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**‘The World Created Anew’: Land, Religion and Revolution in the
Gran Nayar Region of Mexico**

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² AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, M. Durán Cárdenas, 10 July 1932

³ *ibid.*

⁴ AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/18, M. Durán Cárdenas, 14 June 1931

⁵ A. Avitia Hernández, *Historia gráfica...* iv, p.63

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⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Avitia Hernández, *Historia gráfica...* iv, p.143

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Abbreviations

Auts. Trads. – Autoridades Tradicionales

CLA – Comité Local Agraria

CNA – Comision Nacional Agraria

CSOC – Confederación Socialista de Obreros y Campesinos

DAI – Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas

DECI – Departamento de Educación y Cultura Indígena

DEFD – Director de Educación Federal de Durango

DEFJ – Director de Educación Federal de Jalisco

DEFN – Director de Educación Federal de Nayarit

Dept. Agrario – Departamento Agrario

DEI – Departamento de Educación Indígena

DERICI - Departamento de Escuelas Rurales y Incorporación Cultural Indígena

DOF – Diario Oficial de la Federación

Fed. – Federal

GN – Guardia Nacional (Cristera)

Gob. Dgo. – State Governor of Durango

Gob. Jal. – State Governor of Jalisco

Gob. Nay. – State Governor of Nayarit

Jefe Pol. – Jefe Político

JOM – Jefe de Operaciones Militares

LNDR – Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa (often simply ‘La Liga’)

N.D. – No Date

PM. – Presidente Municipal

PNR – Partido Nacional Revolucionario

POED – Periódico Oficial del Estado de Durango

POEJ – Periódico Oficial del Estado de Jalisco

POEN – Periódico Oficial del Estado de Nayarit

Proc. de Pueblos – Procurador de Pueblos

Rep. – Representative

Res. Pres. – Resolución Presidencial

Sec. Gob – Secretaría de Gobernación

Sec. Guerra – Secretaría de Guerra

SEP – Secretaría de Educación Pública

Author's Note: All of the documents quoted in this thesis have been left largely untouched and 'uncorrected,' even when the grammar and orthography used is unconventional (to say the least). I felt that the original language used by the authors of these documents was an important artefact in itself, as reflections of the kind of Spanish spoken in the Gran Nayar in the first half of the twentieth century (and, to an extent, to this day). I have, however, added – or in many cases removed – accents, which seem to have been regarded by local people as at best optional, or, at worst, as a useful decorative addition to any word that took their fancy. I hope that this does not cause any unnecessary confusion to the reader.

Introduction

The sierras of the geographical-cultural region known as the ‘Gran Nayar’ span some or all of the municipalities of El Nayar, La Yesca, Acaponeta, Huajicori, Ruíz and Rosamorada in Nayarit, Mezquitic and Bolaños in Jalisco, and Mezquitil and Pueblo Nuevo in Durango; they are home to the Cora, Huichol, Tepehuano and Mexicanero Indians; and are amongst the poorest and most marginalised parts of Mexico.¹⁶ The Gran Nayar is seen by many as remote, isolated, and impenetrable; a backwater so far removed from life in the regional state capitals of Tepic, Guadalajara and Durango, that it can be understood only as a lawless, violent backwoods of cartel gunmen and Indian ‘tribes’ who subsist on hallucinogenic cacti. However, while the Gran Nayar is certainly a peripheral region, peripheries are usually far from hermetically sealed worlds.¹⁷ Although the communities of the Gran Nayar have historically enjoyed a high level of autonomy, recent research has shown that the languages, religious practices, and political identities of the region’s inhabitants, and the social structures that govern their lives, have taken their current forms as a result of at least five centuries of contact with the outside, ‘Mexican’ world.

