution. This also showed organized labor’s expectation of support from local officials after the Revolution.

The CRT ensured that local authorities remained cognizant of the unity among workers in the area, including peasants, further showing the CRT’s electoral power and ongoing efforts to

⁷ Author’s interview with Miguel Felix, one of the original founders of Section 11 (Santa Barbara) of the Sindicato Industrial de Mineros, Metalurgicos y Similares de la Republica Mexicana, tape recording in Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, July 16, 2010, in author’s possession.

⁸ Cámara Regional del Trabajo to their sections, November 1, 1934, box number 1934, Archivo Historico Municipal de Parral, Parral, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as 1934/AHMP.

increase their power. In 1934, it announced that it had “invited all the agrarian committees and all workers’ unions without any distinctions of credo or political party to show a united front that demonstrates our support for the government and the Revolution, so that it can continue and advance with more resolution the decrees of our socialist education and other important reforms that fortify workers’ standing.”⁹ Federations and unions in the mining region also used their organization’s anniversaries to bring the community and local officials together in an effort to reinforce the connection between unions and local officials. This harmonious collaboration began in the late 1920s, further showing unions’ ties with political elites after the Revolution. For example, in one letter addressed to local authorities, the Obreros Libres (Free Workers) union invited them to “an evening of music and reading,” illustrating the fact that these gatherings included activities aimed at furthering the interests of the working class.¹⁰

Organized labor and elected officials also utilized certain national holidays, including the Revolution (Nov. 20), Independence (Sept. 16), and Workers’ Day (May 1) to advance their interests and those of the workers. For example, in 1930, the Sindicato de Obreros Libres used the anniversary of Mexico’s independence to address class issues through poetry, music, and orations about the life and ideals of Miguel Hidalgo, a priest considered the father of Mexican Independence in 1810. The evening ended with the national anthem. For the workers’ movement, power seemed to be implanted by connecting their cause and a class agenda to nationalism and the legacy of the Revolution.¹¹ These cultural events increased both the federations’ and the authorities’ standing in the community by connecting nationalistic symbols, including Independence Day, with pro-labor values. Unions realized that promoting their organizations as

⁹ Letter from the Cámara Regional del Trabajo to their sections, November 1, 1934, 1934/AHMP.

¹⁰ Letter from the Sociedad de Obreros Miguel Hidalgo to the municipality of Parral, December 12, 1928/AHMP.

¹¹ Letter from the Sindicato Libre de Obreros to Joaquin R. Aguirre, mayor of Parral, July 3, 1930, 1930/AHMP. The program of that evening was attached alongside the letter. This included poetry, music, some of it recited or played by children, and lectures on Hidalgo’s life and death. The evening ended with the national anthem.

bastions of nationalism resulted in tangible gains. When organized labor took advantage of important national celebrations, like Cinco de Mayo, to conduct grandiose festivities in which the entire community participated, they were in effect suggesting that labor and unions would advance with the nation instead of being subjugated by capital and the nation. The usage of nationalistic symbols showed workers' ability to connect the emerging nation as a promoter of working class values. For example, the union connected their colors with the nation: "This union agreed yesterday and with the objective of addressing the municipality invitation to solemnly and with our colors to attend the civic procession to celebrate the glorious Cinco de Mayo Parade that will take place in this city at 10 a.m. on that precise date."¹²

After the Revolution, unions invited local authorities to similar events throughout the year. In April 1933, the local Miners' Union, "Benito Juárez," invited local authorities to the union's anniversary, which they described as an 'epic journey' and encouraged members, "to assist in large numbers at the assigned time."¹³ Their anniversary coincided with the commemoration of the famous battle of Puebla in 1862. Here the union connected this benchmark in Mexican history with their own struggle.

Unions also expressed deference to ensure that local authorities did not feel undermined by organized labor's significant political and social clout in the area. Unions made the decision to defer to authorities instead of business owners and operators to guarantee that they had the local authorities on their side, or at least, unbiased towards their interests.¹⁴ Workers for example asked local authorities for permission to gather, illustrating this deference. In one instance, the mayor responded: "In response to the note dated today, the presidency, under my leadership, has

¹² Sindicato Libre de Obreros to Joaquin R. Aguirre, mayor of Parral, May 5, 1930, 1930/AHMP.

¹³ Sindicato de Trabajadores Mineros "Benito Juárez" to mayor Valente Chacón Baca, April 29, 1933, 1933/AHMP.

¹⁴ Jeffrey Bortz, *Revolution Within the Revolution: Cotton Textile Workers, and the Mexican Labor Regime, 1910-1923* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 183-186, Bortz argues that workers decided to confront owners and managers instead of local authorities.

granted permission so that on the 6th of the current month a gathering followed by a dance can take place at the Bakers' hall."¹⁵ At first glance, asking permission to celebrate certain events clearly delineates power structures in the region, since one might infer that without their permission, the union's meetings might not have taken place. However, unions deferred to authorities as a tactical strategy since they knew local officials would side with them. More notably, unions deferred selectively, and only in issues of minor to regular importance, including procuring permissions to hold a dance. In other instances, like the times in which workers sought higher wages, organized labor simply responded by using direct action, as previous chapters have shown. Unions' expressions of deference came in various forms and tones, including the de-facto acceptance of the new regulations imposed by the government regarding unions. This suggests that this decision resulted from pragmatism, not subordination. Again, workers never abandoned other forms of resistance, like the use of direct action. Having said that, they also did not fight in unison against the limits placed upon them.

One of the mechanisms instituted to regulate labor after the Revolution required organizations to register the names of the representatives on their executive boards with the local authorities every six months. In 1931, the mayor wrote deferentially to the "Benito Juárez" Miners' Union regarding the change in the union's leadership: "Thanks to the memo dated on the third of the current month, the municipality is aware of the newly elected leadership of this union. We wish the new leadership success."¹⁶ In another letter exchanged, the union praised the nation's military as the safeguard of a post-revolutionary nation connected to their pro-worker agenda. "We are very thankful to let you know that we have received the 15 volumes of books

¹⁵ Parral Mayor Gabriel Chávez, to the Benito Juárez Miners' Union, granting permission to congregate, February 1, 1932, 1932/AHMP.

¹⁶ Letter from Joaquin R. Aguirre, mayor of Parral, to the Sindicato de Trabajadores Mineros "Benito Juárez", August 5, 1931, 1931/AHMP.

edited by the Chief of Staff honoring soldiers. This union has taken into consideration the reasons and its thankfulness to the Chief of Staff. We can only praise his good intentions and hope that the working class realizes the distinction made to the soldiers.”¹⁷ This pronouncement also shows organized labor’s loyalty to the federal government and the workers’ recognition of the military’s revolutionary ideals. Federations’ and unions’ utilization of deference supplemented their other endeavors to influence local officials.

Political elites’ alliances with labor sometimes brought violence upon them. On April 13, 1938, unknown assassins killed former mayor Gabriel Chávez in the streets of Parral. A day later, state Representative Ismael Falcón accused Governor Gustavo Talamantes of Chávez’s murder. Falcón insinuated that the reason for the murder had to do with Chávez’s refusal to work with the Talamantes administration because Chávez continued to sympathize with Quevedo, which meant “a death sentence.”¹⁸ Talamantes denied any involvement in the murder and announced in the state media that he would do everything in his power to find the perpetrators. He added that Falcón’s accusation had no merit, and that everyone in the state knew Falcón’s reputation as a Quevedo ally so he did not worry about his accusations.¹⁹ Chávez’s murder highlights the political value that officials placed on workers’ support. His presence in Parral impeded the new state administration from ensuring workers’ allegiance because Chávez presumably remained one of Quevedo’s political operators safeguarding his interests in the mining area, at least in Falcón’s eyes.

Workers in the Hidalgo Mining District did not experience any type of systematic violence from local, state, or federal officials during this decade; however, this does not mean

¹⁷ Letter from the Sindicato de Trabajadores Mineros “Benito Juárez” to the mayor of Valente Chacón Baca Parral, and the chief of staff in Mexico City, July 24, 1933, 1933/AHMP.

¹⁸ *El Continental*, April 13-14, 1938.

¹⁹ *El Continental*, April 15, 1938.

that workers, or their leaders, did not experience any violence in the mining district. In August, 1935, Parral's Section 9's leader, Juan Macías, disappeared in the middle of a conflict between ASARCO and Section 9 over the implementation of a new collective contract.²⁰ Macías was never found. Local officials assured organized labor that his disappearance had nothing to do with the ongoing negotiations over the contract. The fact that these assurances were made shows that workers certainly harbored doubts that their fight for rights in the area was unopposed.²¹

Except for Macías, workers and their leaders experienced only isolated episodes of violence in Parral-Santa Barbara, which corresponded to Governor Quevedo's recognition of the region's high political and economic value. The district was one of organized labor's bastions in the state because of the high level of unionization in the area, which made union members a formidable electoral force. Furthermore, the Miners' Union had shown the ability to disrupt the mining industry through direct action early in the decade; this forced Quevedo to support workers in the Hidalgo district during their various threats of strike against ASARCO, despite his conservative credentials. Moreover, local officials in Parral-Santa Barbara assisted unions and federations in their process of class formation and during most of their strike movements because their own political future depended on workers' support. More notably, this approach allowed political elites to keep workers from radicalizing.

Ciudad Juárez: The Limits of Alliances

By contrast, organized labor's inability to maintain or influence local political power in Ciudad Juárez explains in large part the independent and radical unions' eventual demise in the city. This fallout occurred despite their attempts to influence local elections by supporting certain

²⁰ *La Voz de Chihuahua*, August 23, 1935, *El Correo de Parral*, August 23, 1935.

²¹ *La Voz de Chihuahua*, August 23, 1935, *El Correo de Parral*, August 23, 1935.

candidates and creating political alliances with other sectors of Juárez's political classes. In one of these alliances, a cross-class coalition formed with the Margarito Herrera political faction. The latter was the former head of the local chamber of commerce in Juárez and the candidate for municipal president in 1929 against the official party candidate for the Revolutionary Party (PNR), Gustavo Flores. The latter was a known associate of drug kingpin, Enrique Fernandez, and the Quevedos, who at this point had not yet separated from the Fernandez drug gang.²² Despite his alliance with organized labor, Herrera lost the election to Flores and would lose again to José Quevedo in the 1935 election for mayor in Juárez.

Violence from local authorities, in this case the Quevedos and their allies, stemmed from their significant political and economic interests in Juárez. Historian Nicole Mottier summarizes the clan's reliance on violence in her examination of the Quevedo political group during the same period, likening them to the vicious contemporary drug cartels: "Before the Juárez cartels, there were the Fernández and the Quevedo gangs."²³ Mottier's comparison of Quevedismo with the current drug cartels illustrates the degree of violence the Quevedos exercised against their political and economic adversaries. Besides their interests in the drug trade, the Quevedos operated the local power company in Juárez, which pitted them against one of the most radical and active unions in Mexico, the Electricians' Union. They also had interests in gambling, restaurants, bars, distilleries, and other similar enterprises. Furthermore, they controlled political power on the border throughout the 1930s. Governor Rodrigo Quevedo provided his siblings with *carte blanche* to harass and eliminate radical unions from the city. By the end of the 1930s, the Quevedos' decade long public posturing as revolutionary midwives and protectors of

²² *El Continental*, August 4, 1929. For information on Flores' alleged connections to drug dealers, see Nicole Mottier, "Drugs, Gangs, and Politics in Ciudad Juárez," 31. For information regarding Quevedo and Fernandez working together initially in the 1930s, before the Quevedo's decision to allegedly kill him, see Mottier, 34.

²³ Nicole Mottier, "Drug, Gangs and Politics," 20.

workers' rights, which in large part allowed them to get elected, no longer deceived workers in Juárez.²⁴

The Quevedo clan's use of electoral fraud, patronage, nepotism, and violence to perpetuate their power at the state and local levels significantly affected organized labor's ability to resist anti-worker measures and policies in Ciudad Juárez. Jesús Quevedo occupied the highest municipal office from 1931-1933 and his brother, Rodrigo Quevedo, became governor of the state from 1932-1936 later in the decade. José Quevedo occupied the office from 1936 to 1937 before his removal by Governor Talamantes. Known Quevedista, Dr. Daniel Quiroz, served as municipal president from 1934 to 1936.²⁵ In short, the Quevedo political machine dominated local politics in Juárez throughout most of the 1930s. The clan established a climate of fear in the city that curtailed labor's expressions of meaningful resistance.

This accumulation of political power at the state and local level allowed the Quevedos and their allies to impose substantial control over Ciudad Juárez throughout the decade. The United States' consulate conducted extensive surveillance on the Quevedo family's political involvements, establishing both the family's and Juárez's prominence in Chihuahuan political developments. As U.S. consul in Chihuahua Leo Blohm, affirmed in one such consular report: "The brother of Governor Quevedo (José Quevedo) controls Ciudad Juárez, the most important city in the state outside the capital."²⁶ The report fails to note that the Quevedos' dominance at

²⁴ *La Voz de Chihuahua*, January 3-12, 1932 and August 2-5, 1932. A series of articles in which the newspaper provides ample coverage alleging Quevedo's harmonious relationships with peasant and labor unions throughout the state.

²⁵ Nicole Mottier, "Drugs, Gangs and Politics in Ciudad Juárez," 32.

²⁶ Leo Blohm, Consular Report, February 1936, record group 84.3, American Consulates in Chihuahua City (hereafter ACCC), year 1936, vol. 5, United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland, hereafter USNARG/84.35, 5/1936/ACCC.

the border started with the presence of his brother as governor, and it does not clarify that this control goes back to early in the decade.

Jesús Quevedo won the 1931 election for mayor of Juárez with a comfortable lead, at least officially, as the election was shrouded with accusations of electoral fraud. The final tally found Jesús Quevedo victorious with 6,227 votes over Vázquez's 337.²⁷ Vázquez quickly questioned the legitimacy of the electoral process and called for the election's invalidation: "We consider the election null due to the fact that some authorities pressured voters so that the voting would be partial to Quevedo."²⁸ Needless to say, Quevedo took office later that year despite allegations of fraud. The other sibling, José, won the 1936 election. The U.S. consular report on that election explains the role fraudulent elections served in the latter's ascendance to the city's highest office. The report noted that Quevedo got elected despite representing only a minority of the party's members, which inevitably led to questioning the legality of the election, since no one can get legitimately elected by representing only a minority of the voters in a two candidate race. It also noted the fact that José Quevedo ensured that he had a trustworthy man for the prominent position of chief of police, since troubled times loomed on the horizon as questions of illegality engulfed the election: "The new mayor of Ciudad Juárez, José Quevedo Jr., who had been elected by the local political machine representing a minority (of the PNR in Juárez), took office on January 1st 1936. He kept his right-hand man, Chief of Police Jesús Chacón, but changed probably 90% of the other municipal employees."²⁹ The U.S. consular report describing the second election exposed the inability of the Quevedista political machine to maintain the electoral advantage of almost six thousand votes that they had enjoyed only five years previously

²⁷ *EL Continental*, November 5, 1931.

²⁸ *El Continental*, November 23, 1931.

²⁹ Labor notes, USNARG 84.3, American Consulate in Ciudad Juárez, year 1936, vol. 800, hereafter referred to as 800/1936/ACCJ.

in the election of Jesus Quevedo. As a result, during the 1936 election for municipal president in which the other sibling, José, won the election, the clan relied on electoral fraud to win, or at least in the eyes of their adversaries and those observing in the U.S. consulate. More notably, notwithstanding electoral fraud, the net loss of almost six thousand ballots shows the degree of discontent among the Juárez community with the Quevedos' reign of power.

Their political adversaries described the Quevedos' "family-power" relationship as ruthless and violent. The Quevedos personified the nepotism existent in Mexican politics, especially at the state level, after the Revolution. The fraternal concern of Governor Rodrigo Quevedo towards his brother, Jesús Quevedo, because of the latter's blatant intervention in the electoral process, shows the varying dynamics at work in their relationship. A seamless blend of nepotism and cynicism follow:

My dear Brother:

The reason of the present is to confirm everything in the telephone conversation that I had with you today, recommending that you once again act with energy to influence the behavior of the employees of the municipal administration regarding their active participation in electoral politics, considering that if you coolly analyze the implications to your administration from the failure to correct the municipal element, you will have no doubt in eliminating the ones who don't correspond to the confidence of the official positions they hold. If in any regard your administration could be accused by your political opposition, maybe this would be the strongest charge to be made, I am pointing this fact out to you because I wish you to be wise and respond by correcting the actions of your immediate collaborators.

Receive my regards with love, your brother.³⁰

Jesús Quevedo did not heed the advice of his brother, as numerous irregularities in subsequent elections demonstrate. These illegalities and continuous intrusions from the Quevedos prevented those coalitions in which workers participated from winning one single election. Again, these

³⁰ General Rodrigo Quevedo, Constitutional Governor of the State of Chihuahua to Jesús Quevedo, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, July 13, 1933, box number 1933, folder 741.1318, Archivo Municipal de Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, hereafter referred to as, 1933/741.1318/AMCJ.

charges of electoral fraud go back to the beginning of the decade. In the primary elections of 1931 to elect the party's candidate, the Plutarco Elias Bloc, a cross-class political alliance formed within the PNR to defeat the Quevedos, supported Francisco Vázquez as candidate for the municipal presidency. However, Jesús Quevedo won the primary elections within the PNR without having a wide-base support, and as mentioned previously, Vazquez denounced electoral fraud.

Early in the 1930s, before the Quevedos muscled their way into local politics, eventually taking control of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), which is today's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the PNR had two factions vying for political hegemony in Ciudad Juárez. The Quevedo family and their allies represented the Quevedista interests and the Plutarco Elías Calles Bloc, the other. The reformist wing of organized labor and other local movements of resistance, including the widespread neighborhood action groups in the area and business' interests who felt like outsiders in the close-knit Quevedista regime, represented the Plutarco Elías Calles Bloc.

The Bloc crossed class lines in an effort to defeat the Quevedos and quell their business interests in the alcohol, nightclub, gambling, and alleged drug enterprises, which they protected through their political offices. The group made a strong complaint against the Quevedo campaign of terror prior to the election of 1931 for municipal president: "Jesús Quevedo's followers have committed outrageous acts with the sanction of the law. They assaulted the offices of the Plutarco Elías Calles Bloc, intending to set the symbol of the great National Revolutionary Party on fire. Last night, the bar inspector Daniel Sánchez was drunk in the Cantina Modelo in Juárez Avenue, when he fired a gun trying to force the people who were there to say cheers for Jesús Quevedo. He also fired a bullet at the ceiling of the bar. A man whose last name is Aparicio has

dedicated the last few nights to the abuse of his neighbors, accompanied by a group of drunken persons frightening the neighborhood.”³¹

The clan utilized violence ubiquitously against all adversaries. The following letter shows the political persecution unleashed against those who did not support Quevedistas’ interests, even when the former conducted sanctioned political demonstrations throughout Ciudad Juárez. These acts showed the influence that the Quevedos exercised throughout the electoral campaign even before they officially assumed office, since this repression took place before the first Quevedo sibling reached office. Local authorities clearly favored the Quevedista protest, since the following letter warns the Elías bloc to cease their opposition or else face violent repression. In fact, the Elías Bloc received the brunt of the repression and a number of arrests despite the fact that their demonstration took place in an area where the Bloc was allowed to protest. Local authorities’ warnings showed the level of tension that the 1931 elections generated in Juárez.³² The letter also reveals the degree of control that the Quevedo political group already enjoyed in the city in the early 1930s, even before gaining office. Moreover, it shows how workers, via their coalitions, expressed their discontent with the Quevedos.³³

The conflict escalated to such an extent that the Plutarco Elías Calles faction of the opposing party warned the authorities that they would answer similarly and “punish those responsible for this outrage.”³⁴ Furthermore, public officials’ involvement in illegal electoral practices further reveals Quevedo’s hold on local power: “The Liga de Resistencia del Norte, Partidos Plutarco Elías Calles, and Revolucionario del Norte complain that the councilmen,

³¹ Bloque Plutarco Elías Calles to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Baltazar Adame, September 18, 1931, 1931/700/AMCJ.

³² Bloque Plutarco Elías Calles to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Baltazar Adame, September 18, 1931, 1931/700/AMCJ.

³³ Alberto Almeida, interim mayor of Ciudad Juárez to Mr. Alejandro Falliner, president of the Bloc, “Plutarco Elías Calles,” November 9, 1931, 1931/700/AMCJ.