However, although we have secondary sources dealing with the Colonial and post-Independence history of the region, and substantial anthropological research has, since the late nineteenth century, been carried out into the cultures of the Gran Nayar, few scholars have explored the Mexican Revolution (defined here as the period between the outbreak of the armed uprising against Porfirio Díaz in 1910, and the end

¹⁶ CONAPO, *Indices de Marginacion...*

¹⁷ Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, pp.3-9

of Lázaro Cárdenas' radical presidency in 1940), as experienced in the region. There are passing references to local people fighting as Cristero rebels in Meyer's *La cristiada*; but as Tepehuano leader Asiano de la Rosa noted,

‘A los pobres indígenas que sirvieron como soldados al Ejército Mexicano nadie les recuerda en la historia su servicio prestado a la patria. Muchos antropólogos han publicado otras historias, pero nada acerca de estas personas, tan importantes para el estado y para México.’¹⁸

In this thesis, I seek to fill the historical gap, focusing on the ways in which the revolutionary state attempted to ‘integrate’ the communities of the Gran Nayar into the united, nationalist, revolutionary, and ‘mestizo’ nation that it wanted to create. I argue that these attempts – which involved compulsory schooling, land reform, and military force, and severely threatened the autonomy of the Gran Nayar’s communities, and the cultural identities of its inhabitants – were premised on images of the region as ‘remote’ and of its peoples as ‘primitive’ and ‘backward,’ which have changed little even today. While conservative individuals or factions within communities vigorously opposed threats to their autonomy, others were willing to compromise with the state in order to win its support for their efforts to protect communal landholdings, in the face of more immediate threats posed by their traditional enemies – both local mestizos and neighbouring Indian communities.¹⁹ Some leaders of the latter factions also echoed the discourse of ‘progress’ propagated by the state, and sought to ‘civilise’ their communities in order to gain the benefits

¹⁸ A. de la Rosa Calleros, *Historia de la política y de la justicia del tepehuano*, p.128

¹⁹ The former group often referred to themselves as ‘tradicionalistas,’ the latter as ‘progresistas.’ Knight (in ‘Caciquismo...’ p.37), defines the two groups, using less loaded language, as either ‘conservatives’ or ‘cosmopolitans.’ In this thesis I will use these latter, more analytical terms.

that teachers and agronomists promised would accompany the arrival of schools and mestizo immigrants in the region.²⁰

The role which the region's communities played in the armed phase of the revolution, in the Cristero rebellion, 'la Segunda Cristiada,' and the agrarian reform, was determined by these divergent responses to state-building, the factional tensions that they gave rise to, the historical and cultural idiosyncrasies of each community, the alliances or conflicts that linked them to their neighbours, and the experience of violence in itself. But the role of the people of the Gran Nayar was active as well as reactive, and influenced the course of the Revolution beyond the borders of their communities, while their resistance and accommodation to the Revolution allowed them to shape the ultimate post-revolutionary settlement within the region. This settlement saw the world in some ways 'created anew,' through mestizo immigration, the rise of bi-cultural caciques, and the development of new communal power structures and religious practices. However, given the centrality of ideas of creation and recreation to 'el costumbre' (beliefs, ritual practices and ceremonial institutions) of the Gran Nayar's peoples,²¹ such changes did not – except in a few specific cases – fundamentally alter their identities as Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos or Mexicaneros. Furthermore, the post-revolutionary settlement simultaneously remained a 'work in progress,' as into the *priista* era local communities continued to resist mestizo immigration and caciquismo, defend their rights to political and cultural autonomy, and petition for agrarian reform.

²⁰ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.145-52

²¹ J. Neurath, D. Bahr, 'Cosmogonic Myths...' p.601; P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.146; A. Reyes Valdez, *Los que están...* pp.205-14; see 'Glossary,' this thesis.

My approach to the subject has been informed by the work of many different historians and anthropologists. My preoccupation with the effects of state policies, or the presence of revolutionary or rebel armies, on the communities of the Gran Nayar, and the everyday ritual, political, social and economic lives of local people, has been influenced by the work of Luis González y González, the founder of the Mexican school of 'microhistoria.'²² Beatriz Rojas' detailed archival work has also clearly demonstrated that the history of the Sierra Huichola, and by extension the Gran Nayar as a whole, cannot be understood without reference to events at national level, which has helped me to insert the 'micro' within its wider, 'macro' context.²³

Meanwhile, my conception of the armed phase of the Revolution as a genuinely popular uprising that resulted in the dramatic reconfiguration of both state and nation, is based on Alan Knight's critique of 'revisionist' interpretations that would class it an elite political struggle that resulted in little real change.²⁴ Knight's view of participation in the Revolution as being strongly 'motivated by local concerns,'²⁵ and his rough division of revolutionary actors into 'serranos' and 'agraristas,'²⁶ encouraged me to examine the agrarian and political pressures (sometimes indistinguishable, in the Gran Nayar, from cultural pressures), that individual communities faced in the Porfirian and revolutionary periods.

The work of Knight, Joseph and Nugent, and Vaughan has also influenced my view of the revolutionary state. These scholars have shown that while the revolutionary state

²² González y González, *Pueblo en vilo*, pp.5-12

²³ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...*

²⁴ A. Knight, 'Interpreting the Mexican Revolution,' pp.21-22

²⁵ A. Knight, 'Peasant and Caudillo,' p.35

²⁶ A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, i, pp.78-127

as seen ‘from above’ or ‘from below’ appears rather different, the consolidation of the revolutionary state involved both national-level institutional reform,²⁷ and the reformation – often negotiated, rather than imposed – of ‘activities and cultural forms that have provided modes of organization, social practice and identity.’²⁸ In the Gran Nayar, as in many other rural regions of Mexico, revolutionary state-building, as seen from both ‘above’ and ‘below,’ meant imposing military control, carrying out agrarian reform, and, above all, building schools. These latter would teach the ‘backward’ Indians to speak Spanish, would lead them away from the destructive ‘superstition’ and ‘fanaticism’ that dominated their lives, would make them into productive citizens by teaching them better agricultural techniques, and would also form the nuclei of new, permanent settlements, within which the state’s political authority could be more easily exerted, thus finally completing the task, begun by colonial missionaries, of ‘concentrating’ the dispersed Indian population. My research coincides with that of Mary K. Vaughan in showing that the state had little success when it tried to directly impose control on the Gran Nayar by means of schools. Rather, any influence these schools did have on local communities was usually the product of negotiation with local people (particularly communal caciques), who sought to use the schools to their own advantage;²⁹ and at times, Federal schools were fiercely resisted, particularly by conservative elders.³⁰ The nature of this resistance provides examples of James C. Scott’s ‘weapons of the weak’: noncompliance, evasiveness, use of native language to confuse the Spanish-speaking teachers, and

²⁷ *ibid.*, ii., pp.469-93; T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* pp.22-30, pp.31-53

²⁸ G. M. Joseph, D. Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms...* p.14; M. K. Vaughan... *Cultural Politics*, pp.8-20

²⁹ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.8-20, pp.158-9

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp.122-4, pp.62-3

sometimes violence,³¹ when the perceived provocations of these teachers – who often meddled in local politics, facilitated mestizo land-grabs and severely beat children – became too much for local people to bear.

Violent resistance came to a head during the Cristiada and ‘la Segunda.’ I follow Jean Meyer in presenting the Cristero rebellion as a mass movement of campesinos and small land-owners, rather than an elite struggle between the Church hierarchy and the state.³² I also draw on Meyer’s pioneering accounts of Cristero activity in northern Jalisco, southern Zacatecas, and southern Durango, placing the rebellious participation of various Huichol and Tepehuano communities in a regional context. However, in terms of the motivation for this participation, the evidence presented in this thesis tends towards the analyses of Matthew Butler and Jennie Purnell: that support for the Cristeros was often predicated less on ‘belief’ itself, than on the socio-political implications and consequences of religious practice, in the context of local historical conditions and conflicts.³³ Thus the Cristiada in the Gran Nayar was determined by the interplay of local territorial disputes, tensions caused by the founding of government schools, conflicts with municipal political authorities, and the violent legacy of the armed phase of the revolution, which had allowed communal *caciques* to amass political and military power in the region, and which in turn gave rise to power struggles and factional conflict.

I further argue that in the Gran Nayar, ‘la Segunda’ was as important as, or perhaps more important than, the first Cristero rebellion. In other parts of Mexico,

³¹ cf. J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak...*

³² J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, pp.386-91; iii, pp.3-50

³³ J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* pp.124-33 M. Butler, *Popular Piety...* p.3

‘Segundero’ violence was a direct response to the renewed anticlericalism of the revolutionary regime, and a radical, ‘socialist’ school curriculum that many Catholics thought would ‘pervert’ and ‘corrupt’ their children.³⁴ However, in the Gran Nayar the revolt was in many ways a direct consequence of the violence of the first *Cristiada*. The raiding that characterised that rebellion, and the disruption that the violence had caused to communal *costumbre* and its mediating role within communities, gave rise to new factional and family feuds, which combined with new threats to the lives of amnestied *Cristero caciques* to result in the outbreak of renewed conflict.