³⁴ Bloque Plutarco Elías Calles to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Baltazar Adame, October 30, 1931, 1931/700/AMCJ.

Chief of Police, and other municipal employees participated last Sunday raising propaganda in favor of Guadalupe Díaz, destroying the advertisements that other parties were making. By agreement of the governor, I remind you of the memo ordering authorities in municipal and state government to abstain from participation in electoral issues.”³⁵ Needless to say, the numerous complaints by the opposition to the Quevedos were ignored as they continued winning elections throughout the 1930s despite their reliance on illegal electoral practices. Furthermore, these dynamics show the federal government’s lack of power, which despite their efforts to intervene in Juárez, were no match for local elites’ hold on power.

Subsequent Elections and the Limits of Political Alliances

In 1935, Margarito Herrera, the former head of the chamber of commerce in Juárez, ran for mayor again. In his acceptance speech, he summarized the political environment present at the border. Herrera declared the following; “I have the resolve to include in the new government, the principle of no nepotism so that we can finally end one of the most grave and shameful mistakes, in which most government locally engaged in.”³⁶ The message Herrera promoted, which consisted of disseminating the truth of the Quevedo reign of power and illegality, resounded among the different forces in Juárez who rallied behind Herrera’s anti-nepotism message and included a vibrant socialist base. The following organizations, present throughout the city, supported Herrera’s candidacy: Partido Socialista del Norte (Socialist party of the North), Partido Felipe Angeles, Centro 10 de Mayo de 1911 de los Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro Juvenil Juarenze, Bloque Socialista Juarenze (Juarenze Socialist Block), Alianza de los Trabajadores de Norte, Partido Francisco Villa, Centro Agricultores Unidos de los Partidos and

³⁵ Lic. Enrique Gonzales Flores to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Jesús Quevedo, July 20, 1933, 1933/741.1318/AMCJ.

³⁶ *El Continental*, July 27, 1935.

the Bloque Socialista del Norte (Socialist Block of the North).³⁷ These groups represented the reformist wing of organized labor showing Herrera gave workers a space to articulate their demands.

Besides the traditional business connections, support for Herrera also came from underprivileged, but organized, sectors of the community, including many Socialist organizations. These coalitions show that a cross-class alliance among different sectors of Juárez's political and economic life coordinated in an effort to defeat the Quevedos. It also shows organized labor's attempts to mobilize their members across class lines in an effort to access political power. The following document comes from The Bloque Socialista del Norte faction, under the umbrella of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario party, supporting the nomination of Margarito Herrera: "We have the honor to communicate to you that the members of the 'Partido Socialista del Norte' agreed to hold a large demonstration the 22nd of this month in honor of C. Don Margarito Herrera, the candidate nominated for the municipal presidency of this place, which is going to be organized at the Monument Benito Juárez; it will march through the principal streets and avenues in order, and will end with a rally at the same place it began."³⁸ Margarito Herrera enjoyed popular support from the organized labor wing of the PNR as expressed in the union's manifesto, which showed profound discontent with the candidacy of José Quevedo: "The traditional masquerade that was held in the Pan-American last Sunday, where authorities that are sustained by taxes paid by the citizens have conspired against social interests to support a candidate repudiated by public opinion, a person who has no merits, and the drawback of the support of his brother, the governor of the state, so that this is the right moment to show with your participation in this great popular movement justified discontent at the

³⁷ *El Continental*, July 27, 1935.

³⁸ Letter from the Bloque Socialista del Norte to Dr. Daniel Quiroz Reyes, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, September 19, 1935, 1934/745.1327/AMCJ.

perpetuation of government by a single family in the municipality, pretending through electoral fraud to inherit political offices as if they were family fiefdoms.”³⁹

The Cámara Sindical Obrera did not support Margarito Herrera publically during the election process of 1935, perhaps due to the CSO’s reputation as radical stalwarts of labor ideals. The other radical organizations in the city, such as the electricians, the Centro Agrícola, the Cámara Sindical Unitaria, and the Bakers’ Unions, did not publically support Herrera either. This lack of support illustrates the division between reformist organizations, and unions with Communist connections, and the latter’s refusal to go along the National Communist Party directive to enter into political alliances during the Popular Front era.

However, four years earlier, the CSO felt Mr. Herrera had the revolutionary credibility needed for a municipal post, in this case the National Prosperity Committee: “According to the agreement formalized at the meeting that was called through the initiative of the Cámara Sindical Obrera regarding the municipal presidency, with the participation of the workers’ organization, yourself, and representatives of this Institution, we have designated Mr. Margarito Herrera and Arnulfo Vázquez as members of the Comité Permanente de Prosperidad Nacional, as soon as you call its members for the inauguration meeting.”⁴⁰

Herrera’s widespread support from the various allying forces present in Juárez quickly felt violent repercussions from the Quevedo political machine. The following incident took place in the barrio of the Chaveña and the official report has many inconsistencies, including blaming members of the PSN for aggression towards some Quevedista supporters. The authorities admitted that the Quevedistas acted violently as well. Regardless of who initiated the incident, the report illustrates the level of violence that these elections generated, and demonstrates the

³⁹ Manifiesto from the Partido Socialista del Norte in support of the candidacy of Don Margarito Herrera, 1934/745/AMCJ.

⁴⁰ Cámara Nacional de Comercio of Ciudad Juárez to Arturo N. Flores, February 24, 1931, 1931/702.1219/AMCJ.

police and local officials' involvement in them. According to local officials, members of the PNR gathered at the Chaveña to begin their demonstration, and after marching through the streets, they ended their march at the Bellavista neighborhood. Moments later, a group of approximately 150 people of the Partido Socialista del Norte attacked them with shotguns and rocks. This version contradicts the PNR's members' testimony alleging Quevedistas shot first. The report later adds that the PSN shot at the police, so they shot into the air and sent the PSN's members scattering.⁴¹

Local police arrested high-ranking members of the PSN in the struggle, which shows that this protest included important individuals within the coalition against Quevedo. Later in the letter, the police tried to minimize another attack in the same area. They also argued that Herrera's supporters murdered a member of the PSN, which seems unlikely since they belonged to the same group.⁴² In light of the events publicized in the newspapers, this report seems erroneous. Nevertheless, the repression by the Quevedos continued to escalate until its culmination with assaults on the houses of Margarito Herrera and Guadalupe Díaz, the president of the Socialist Party. In a letter to Mayor Quiroz, the Chihuahua City mayor and a known radical, Manuel Dávila made an effort to set the record straight. He explained that the gunmen were hired by José Quevedo. He added that the chief of the military denied Herrera and the PSN protection without approval from the federal government. He ended the letter by warning Quiroz that they would seek federal intervention because their lives were in danger.⁴³

The radical wing of the Herrera coalition faced most of the violent repression. The news of the Quevedo political machine's intervention in the electoral process and the violence against

⁴¹ Ricardo Espinoza Ramirez, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, October 24, 1935, 1935/745.1327/AMCJ.

⁴² Ricardo Espinoza Ramirez, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, October 24, 1935, 1935/745.1327/AMCJ.

⁴³ Professor Manuel López Dávila to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Daniel Quiroz, September 4, 1935, 1935/759.1352/AMCJ.

the Socialists quickly reached Governor Quevedo officially, he distanced himself from his brother (at least when it came to the paper trail) by deciding that his sibling's actions did not warrant a more energetic denunciation or action. The following letter, written by the secretary of the state government, shows Quevedo's effort to separate his administration from his brother's actions:

. . . the Secretary of the Interior in memo number 38290, First Section, From Ciudad Juárez of that state, Second Table, Exp.2.311.M (6) 37, says the following:
From Ciudad Juárez, of that state, two messages were received from Mr. Roberto Calvillo and Juan Garcia, stating that the authorities of that place have put them in prison for being Herreristas. Due to this complaint, I would appreciate your initiating an investigation and, if the facts presented are true, enforce the rights of these persons and other citizens of that state in the present electoral struggle. I write this at the order of the Governor . . .⁴⁴

Only pressure from the federal government concerning the Quevedo clan's actions in Juárez forced Governor Quevedo to respond to the numerous voices arguing against the illegalities occurring throughout the campaign: "Through a message addressed to the Presidency of the Republic and given over to this Secretary, we are informed that Mr. Arturo R. Silva, from Cd. Juárez, has been again put in jail, just for the reason of posting propaganda for the next municipal elections of that state. - I am pleased to inform you of the latter and I ask you please to give orders to the corresponding authorities of that federal entity with all dignity in your charge to maintain absolute neutrality in the present electoral struggle."⁴⁵

Despite continuous protests, the violence did not cease. The clan often forced people to flee Mexico, fearing for their safety. Some of Herrera's supporters had to cross the border to ensure their security as happened with known PSN members, Ramon Morfín and Justo Acosta,

⁴⁴ Francisco G. Rodriguez, secretary general of the state government to the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, Daniel Quiroz, November 5, 1935, 1935/757.1358/AMCJ.

⁴⁵ Francisco G Rodriguez, secretary general of the state government to Daniel Quiroz, mayor of Ciudad Juarez, October 22, 1935, 1935/757.1358/AMCJ.

who “have been forced to leave the national territory to seek asylum in El Paso, Texas”.⁴⁶

Impunity reigned on the border. So despite the many violent acts perpetrated by the Quevedo political group throughout the election process, José Quevedo started his term without major distractions or massive protests.

So on January 1, 1936, at 11:00 a.m., José Quevedo Jr. took the oath of office as the new municipal president of Ciudad Juárez at the Alcazar cinema in front of a significant crowd. The ceremony went without incidents despite the announcements of rival groups’ intentions to disrupt the ceremony.⁴⁷ The election of 1936, won by José Quevedo, displayed the degree of power that the Quevedista political machine enjoyed in Juárez despite coalitions across class and ideology that galvanized to defeat them. It also meant that workers’ political involvement was met with violence and electoral fraud coming from the highest echelons of state and local political power. These aggressions prevented federations and unions from engaging in actions that worked more effectively, such as the use of direct action.