My analysis of the nature of *caciquismo* in the Gran Nayar has been informed by Brewster’s research in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, which provides important examples of the dynamics of Indian-mestizo power relations,³⁵ and the way in which attributions of supernatural powers can be seen as evidence of ‘charismatic’ leadership.³⁶ My analysis also owes much to Paul Friedrich’s work. His emphasis on the importance of Primo Tapía’s ‘bicultural’ status in his rise to power is mirrored in the cases of many of the Gran Nayar’s *caciques*. These individuals spoke Spanish, and were sometimes literate, which enabled them to act, as Tapia had done, as cultural ‘bridges’ between their communities and the outside, essentially ‘foreign’ forces (*Carrancistas*, Federal troops, mestizo schoolteachers and *Cristero* rebels) who entered the region during the revolutionary period.³⁷ Similarly, the factions that grew up around these *caciques* were often linked at some level by either literal or ritual

³⁴ A. Bantjes, *As if Jesus...* pp.46-50; J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, pp.366-83; M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.34-5, p.90

³⁵ K. Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics...* pp.4-10; *idem.*, ‘Caciquismo in Post-Revolutionary Mexico ...’ pp.3-4, pp.32-5, pp.292-6

³⁶ cf. M. Weber, *On Charisma*, pp.18-27

³⁷ P. Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt*, p.70-4

kinship,³⁸ although in the context of the Gran Nayar, these relationships were configured rather differently, and maintained through ritual practices specific to either Cora, Huichol, Tepehuano or Mexicanero costumbre.

My understanding of this costumbre is in large part based on the research of scholars associated with the ‘Seminario de Antropología e Historia del Gran Nayar’ at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), including Johannes Neurath, Jesús Jáuregui, Philip Coyle, Margarita Valdovinos, Antonio Reyes, Neyra Alvarado, and Laura Magriña.³⁹ Their work has challenged much of the ‘new age’ anthropology that since the publication of Carlos Castañeda’s ‘Don Juan’ books in the late 1960s, has presented the Huichols in particular as representatives of an ‘uncorrupted,’ ‘ancestral,’ peyote-munching Indian tradition,⁴⁰ and the Gran Nayar as a mystical backwater separated from modern Mexico by a distance of hundreds of miles, and thousands of years.⁴¹ In recent years, Neurath, Jáuregui *et al* have broadened our knowledge of the history and cultures of the Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and even the permanently under-researched Mexicaneros, locating their cultures and histories within wider mesoamerican, Colonial, Porfirian or modern Mexican contexts. Indeed, the inclusion of the Tepehuanos as a group whose culture fits within the ‘Gran Nayar’ complex in itself owes much to the work of Reyes, whose ethnographical work on the Tepehuanos, together with that of Alvarado on the Mexicaneros, Neurath’s on the Huichols, and Valdovinos and Coyle on the Coras, has proved especially useful in my

³⁸ *ibid.*, pp.86-9

³⁹ See ‘Bibliography,’ this thesis.

⁴⁰ See ‘Glossary,’ this thesis

⁴¹ cf. B. G. Myerhoff, *Peyote Hunt...*; P. T. Furst, ‘To Find Our Life: Peyote among the Huichol...’; S. B. Schaefer, Peter T. Furst (eds.), *People of the Peyote...* Fierce critiques of this peyote-centric approach can be found in J. Neurath, *Las fiestas...* p.14, and especially in J. C. Fikes, *Carlos Castañeda...*

research. In particular, my analysis of the deep conflict between caciques whose power was based on their access to arms and alliances with outside forces, and communal cargo-holders and elders, whose legitimate authority was inseparable from the practice of *costumbre*, owes much to Coyle's work.

The emphasis that these anthropologists and ethnohistorians put on the importance of oral tradition in the Gran Nayar also induced me to head to the region myself, in order to gather oral accounts of the revolutionary period and to try to understand the geography of the region, the modern *costumbre* of its peoples, and the structure of communal life. Interestingly, in conducting interviews I faced many of the same problems as the emissaries of the revolutionary state had done before me. The dispersed settlement patterns typical of the region, monolingualism, and simple suspicion of me as an outsider – especially amongst those older people who knew most about the Revolution – presented difficulties. In particular, the reluctance of older women to talk to me, even via a translator, has resulted in the notable absence of female perspectives – a deficiency that I was unfortunately unable to correct through the use of documentary sources, which largely neglect the role of women in local communal life. The spread of Mexico's drug war to the region also created difficulties, as my presence occasionally aroused local suspicions – some believed I was a 'gringo spy' working for the DEA – and prevented me from reaching either of the region's Mexicanero communities. Given the dearth of secondary material on the Mexicaneros, this thesis therefore lacks much analysis of this ethnic group. In general, however, oral research in the Gran Nayar gave me a vital insight into the world that I was researching in the archives.