Political elites targeted main labor leaders with the hope that by taking a leader out, the organization would follow, as happened with Electricians’ Union representative, Armando Pórras who will be discussed in detail later in this chapter; but he was not the only one. On March 31, 1936, unknown assailants killed labor leader Manuel Pineda in the state’s capital. Pineda was one of the original founders of the CSO in Chihuahua and in Ciudad Juárez and associated with known Communists, including Pascual Padilla. At the time of the killing, Pineda was the state’s secretary of the Cámara Nacional de Trabajo (National Labor’s Chamber), a labor conglomerate closely associated with the federal government. The CSO removed Pineda from the organization when he was accused of theft by the radical Sindicato de Carboneros (Coal

⁴⁶ Francisco G. Rodríguez, secretary general of the state government to Daniel Quiroz, mayor of Ciudad Juárez, , November 18, 1935, 1935/759.1362/AMCJ.

⁴⁷ *El Continental*, January 1, 1936.

Workers Union) in 1933, led by Padilla.⁴⁸ He continued working with other labor organizations, but he never returned to the ranks of the CSO or any other radical organization. Nevertheless, his death resonated among most of the labor organizations in the state, including the CSO, which protested his murder.⁴⁹ Pineda supported the election of Talamantes, and he was shot by a supporter of General Merino, Talamantes' opponent for the governorship.⁵⁰ Although Pineda's murder took place in the state's capital, most of his organizational efforts, which included the CSO's founding, happened in Ciudad Juárez. The radical wing of the labor movement in Juárez had already expelled Pineda three years prior to his death. Nevertheless, the murder of a high-profile labor leader inevitably created a climate of intimidation and fear throughout the entire movement.

Moreover, political elites on the border specifically targeted leaders of known Communist organizations. The *Centro Agrícola* and the *Sin Trabajo* (Unemployed Committee) led by Pascual Padilla suffered the brunt of the repression. The following incident from 1932 effectively captures the Quevedos' methods of dealing with workers, especially those with an affinity for direct action. The *Sin Trabajo* organization formed by 1,500 unemployed workers in the area, the majority of them longtime residents of Juárez, published a manifesto in the local media in which they announced a 'silent hunger' demonstration. "After walking five blocks to go to the municipal presidency, we were stopped by the police, who did not let the march continue even though we had permission. The authorities violated Article 8 of the General Constitution of the Republic by denying us the sacred right of petition, councilmen Baca Gallardo argued that

⁴⁸ CSO's Justice Commission in the case against Manuel Pineda, 1933/AMCJ.

⁴⁹ *Voz de Chihuahua*, March 29-31, 1937.

⁵⁰ *El Paso Herald-Post*, March 31, 1936.

we gave an ugly image to visitors. Later came the Chief of the Military garrison with a squad of troops and proceeded to break up our demonstration.”⁵¹

The union showed that local officials violated the constitution in their actions against it and proclaimed Article 8 as its justification for complaint. They also argued that neither machine guns nor police batons would solve hunger. They called Quevedo’s operatives a caste of jackals that wanted to prolong for an indefinite time the suffocating system “under which we live.”⁵² The union called upon other organizations in the city for support, which shows their expectations regarding the prevalent solidarity among workers during this period. Perhaps more notably, the union’s mention of a “suffocating system” also reveals the degree to which class interest influenced it and demonstrates workers’ awareness of a political and economic system based on class. The repression did not end there, since weeks later Jesús Quevedo imprisoned the principal leaders of the movement for fifteen days and imposed a fine of ninety pesos without any cause.⁵³

Another incident at the mayor’s office on June 9, 1935, between municipal president and known Quevedista, Dr. Quiroz, and the Unemployed Committee, illustrates the type of actions that local officials engaged in to weaken radical workers’ influence.⁵⁴ The committee was comprised of local political, labor, and peasant groups, and was led by Pascual Padilla. At the meeting, the group argued that they represented the “concerns of the working classes in this area.”⁵⁵ Trinidad Bustillos, secretary general of the Unemployed Committee, told the audience that President Cárdenas had offered to send a commission to investigate the terrible conditions of

⁵¹ Agrupación de Obreros y Campesinos Sin Trabajo, July 25, 1932, unknown newspaper, 1933/731.1293/AMCJ.

⁵² Agrupación de Obreros y Campesinos Sin Trabajo, July 25, 1932, unknown newspaper, 1933/731.1293/AMCJ.

⁵³ Secretary of the state government, Ismael C. Falcón, to the Ciudad Juárez’s mayor, Jesús Quevedo, August 13, 1932, 1933/731.1293/AMCJ.

⁵⁴ The Comité de Desocupados was composed of the following organizations: Centro Agrícola e Industrial (Communist), Comité Sindical Unitario (Communist), Sindicato Unitario de Comerciantes en pequeño (Small Business Association), Comité de Trabajadores Revolucionarios de la Frontera (Committee of Revolutionary Workers in the border) and the Sindicato de Trabajadores del Norte (Northern Workers Union). For more information regarding Quiroz’s connection with Quevedo, see Nicole Mottier, “Drugs, Gangs, and Politics,” 32.

⁵⁵ Official affidavit from the second district state judge, June 9, 1935, 1935/757.1358/ AMCJ.

workers in this region. Bustillos also distributed copies of the letters he exchanged with Cárdenas to the audience. He continued with his speech when several policemen stormed the gathering, pushing the audience away as they went after Bustillos to arrest him.

When workers demanded that the police free their leader, a mass action took place in which “workers liberated him” from prison. During the struggle, police “drew their guns against the audience.” Pedro Martínez, a member of the Centro Agrícola Industrial, was shot by the police. Later that evening, the police also arrested another worker, Rafael Páramo, who was brutally beaten. Workers manifested their indignation to the newspapers. They detailed the brutal police response and detailed how the police threatened their lives if they continued with their protests.⁵⁶

However, the Quiroz administration blamed workers for inciting the violence. Workers bitterly attested, “Naturally, they now say that it was our fellow workers who were the ones who jumped on them.” The union added that in a “Socialist government,” workers should have legal protections. Instead they were “answered with bullets.” They demanded the immediate liberation of their “fellow workers” in order to bring justice.⁵⁷

The widespread utilization of violence against these radical organizations resulted in numerous shows of support. The Liga contra el Fachismo y la Guerra Imperialista (The League against Fascism and Imperialist Wars) denounced the repression against the Unemployed Committee by the police: “This organization (Unemployed Committee) has fought tenaciously for the immediate and effective improvement of workers. It is precisely due to this reason that they organized public meetings, seeking through this to EDUCATE the worker proletariat and the peasants in their classist fight against capitalists, the everlasting exploiters of the humble

⁵⁶ Official affidavit from the second district state judge, June 9, 1935, 1935/757.1358/ AMCJ.

⁵⁷ *Unión de Trabajadores del Comercio en General* to Juárez’s mayor, Dr. Daniel Quiroz, the state governor, Rodrigo Quevedo, and President Lazaro Cárdenas, June 20, 1935, 1935/757.1358/AMCJ .

classes.”⁵⁸ The Liga claimed that the tactics and goals of the Unemployed Committee resulted in a violent response from authorities once these actions seriously threatened their hold on political power, which is precisely this study’s position. Finally, as mentioned in previous chapters, a warrant for Padilla’s arrest arrived from the state of Jalisco. Quevedo’s appointed chief of police, Jesús Chacón, suggested that the mayor could not ignore the warrant, and that its execution would improve local and federal cooperation. The article explains that the warrant did not contain any specifics regarding a crime; it only called for Padilla’s arrest without any details. Padilla requested an injunction (amparo) to stop his arrest.⁵⁹ Eventually, Padilla had to leave the border or, as Chief Chacón announced in the local media, “face arrest for vagrancy and put him to work to clean the streets.”⁶⁰ Padilla returned to Juárez, or simply never left to form the new Genuino Centro Agrícola Industrial after the original Centro Agrícola, co-opted by local officials in 1938, removed him from the organization. The CSO also expelled Padilla in 1940. Local officials did not hesitate to arrest Padilla at least twenty times during the decade as well. The fracture within the radical wing of organized labor evidenced by Padilla’s removal, illustrates the degree of division among organized labor in the late 1930s. It was clear that the reformist wing of the labor movements on the border wanted the radical unions weakened, including the CSO, the Centro Agrícola, and the Electricians’ Union.

Armando Pórras Murder

The aforementioned conflict between the Electricians’ Union and the Quevedos turned lethal on July 9, 1938, when Juan Montes, a non-union employee of the power company in

⁵⁸ *Liga contra el Fachismo y la Guerra Imperialista* to Felipe Martínez, secretary of the mayor of Ciudad Juárez, June 26, 1935, 1935/757.1358/AMCJ.

⁵⁹ *El Continental*, May 8, 1936.

⁶⁰ *El Continental*, May 8, 1936.

Ciudad Juárez, murdered the Electricians Union's leader, Armando Pórras, outside his home. Montes also shot Pórras' wife, mother, and father, who later recovered from their injuries. Pórras' father recounted the dramatic killing: "Juan Montes got gradually closer, hiding behind the power posts, but it was so sudden, got right next to Armando, said his name out loud, and then shot him three times point blank."⁶¹ Immediately Pórras' wife intervened to protect her husband, and Montes said, "There is some for you too."⁶² Juan Montes worked as a chauffeur for the former mayor of Juárez, Jesús Quevedo (1932-1934), who also operated the electric company at the time of the assassination. Pórras' murder was the culmination of years of hostile negotiations between the electrical union and the power company's operators, one of whom was Jesús Quevedo.

Pórras' murder resonated throughout the nation. For example, the Electrician's Union of Ciudad Guzmán, in the state of Jalisco, wrote a letter to President Cárdenas detailing Pórras' murder, "A member of the *H. Sindicato de Obreros y Empleados de la Compañía Mexicana Productora de Fuerza y Electricidad S. A.*, was brutally assassinated in Ciudad Juárez, at his house, when three individuals suddenly shot our fellow worker Pórras, his parents, wife, and children. Pórras died and the rest of his family members were injured."⁶³ The union also argued that Jesús Quevedo and Domingo H. Tamez, the main stockholders of the company, were the alleged masterminds of the crime since the murderers are their gunmen, and Pórras, organizer and leader of the union, had become an obstacle with his firm resistance, which prevented the

⁶¹ *El Continental*, July 11, 1938.

⁶² *El Continental*, July 11, 1938.

⁶³ Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica en Cd. Guzman, Jalisco to President Lázaro Cárdenas, July 15, 1938, 1933/741.1318/AMCJ.

company from continuing “the exploitation of workers.” In their eyes, Pórras defended workers against business owners.⁶⁴

A newspaper article published in *El Continental*, illustrates the connections between the gunmen and the Quevedo clan. It also goes into some detail regarding the motive for the murder in an effort to exonerate Quevedo by creating the perception that the murder did not result from political reasons, but from mere misunderstandings: “Salvador Sosa, arrested for the murder of Pórras, told authorities that he is a member of the Electricians’ Union and that he was aware of the problems between workers and the Company. Operators had expressed that they were no longer able to cover payroll and that a readjustment was necessary. . . afterwards at the New York bar, Sosa claims he saw Juan Montes, Javier Serrano and J. Hidalgo, who were talking about the readjustment. Roberto Quevedo and José Ángeles were also there, and they bought him a beer. . . He eventually said that he believed that the crime was the result of the enemies Pórras had among other workers and employers of the power company.”⁶⁵

The article also reveals that Roberto Quevedo was present in company of the eventual killers, which further connects the Quevedo political machine with the murder. Pórras’ killing exhibits the efficacy of the state’s strategy to weaken radical labor movements by co-opting, exiling, or murdering certain labor leaders. For the Electricians’ union, the murder of their leader had as a consequence a change in the leadership after elections shrouded in a climate of intimidation and violence took place, which eventually negated the implementation of the collective contract the union fought for ten years. The Electricians were not the only radical organization co-opted by economic and political elites.

⁶⁴ Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica en Cd. Guzman, Jalisco to President Lázaro Cárdenas, July 15, 1938, 1933/741.1318/AMCJ.

⁶⁵ *El Continental*, July 11, 1938.

The CSO's Co-optation

After years of continuous violence and political persecution, on February 8, 1940, in a “heated assembly,” one of the original founders of the CSO and Communist leader, Pascual Padilla, was prohibited from making any statements in the CSO’s name, which basically meant an outright expulsion from the organization.⁶⁶ More notably, as had happened with the Electricians Union, this meeting, shrouded by intimidation and violence in which Padilla was removed, also brought about a change in the leadership structure of the CSO. In addition to Padilla’s de facto expulsion, Secretary General Agustín C. Gonzales was removed alongside all other union officials. Radical and Communist labor organizations, such as the Cámara Unitaria, the Coal Workers’ Union, and the Libertad Bakers’ Union walked away from the meeting.⁶⁷ In fact, the new leader, Manuel Herrera, was the vice mayor prior to his appointment to head the CSO. Herrera represented the conservative wing of the labor movement in Juárez,⁶⁸ and he had political connections with Governor Gustavo Talamantes; hence the initial reason for his appointment as a high-ranking official in the local administration to begin with.

Political and economic elites resorted to violence against the most radical and militant unions in the Ciudad Juárez region. The CSO endured a decade of violent attacks against it before local political and economic elites had the ability to direct the union’s leadership. It took ten years to dismantle this radical organization through outright violence, including murder, persecution, false arrests, and electoral fraud. CSO’s widespread use of direct action, mass public protests, and strikes exposed local officials’ lack of control over labor while at the same time making the CSO a target. The CSO sought a continuous and significant presence in the

⁶⁶ *El Continental*, February 8, 1940.

⁶⁷ *El Continental*, February 8, 1940.

⁶⁸ *El Paso Herald Post*, March 31, 1936.

community by engaging in continuous strikes, using the local courts successfully, and establishing collective contracts, and were prominent during special celebrations, including Independence Day, Worker's Day, and the Revolution's anniversary. The coverage this radical union generated reached the top echelons of power, since the U.S. media and politicians constantly reacted to the events in Juárez.⁶⁹ Finally, CTM and former CSO labor leaders, like Miguel Oaxaca, collaborated with the Mine, Mill, and Smelter union to organize workers in El Paso.⁷⁰ Organized labor's actions on the border became a transnational affair as well, further increasing their power and potential for radicalization.

The ability to protest and take to the streets needs highlighting. Kevin Middlebrook has shown that political and economic elites have sought "to constrain the frequency and duration of mass mobilizations and direct it through approved organizational CHANNELS AND LIMIT MOBILIZATION activities to elite-defined political or economic objectives."⁷¹ Elites on the border utilized the aforementioned approved outlets in an effort to curtail labor militancy, but violence was their primary weapon to undermine unions, like the Electricians' Union, or federations, like the CSO, as it forced a change in leadership.

The violence put a halt to these processes of class formation through cultural assertion and direct action. This was especially true of the CSO and its Communist allies who had to hide from authorities to avoid arrest. As a result, the CSO lost much of its influence in the community. The continuous violence gradually inhibited the use of radical labor tactics to generate pressure against businesses and authorities, including massive mobilizations.

⁶⁹ *El Paso Times*, *El Paso Herald Post*, and *El Continental*, March 8-15, 1940. The arrests and subsequent proceedings involved high-ranking officials from both sides of the border.

⁷⁰ Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 42, 101, 131-132. See also, *El Paso Times*, *El Paso Herald Post*, and *El Continental*, March 8-15, 1940.

⁷¹ Kevin J. Middlebrook, *Paradox of Revolution*, 10. Middlebrook uses caps to highlight that particular aspect of his argument.

Furthermore, it interrupted the ongoing process of class formation by taking away one of its primary weapons. Strikes, or even threats of strikes, were also met with violence, including murder, as happened with Armando Pórras in 1938. Establishing a climate of terror curtailed the activities that empowered workers the most.

As mentioned above, this hostile environment impacted the internal election processes of certain unions as well. For example, continuous harassment in the form of false arrests and threats of violence caused a decline in workers' participation in the electoral processes of their own organizations. In other instances, intimidation forced them to abstain from voting altogether, or to vote for a different candidate, as happened with the Electricians' Union and with the CSO.⁷² As a result of lower voter turnout and fraud, these tactics ensured that the resulting leadership would eventually collaborate with Quevedismo, or other local officials. Furthermore, the events of the 1930s demonstrate that violence, deportations, sensationalistic trials, arrests, and murder halted transnational efforts to combine the movement on both sides of the border. The impunity the Quevedistas' enjoyed came to a political end with the removal of Mayor José Quevedo. However, this apparent victory for organized labor in Juárez brought unforeseen consequences as well.

José Quevedo's Ousting and the Militarization of the Border

José Quevedo did not enjoy the support of Governor Talamantes in the municipal elections of 1936, which exposed him to his countless adversaries. Once Governor Rodrigo Quevedo's term ended in 1936, the Quevedo political machine's impressive ability to remain above the law changed quickly. Their enemies around the state, including organized labor, held many grievances against them and quickly pressured Governor Talamantes to act against the

⁷² *El Continental*, July 10-20, 1938 and March 1940.

Quevedo group. However, for organized labor, Quevedo's removal also came in the form of a de facto military occupation of the border by federal forces which in turn curtailed most expressions of militancy, including massive protests, walkouts, and strikes.

The first sign of problems for the Quevedos in Juárez came when Governor Talamantes arrived in Ciudad Juárez at the beginning of March, 1937, and immediately criticized the performance of the local administration: "They have done nothing to benefit the people, the streets are dirty and dusty, the local slaughter house is a monopoly, the red light district has not been removed from downtown, and the aldermen have not called on José Quevedo to do something about it."⁷³ José Quevedo could not respond to these accusations, since he and his allied aldermen mysteriously traveled to Mexico City before the Governor's arrival.⁷⁴

However, Quevedo realized that he needed to get back to the border and face his accusers if he wanted to stay in power. On March 5, 1937, Quevedo returned to the city and quickly denied the rumors about his resignation caused by his abrupt disappearance and that of his allied aldermen: "There is no motive for deposing the entire municipal administration of Ciudad Juárez since I sincerely believe that I as leader of the cooperative, as well as the councils and the rest of the administration have fulfilled our duty as much as we could, have loyally cooperated with the state government and have remained committed to improve the people."⁷⁵ Quevedos argument, without his brother's occupying the highest office in the state, did not carry any weight. On March 19, 1937, a state judge responded to accusations of embezzlement against José Quevedo by issuing a warrant for his arrest. Governor Talamantes also removed his chief of police and named Quevedo's eventual replacement, Captain Antero Torres, as the new chief. Furthermore,

⁷³ *El Continental*, March 3, 1937.

⁷⁴ *El Continental*, March 3, 1937.

⁷⁵ *El Continental*, March 5, 1937.

an audit on the municipality found many irregularities, including extraordinary amounts of missing cash as well as scores of unpaid bills and loans.⁷⁶

On March 26, 1937, the state legislature removed Quevedo from his elected position as mayor of Ciudad Juárez. Quevedo used the courts to delay his removal, but only for a few days because on March 31, 1937, the judge declared the action against him legal.⁷⁷ Quevedo also tried to persuade the federal military commander in the area to intervene, but to no avail. Capitan Juan Felipe Rico did not interfere in the removal of Quevedo until the beginning of April when his troops, under orders from Mexico City, began patrolling in Juárez after Quevedo clung to his position: “José Quevedo refused to turn over his office, and it was not until Governor Talamantes was reported to have had a personal conference with President Cárdenas that orders to the garrison commander arrived from Mexico City to install Captain Torres, which was accomplished on April 8.”⁷⁸

The actions by the federal government, which for years had tried to weaken the political Quevedista machine without much success, also served the purpose of undermining unions, which depended on massive shows of public numbers and strikes. Thus, the presence of the army on the streets significantly subverted their expressions of power in the community, since mere presence of the military inherently prevented public manifestations.

As a result, the removal of José Quevedo in March of 1937, after years of continuous illegal acts, came a bit late for organized labor. The constant acts of harassment and violence weakened the labor movement significantly with the murder of their leaders, and their movements co-opted by corrupt elections. The newspaper and archival evidence throughout the 1940s in Juárez suggests that unions and federations’ militancy and capacity for direct action

⁷⁶ *El Continental*, March 19-21 1937.

⁷⁷ *El Continental*, March 31, 1937.

⁷⁸ Political Situation in Chihuahua, USNARG/84.3, 1937/4/ACCC.

gradually disappeared. This disappearance was aligned with the presence of the army on the streets and the co-optation of the few radical unions present on the border. On the surface, Quevedo's removal appeared a victory for organized labor, but it really placed them into a position where they were no longer able to use the streets for effective protest once the army occupied them.

José Quevedo's ousting also demonstrated that without the political support of his brother in the governor's office, the premature end of his tenure was inevitable. This explains the nature of the politics of Chihuahua in which political connections and loyalties ruled the state. In Chihuahua, powerful local elites trumped the federal government's power, as evidenced by Cárdenas' fruitless efforts to stop Quevedo. This scenario was especially true if a particular province had a strongman as governor, as was the case in Chihuahua.

Finally, although José Quevedo spent a few months in a United States prison charged with fraud, he never served time in Mexico. His brother, Jesús, remained in the city to operate the local power company and the rest of the family's interests. His brother, Rodrigo, did not experience any significant repercussions either, since he became chief commander of the Guanajuato military zone, located in the central part of the nation, after his term as governor ended. This shows that due to their political, economic, and military power, the Quevedos enjoyed almost total impunity for their actions in Ciudad Juárez due to the historical power that governors in Mexico had over their own provinces, sometimes at the expense of the federal government.

The Quevedo clan's eventual fall later in the 1930s from grace did not empower organized labor, since by that time the level of violence had already established an environment of fear, which slowly attenuated organized labor's radicalness and reliance on direct action to

such an extent that independent unions eventually disappeared from the city. Moreover, the way the Quevedos dealt with organized labor, notwithstanding the fact that it cost his brother the municipality of Juárez, showed future local political and economic elites that violence, in many forms, could effectively neutralize the advancement of workers and communities. Despite Jose Quevedo's removal, the environment of fear remained.

Jose Borunda's Murder and its Relation to Labor

Juárez Mayor José Borunda's murder in April, 1938, after he spent less than three months in office, illustrates the increasingly common use of violence to get rid of local officials in Juárez who sided with labor. Borunda supported workers in his electoral campaign. As Charles Hershberger noted, "José Borunda was the darling of the local labor unions, another important factor for an ambitious Mexican politician living in the Lazaro Cárdenas era."⁷⁹ Borunda replaced General Rico, who briefly assumed Jesús Quevedo's position after the latter's removal from office in 1937 by incoming Governor Luis Talamantes in an intra-elite conflict. Quevedo was removed only a couple of months before completing his term. Local newspapers covered the murder effectively since they followed the police investigation throughout the entire process. Municipal President José Borunda was killed on the 1st of April; a bomb inside a box ended his life and that of worker Domingo Barraza.⁸⁰

The following article in the *Continental* newspaper in El Paso, Texas, summarizes Borunda's short stint as mayor of Juárez: "Jose Borunda was 38 years old and had been mayor for exactly 90 days before being murdered last Friday when he opened a mysterious package received hours before, which functioned with mathematical precision, also killing Chief of

⁷⁹ Charles Hershberger, "The Death of Borunda: Alcalde of Ciudad Juárez: Chihuahuan Politics During the 1930s," *Arizona and the West*, 8, no. 3 (1996): 208.

⁸⁰ *El Continental*, April 2, 1938.

Janitors Domingo Barraza.”⁸¹ Barraza did not belong to any union; he was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time. The use of a bomb to kill a local official demonstrates the sophisticated level of violence adversaries utilized to get rid of their enemies in Juárez.

Borunda’s murder coverage in the local newspapers evolved as the month progressed. Initially, the local police accused Alfredo Aziz, a former official of the Quevedista regime in Juárez and a close friend and political associate of the Quevedo clan, of the crime after Borunda’s secretary claimed Aziz gave the package containing the dynamite to him early in the day so that he could give it to Borunda. This accusation seemed plausible since the Quevedo political machine did not support Borunda in his election for mayor of Juárez, and because the clan frequently resorted to violence to resolve conflicts throughout the decade. Ex-governor Rodrigo Quevedo denied any involvement.⁸² The former mayor of Juárez, José Quevedo, remained in prison accused of fraud at La Tuna, New Mexico, during the time of the murder and also denied any connection.

The following report by the U.S. Consulate described the animosity between the different political forces participating in the election for mayor of Juárez in 1938. It came months before the murder and the eventual removal of José Quevedo. “The final phases of the fight between the Talamantes and Quevedo factions seem to have been concentrated in the campaign of the Borunda-Escobar ticket against the Rodrigues-Mares ticket. The first is being backed by present Governor Talamantes and the second by ex-Governor Quevedo.”⁸³ The report confirms that the Quevedos’ did not support Borunda in his run for mayor.

As it turned out, within two weeks, the municipal office secretary under Borunda, Efrén Escobar, confessed to the crime and exonerated Aziz from any connection with the murder. The

⁸¹ *El Continental*, April 3, 5, 13, 1938.

⁸² Charles Hershberger, “The Death of Borunda: Alcalde of Ciudad Juárez,” 214-224.

⁸³ Political Situation in Chihuahua, USNARG 84.3, 4/1937/ACCC.

change of testimony on the part of Escobar convolutes the entire situation. Once he confessed, local authorities provided a plausible motive for the murder. Apparently, Borunda and Escobar had some business ventures together connected to mining that went awry, and thus, Escobar killed him. This explanation seemed unlikely: this so called 'business venture' happened years before, and more importantly, Borunda had picked Escobar as his running mate.⁸⁴

Regardless of the real motive or culprit behind Borunda's murder, the blatant use of violence against certain individuals or groups in the city, usually those associated with pro-labor positions, came from the top echelons of local and state-wide political power. This allowed political and economic elites to stop pro-labor initiatives and gains in this area by establishing an environment of fear. Local political and economic elites' use of murder to resolve conflicts shows the severity that these labor-related conflicts reached. We can only imagine the transgressions that did not make the headlines because the victims were not high-profile labor leaders or city mayors. These actions established a legacy of violence in Juárez that still affects the city today.

Conclusion

Organized labor's political alliances on the border and in the mining region differed dramatically when compared to each other. In the mining region, unions and federations never questioned the place of ASARCO at the top of the existing economic hierarchies, nor the role of political elites as stalwarts of labor's well-being. They did, however, rely on direct action extensively and exhibited at various times other forms of radicalism, including widespread unionization, collective bargaining, and class solidarity across trade and skill. As a result of the

⁸⁴ *El Continental*, April 3-15, 1938.

limits placed on their radicalism, federations did not suffer any type of violence against their organizing efforts, which allowed them to operate freely and achieve important concessions rarely seen among workers. Their solidarity had limits. They supported the Quevedos regime even when it was harming and even killing trade unionists in another community. In Juárez, things played out differently. Local authorities' economic and political interests directly contravened those of workers. From the start of the 1930s, local officials made sure unions and federations did not have any influence in local politics, as "securing political control had proven crucial for the Quevedos being able to dominate the Juárez drug trade."⁸⁵ They achieved this through the use of violence and electoral fraud, which in turn affected workers' ability to act in radical ways.

This difference resulted also from state and national politics. In the mining region, unions and federations utilized post-revolutionary nationalism to attack foreign-owned ASARCO, which made the giant smelter an easy target in the radical nationalist post-revolutionary years. Additionally, Quevedo wholeheartedly supported the Cárdenas administration in their process of empowering workers in the mining region, especially during the administrations of his political allies, Gabriel Chávez and Chacón Baca. He also sided with workers in most strikes, collective bargaining disputes, and price regulation efforts. In other words, perhaps, it seems likely that Governor Quevedo acted the way he did in the mining region so that he could build enough political capital with federal authorities to get away with his anti-labor policies against workers in Juárez.

⁸⁵ Nicole Mottier, "Drugs, gangs, and Politics in Ciudad Juárez", 41.

CONCLUSION

The Revolution increased workers' power in the communities under study. In an effort to attenuate this power, which would have eventually threatened their ability to govern, political elites put in place hegemonic processes that provided workers with access to certain spheres of power in exchange for labor peace. In Ciudad Juárez and the Hidalgo Mining District, local elites had to make significant concessions to workers. Workers readily took advantage of the legal mechanisms established by the revolution to articulate long sought out popular demands, such as unionization, the ability to strike, collective bargaining, and the use of conciliatory courts. In the mining district, workers threatened political elites' hold on power going back to the 1920s, preventing capital owners from ignoring collective contracts, which gave workers a degree of control in the workplace. As a result of workers' increasing influence, local political elites supported workers to shield their own vulnerability, although this situation gradually changed once political elites cemented their mandate. At the same time, workers' ties with the dominant class undermined the potential for further radicalization. Workers' continuous victories in the courts, which gave them a de facto control of the workplace, prevented them from pushing further. Although counterintuitive, the success enjoyed in the workplace, the community, and the courts curtailed their ambition to change power structures and take hold of the revolution. Thus, miners in the mining district missed an historical opportunity to transform their legacy.

On the border, workers radicalized their movement. Interestingly enough, this radicalization began in earnest once political elites responded with violence to workers' demands

to merely uphold the law. Although workers in Juárez also increased their power during the 1930s through collective contracts and continuous court victories, political elites use of violence slowly undermined workers' power. They achieved this by co-opting the most radical unions and federations through coercive methods starting in the late 1930s and continuing into the 1940s.

The study of the Hidalgo mining district and Ciudad Juárez demonstrates that workers increasing influence began in the 1920s and matured in the 1930s. This study argues that this power resulted from the high levels of unity and the willingness to use direct action that workers demonstrated. Nevertheless, shrewd politicians utilized this momentum to curtail further advancement in a risky move that eventually succeeded. On the border, political elites made the decision to confront workers head on, even if it meant violating the rule of law, once their economic and political interests were threatened by workers' increasing power.

President Lázaro Cárdenas made timid efforts to stop Quevedo in Juárez, perhaps due to his own fragile hold on power, and the importance of the mining industry in the Mexican economy. Once Quevedo proved a staunch labor protector in the district, and a fierce anti-Catholic, as well as a supporter of Cárdenas' educational policies, he was able to have a *carte blanche* in Juárez. The border situation also exposed the limits of solidarity that miners displayed towards their border counterparts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Archives

Archivo Municipal de Santa Bárbara (AMSB), Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, México

1928-1944

Archivo Histórico Municipal de Parral (AHMP), Parral, Chihuahua, México

1928-1942

Archivo Municipal de Ciudad Juárez (AMCJ), Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México

1928-1942

Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), México City

Presidential papers collection: mostly letters and memos from unions to the president of the Republic.

Pascual Ortiz Rubio (1930-1932)

Abelardo Rodríguez (1932-1934)

Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940)

Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946)

United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland

US Consulate reports in Ciudad Juárez, 1930-1940. Record group 84.3

US Consulate reports in Chihuahua, 1930-1940, Record group 84.3

Oral Interview

Interview with Don Miguel Rodriguez, Miners' Union founder, section 11, Santa Barbara. He is 105 years old. Interview conducted in June, 2010, in Santa Barbara, Chihuahua.

Newspapers

El Correo de Parral (1925-1940), Parral, Chihuahua.

El Continental (1928-1942), El Paso, Texas.

El Paso Times (1930-1943), El Paso, Texas.

EL Heraldo de Chihuahua (1988), Chihuahua City.

El Correo de Chihuahua

El Mexicano

El Crisol

El Machete (Mexico City)

Secondary Sources

Books

Aguilar Camín, Hector. *La frontera nomada: Sonora y la Revolución Mexicana*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1977.

Alamillo, Jose. *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in: a California town, 1880-1960*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Almada, Francisco. *La Revolución en el estado de Chihuahua*. Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Estudios Historicos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1964.

Andrews, Greg. *Shoulder to Shoulder? The American Federation of Labor, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1924*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Anguiano, Arturo. *El estado y la politica obrera del Cardenismo*. Mexico City: Era, 1984.

Ashby, Joe C. *Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cardenas*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963.

Bakewell, Peter. *Miners of the Red Mountain: Indian Labor in Potosí, 1545-1650*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984.

- . *Minería y Sociedad en el México Colonial: Zacatecas, 1546-1700*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976.
- Bantjes, Adrian. *As if Jesus Walked on Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora and the Mexican Revolution*. Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 1998.
- Bassols, Jacinto Barrera. *Correspondencia (1904-1912) Ricardo Flores Magón*. Universidad Autónoma de Puebla,
- Beezley William H. *Insurgent Governor: Abraham Gonzalez and the Mexican Revolution in Chihuahua*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973.
- Benjamin, Thomas, and Mark Wasserman, eds. *Provinces of the Revolution: Essays on Regional History, 1910-1929*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990.
- Berman, Daniel. *Muerte en el Trabajo*. México City: Siglo veintiuno editores, 1983.
- Bernstein, Marvin. *The Mexican Mining Industry, 1890-1950: A Study of the Interaction of Politics, Economics, and Technology*. Albany: State University of New York, 1964.
- Bethell, Leslie. *Mexico Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Botz, Jeffrey. *Revolution Within Revolution: Cotton Textile Workers and the Mexican Labor Regime, 1910-1923*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- . *El Salario en Mexico*. Mexico DF: Ediciones El Caballito, 1986.
- Bowden, Charles. *Juarez: The Laboratory of Our Future*. New York: Aperture Foundation, 1998.
- Boyer, Christopher. *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Reform in Post-Revolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Brading, David A. *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico 1763-1810*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1972.
- , ed. *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Brown C. Jonathan. *Workers' Control in Latin America, 1930-1979*. Chapel Hill: University of California Pres, 1997.
- Carbajal, David López. *La minería en Bolaños, 1740-1810*. Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2002.
- Carbo, Ana Rivera. *Anarcosindicalismo y revolución en México*. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010.
- Cárdenas, Nicolás García. *Empresas y trabajadores en la gran minería mexicana, 1900-1929, la revolución y el nuevo sistema de relaciones laborales*. México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1998.

- . *Una experiencia obrera radical: los mineros de Jalisco (1920-1930)*. Mexico: Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, 1993.
- Carr, Barry. *El movimiento obrero y la politica en Mexico, 1910-1929*. Mexico City: Sepentas, 1976.
- . *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth Century Mexico*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.
- Caulfield, Norman. *Mexican Workers and the State: Form the Porfiriato to NAFTA*. Fort Worth: Texas University Press, 1998.
- Clark, Ruth Marjorie. *La organización obrera en Mexico*. México DF: Ediciones Era, 1979.
- Cole, Jeffrey. *The Potosí Mita, 1573-1700*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- Contreras, Carlos. *Mineros y Campesinos en los Andes*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1983.
- Córdova, Arnaldo. *La Política de Masas del Cardenismo*. Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1994.
- . *La ideología de la Revolución Mexicana: Formación del Nuevo régimen*. Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales. UNAM. México DF: Ediciones Era, 1973.
- . *La Formación del poder político en México*. México DF: Ediciones Era. 1972.
- . *La clase obrera en la historia de Mexico: En una época de crisis, (1928-1934)*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1989.
- Cramaussel, Chantal. *Poblar la frontera: La provincia de Santa Barbara en la Nueva Vizcaya en los siglos XVI y XVII*. Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 2007.
- Cumberland, Charles C. *The Mexican Revolution: The Constitutionalists Years*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972.
- De la Pena Gonzalez, Moises. *Chihuahua Economico, Tomos, I, II, III*. Mexico D.F.: talleres graficos de Adrian Morales, 1948,
- DeGenova, Nicolas. *Working the Boundaries: Race, Space, and Illegality in Mexican Chicago*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005.
- Deustua, Jose. *The Bewitchment of Silver: The Social Economy of Mining in Nineteenth Century Peru*. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000.
- . *Minería Peruana y la Iniciación de la República*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1986.
- Deutsch, Sara. *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier, 1880-1940*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

- Fallow, Ben. *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Post-Revolutionary Yucatán*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Fisher, John. *Minas y Mineros en el Perú Colonial, 1776-1824*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1977.
- Flores, Alberto Galindo. *Los Mineros de la Cerro de Pasco, 1900-1930*. Lima: Universidad Católica Del Peru, 1983.
- Foley, Neil. *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
- French, William. *A Peaceful and Working People: Manners, Morals, and Class Formation in Northern Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New México Press, 1996.
- Friedrich, Paul. *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 1970.
- Garcia, Mario. *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- . Garcia, Mario. *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Gauss, M. Susan. *Made in Mexico: Regions, Nation, and the State in the Rise of Mexican Industrialism, 1920s-1940s*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University.
- Gilbert, Joseph M. "Caciquismo and the Revolution: Carrillo Puerto in Yucatán." In Brading, David ed. *Caudillo and Peasant in Mexican Revolution*.
- Gilly, Adolfo. *El Cardenismo: Una Utopia Mexicana*. Mexico DF: Cal y Arena, 1994.
- Gomez Antillón, Pedro. *Cronicas Chihuahuenses: De La Conquista al Cardenismo. Ciudad Juárez*: Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juárez, 1992.
- Gomez, Jesús Serrano. *Aguascalientes, imperio de los Guggenheim 1890-1930*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982.
- Gonzales, Michael. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002.
- Gonzalez, Luis. *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana, 1934-1940: Los artifices del cardenismo*. Mexico City: El Colegio De Mexico, 1979.
- . *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana, 1934-1940: Los dias del presidente Cárdenas*. Mexico City: El Colegio de Mexico, 1981.
- Gordon, Linda. *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selection from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers, 1972.

Hadley, Phillip. *Minería y Sociedad en el Centro Minero de Santa Eulalia, 1709-1750*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976.

Hamilton, Nora. *Limits of State Autonomy: Post-revolutionary Mexico*. Princeton University Press, 1992.

———. *Mexico: Political, Social and Economic Revolution*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Hart, John Mason. *The Silver of the Sierra Madre*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008.

———. *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931*. Austin: University Press, 1978.

Harvey, David. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Harris, Charles H. and Sadler R. Louis. *The Secret War in El Paso: Mexican Revolutionary Intrigue, 1906-1920*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009.

Hart, John Mason *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860-1931*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

———. *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Hobsbawm, E. J. *Primitive Rebels, Studies in Archaic form of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Century*. New York: Praeger, 1963.

Huitrón, Jacinto. *Orígenes e Historia del movimiento obrero en México*. Mexico DF: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1974.

Hyde, Charles. *Copper for America: The United States Copper Industry from Colonial Times to the 1990s*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998.

Jameson, Elizabeth. *All that Glitters: Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Joseph, Gilbert M. *Revolution from Without: Yucatan, Mexico and the United States, 1880-1924*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1988.

Katz, Frederich. *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998.

———. *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike in 1983*. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 1989.

Klein, Herbert S. *The American Finances of the Spanish Empire: Royal Income and Expenditures in Colonia Mexico, Peru and Bolivia, 1680-1809*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.

- Knight, Alan. *The Mexican Revolution, vol. 1, Porfirians, Liberals and Peasants*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- . *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 2, Counter-revolution and Reconstruction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Langham, Thomas C. *Border Trials: Ricardo Flores Magón and The Mexican Liberals*. Texas Western Press, 1981.
- Lear, John. *Workers, Neighbors, and Citizens: The Revolution in Mexico City*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Lojkin, Jean. *La clase obrera, hoy*. México: Siglo veintiuno editores, 1988.
- Lomnitz, Claudio. *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón*. Zone Books, 2014.
- Maclachlan, Colin. *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: The Political Trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Mallon, Florencia. *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Marcosson F. Isaac. *Metal Magic: The Story of the American Smelting and Refining Company*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1949.
- Martelle, Scott. *Blood Pasion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2008.
- Martinez, Oscar. *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez Since 1948*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1943.
- Meyer, Francisco. *Minería en Guanajuato, 1892-1913*. Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 1988.
- Middlebrook, Kevin J. *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State and Authoritarianism in Mexico*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Montemayor, Carlos. *La Guerrilla Recurrente*. Mexico: Debate, 2007.
- Nash, June. *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
- Nelson, Bruce. *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.
- Nugent, Daniel. *Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993.
- . *Rural Revolt in Mexico: US Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics*. Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Orozco, Victor. *Historia General de Chihuahua III: Los Pueblos del Distrito de Guerrero en el siglo XIX*. Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juárez, 1995.

- Ochoa, C. Enrique. *Feeding Mexico: The political Uses of Food since 1910*. Scholarly Resources, 2002.
- Patterson, Gigi. *A Dangerous Demagogue: Containing the Influence of the Mexican Labor-Left and Its United States Allies*. Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- Perales, Monica. *Smelertown: Remembering and Making a Southwest Community*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Quintana, Alejandro. *Pancho Villa: A Biography*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2012.
- Raby, David. *Educación y Revolución Social en México*. Champaign: University of Illinois, 1972.
- Rocha Chavez, Ruben. *Tres Siglos de Historia, 1631-1978: Biografía de una ciudad Parral*. Taller Grafico del Gobierno del Estado de Chihuahua, 1978.
- Randall, Robert. *Real Del Monte*. Austin: University of Texas: 1972.
- Romero Gil, Juan Manuel. *El Boleo: Un Pueblo que se negó a morir, 1885-1954*. Hermosillo, Sonora: Editorial Unisono, 1991.
- Romero Sotelo, María Eugenia. *La minera novohispana durante la guerra de Independencia*. México: El Colegio de México, 1995.
- . *Minería y Guerra. La economía de Nueva España, 1810-1821*. México: El Colegio de México-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1996.
- Romo, David. *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez: 1893-1923*. El Paso Texas: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005.
- Ruiz, Ramón Eduardo. *Labor and the Ambivalent Revolutionaries Mexico, 1911-1923*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- . *The Great Rebellion*. New York: Norton, 1980.
- Santiago, Myrna I. *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Sariego, Juan Luis. *El Estado y la minería mexicana: política, trabajo y sociedad durante el siglo XX*. México, DF: Secretaria de Energía, Minas e Industria Paraestatal: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia: Comisión de Fomento Minero: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988.
- . *Enclaves y Minerales en el norte de México, historia social de los mineros de Cananea y Nueva Rosita, 1900-1970*. Mexico City: Ediciones de la casa Chata, 1988.
- . *Sindicalismo Minero en México, 1900-1952*. Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1983.
- Snodgrass, Michael. *Deference and defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and the Revolution in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

- Spenser, Daniella. *Stumbling its way through Mexico: The Early Years of the Communist International*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011.
- Suggs, George G. *Colorado's War on Militant Unionism: James H. Peabody and the Western Federation of Miners*. Detroit: Wayne State University, 1971.
- Staudt, Kathleen A. *Violence and Activism at the Border: Gender, Fear, and Everyday Life in Ciudad Juárez*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.
- Taibo, Paco Ignacio III. *Bolcheviques: historia narrativa de los orígenes del comunismo en México*. Mexico: Ediciones B, 2008.
- Tandeter, Enrique. *Coercion and Market: Silver Mining in Colonial Potosí, 1692-1826*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993.
- Torres Parés, Javier. *La Revolución sin frontera: El Partido Liberal Mexicano y las relaciones entre el movimiento obrero de México y el de Estados Unidos, 1900-1923*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990.
- Timmons, W.H. *El Paso: A Borderlands History*. Texas: Texas Western Press, 1990.
- Vargas, Jesús. *Máximo Castillo y la Revolución en Chihuahua*. Chihuahua: Nueva Vizcaya Editores, 2003.
- Vanderwood, Paul J. *The Power of God Against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System from the Perspective from Latin American and the Caribbean: Comments of Stern Critical Tests." *AHR* 93, no. 4 (1988).
- Wasserman, Mark. *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico 1845-1911*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1984.
- . *Persistent Oligarchs: Elites and Politics in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1910-1940*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Weis, Robert. *Baker and Basques: A Social History of Bread in Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012.
- West, Robert. *The Mining Community in Northern New Spain: The Parral Mining District*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949.
- Wolf, Eric. *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*. Harper and Row, 1969.
- Womack, John Jr. *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*. New York: Knopf, 1968.
- Wood, Andrew Grant. *Revolution in the Street: Women, Workers, and Urban Protest in Veracruz, 1870-1927*. Wilmington Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2001.

Articles

Barton, Joseph. "Borderland Discontents: Mexican Migration in Regional Contexts, 1880-1930." In Marc Rodriguez ed. *Repositioning North American Migration History: New Directions on Modern Continental Migration, Citizenship, and Community*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005.

Brown, Kendall. "Workers' Health and Colonial Mercury Mining at Huancavelica, Peru." *The Americas* 57, no. 4 (2001): 467-196.

Carr, Barry. "Marxism and Anarchism in the Formation of the Mexican Communist Party, 1910-19." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 63, no. 2 (1983): 290.

———. "The Casa del Obrero Mundial, Constitutionalism and the Pact of February 1915." In Meyer, M. and Vázquez J. *Work and Workers in the History of Mexico*. Tucson University Press, 1979.

French, William. "La economía moral de los trabajadores mineros: El caso de Parral." Unpublished Paper, University of British Columbia, 1996.

———. "Mining and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico." *Journal of the West* 27, no. 4 (1998).

———. "Business As Usual: Mexico Northwest Railway Managers Confront the Mexican Revolution." *Estudios Mexicanos* 5, no 2 (1989).

Garcia, Mario, "Border Proletarians: Mexican Americans and the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, 1939-1946," in *Labor Divided: Race and Ethnicity in the United States Labor Struggles, 1835-1960*, ed by Asher, Robert and Stephenson Charles. Albany, N.Y.: Suny Press, 1990.

Garner, Richard. "Long-term Silver Mining Trends in Spanish America: A Comparative Analysis of Peru and Mexico." *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 4 (1998): 898-935.

Gonzales, Michael. "US Copper Companies, the Mine Worker's Movements and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (1996): 503-534.

———. "United States Copper Companies, The State, and Labour Conflict in Mexico, 1900-1910." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 3 (1994): 651-681.

———. "Capitalist Agriculture and Labour Contracting in Northern Peru, 1880-1905." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 12, no. 2 (1980): 291-315.

———. "Planters and Politics in Peru, 1895-1919." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23: 515-541.

———. "Interpreting Peruvian Colonial History." *Latin America Research Review* 23, no. 3 (1988).

Guerra, Francois-Xavier "La Revolution Mexicaine: d'abord une revolution miniere?" *Annales E.S.C.* 36 (1981).

Hart, John Mason. "The Urban Working Class and the Mexican Revolution: The case of the Casa del Obrero Mundial." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58 no. 1 (1978).

Hershberger, Charles. "The Death of Borunda Alcalde de Ciudad Juárez: Chihuahua Politics During the 1930s." *Arizona and the West* 8 no. 10 (1966).

Hodges, Douglas. "The Political Heirs of Ricardo Flores Magón." *Canadian Journal of Caribbean and Latin American Studies* 17, no. 3 (1992).

Katz, Frederick. "Pancho Villa: Reform Governor of Chihuahua." In Wolfskill and Richmond, eds. *Essays on the Mexican Revolution*.

———. "Agrarian Changes in Northern Mexico in the Period of Villista Rule, 1913-1915." In James W. Wilkie, Michael Meyer, and Edna Monzon de Wilkie, eds. *Contemporary Mexico: Papers of the Fourth International Congress of Mexican History*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

———. "Pancho Villa, Peasant Movements, and Agrarian Reform in Northern Mexico." In Brading ed. *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution*.

Knight, Alan. "Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 1 (Jan 1994): 73-107.

———. "The Myth of the Mexican Revolution." *Past and Present* 209, Nov 2010, 223-273.

———. "The Mexican Revolution." *History Today* 30, May 1980, 28-34.

———. "The Mexican Revolution: Bourgeois? Nationalist? Or Just a 'Great Rebellion'?" *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 4, no. 2 (1985): 1-37.

———. "The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16, no. 1 (1984): 51-79.

———. "Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico 1910-1940." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74, no. 3 (Aug 1994).

———. "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo." In Leslie Bethall, ed. *Mexico Since Independence*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

———. "The Political Economy of Revolutionary Mexico, 1910-1940." In Christopher Abel and Colin M Lewis, eds. *Latin America, Economic Imperialism and the State: The Political Economy of the External Connection from Independence to the Present*. London: Athlone Press, 1985.

Lerner, Victoria. "Los fundamentos socioeconomicos del cacicazgo en el Mexico postrevolucionario- el caso de Saturnino Cedillo." *Historia Mexicana* 29, no. 3 (January-March 1980): 375-446.

- Mottier, Nicole. "Drugs, Gangs, and Politics in Ciudad Juarez, 1928-1936." *Estudios Mexicanos* 25, no. 1 (2009): 25-46.
- Osorio, Ruben "Villismo: Nationalism and Popular Mobilization in Northern Mexico," in Daniel Nugent's, *Rural Revolt in Mexico: US Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics* (Duke University Press, 1998).
- Perez, F. and G. Hernandez. "La Escuela Normal y la Educación Socialista en Chihuahua, 1934-1940." *Memoria* (2010).
- Spenser, Daniela. "La Cimentación de la Confederación de Trabajadores de Mexico." *TzinTzun*, no. 60 (2014).
- Spenser Daniela and Stoller Richard. "Radical Mexico: Limits to the impact of Soviet Mexico." *Latin American Perspectives* 35, (2008).
- Staudt, Kathleen A. "Gender, Governance, and Globalization at Borders: Femicide at the US-Mexico Border." In Shirin Rai and Georgina Waylen, eds. *Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives*. New York: Palgrav Mcmillan, 2008.
- Stern, Steve. "Feudalism, Capitalism and the World System from the Perspective on Latin America and the Caribbean: Ever More Solidarity." *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 4 (1988).
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System from the Perspective from Latina American and the Caribbean: Comments of Stern Critical Tests." *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 4 (1988).
- Wasserman, Mark. "Foreign Investment in Mexico, 1876-1910: A Case Study of the Role of Regional Elites." *The Americas* 36 no 1 (1979).
- . "Strategies of Survival of the Porfirian Elite in Revolutionary Mexico: Chihuahua during the 1920s." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 67, no. 1 (1987).
- . "The Social Origins of the 1910 Revolution in Chihuahua." *Latin America Research Review* 1, no. 15 (1980).

Unpublished Theses And Dissertations

- Cross, Harry. "The Mining Economy of Zacatecas. Mexico in the Nineteenth Century." Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1976.
- Green, Joseph Howard. "Workers, Peasants, and State-Building During the Mexican Revolution: The Case of Jalisco, 1910-1940." PhD dissertation, University of California Riverside, 2006.
- Medina Estrada, Roberto. "Border Revolution: The Mexican Revolution in the Ciudad Juárez/El Paso area, 1906-1915." Master's thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1975.

Unpublished Essays

Aguila, Marcos. "Mexican Miners Moral Economy: Quick Transformations, 1927-1940" (From the Great Depression to Cardenismo). Paper delivered at the 1998 Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois, September 26-26, 1998.

Barton, Joseph. "Edge of Endurance: Mexican Migrant Workers and the Making of a North American Working Class, 1880-1945." Paper delivered presented at the Newberry Seminar in Labor History), Chicago, Illinois, September 21, 2012.

French, William. "La economía moral de los trabajadores mineros: El caso de Parral." Unpublished Paper, University of British Columbia, 1996.

Wasserman, Mark. "Metal Magic only Went so Far: The American Refining and Smelting Company in Mexico, 1890-1940." Unpublished Draft, Rutgers University.