The Revolution, however, remains a controversial subject in the region, since many of the communal, factional or family feuds that still divide the people of the Gran Nayar today emerged during this period. Furthermore, narratives of past events are often communicated through the performance of ritual, which for an outsider can be difficult to penetrate, and often seem rather incomprehensible.⁴² And although some elders recount the events of the Revolution in a more straightforward, ‘chronicle’ format, their stories often anachronistically compress together events and mix up the identity of key characters (so that Pancho Villa becomes a Cristero leader, while Manuel Lozada fights Carrancistas).⁴³ Local analysis of events is also often rather ‘essentialist,’ and rooted in a view of the world that favours immediate, tangible factors over larger questions of ideology or national context in explaining resistance to, or cooperation with, sometimes rather incomprehensible outside forces.⁴⁴

In trying to construct this thesis, I therefore also relied on extensive information taken from documentary sources. I was able to gain only very limited access to the Mexican military archives (AHSDN), and my freedom of information requests to this institution provided very little information at all. I have therefore drawn heavily on letters and petitions sent by local leaders to the Federal government, which are now stored in the ‘presidentes’ section of the National Archives (AGN); on similar documents in the state archives of Jalisco (AHJ) and Durango (AHED) (there is very little in the way of a functioning state archive in Nayarit); on the files on each community’s land claims in the General Agrarian Archive (AGA); on reports and telegrams written by and to Cristero rebel commanders in the region, which I obtained

⁴² J. C. Fikes, P. C. Weigand, A. García de Weigand, ‘Introduction,’ xxviii

⁴³ Bruno Gómez Estrada

⁴⁴ P. Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt...* p.140

from the archives of Aurelio Acevedo (AAAR) in the UNAM; on letters and reports written by Catholic priests and missionaries, from the Archives of the Archdiocese of Guadalajara (AHAG) and the Josefino Missionary Archive (AGMJ); and on the reports of local teachers and zone inspectors, taken from the archives of the Ministry of Education (AHSEP), which are now stored in the AGN. These SEP documents proved particularly rich in information on the Gran Nayar in the revolutionary period. I also obtained further details on the regional events of ‘la Segunda’ from the fictionalised, semi-autobiographical accounts of Antonio Estrada, who as the son of regional Cristero leader Florencio spent several years in the Sierra Tepehuana during the height of the conflict;⁴⁵ and of Ángel Menéndez,⁴⁶ a journalist and politician who travelled through the Sierra Cora in the same period.⁴⁷ The result of this research is a history of the Gran Nayar between 1910 and 1940, in part seen through the eyes of the local people, mestizo teachers, state governors, municipal authorities, Cristero rebels and Federal generals.

In the first chapter, I will explore local participation in the armed phase of the revolution, and suggest why some communities or individuals were more deeply involved than others. I will also outline how this participation affected the region in the short term, with a special emphasis on the rise of caciques in communities formerly governed by authorities who depended not on arms, but on the performance of ritual, to legitimise their power.

⁴⁵ A. Estrada, *Rescoldo...*

⁴⁶ M. Ángel Menéndez, *Nayar*

⁴⁷ J. Jáuregui (ed.), *Musica y danzas...* p.9

In the second chapter, I will try to show the way in which the emergence of revolutionary caciques, and of the diverse attempts of the nascent revolutionary state to integrate the region into the Mexican nation, resulted in growing intra-communal factional conflicts in some areas, and increased inter-communal conflicts in others.

The third chapter addresses the way in which the Cristiada affected the region, and how the legacy of revolutionary civil war and recent state-building efforts – mainly implemented via the SEP – influenced local participation on either side of the conflict.

In the fourth chapter, I examine the renewed attempts of the state to integrate the Gran Nayar in the wake of the *de facto* defeat of the Cristeros in 1929, and the way in which growing factional conflicts combined with already existing tensions and led to the outbreak of a further round of violence in the region in 1934 – ‘la Segunda.’

The fifth chapter explores local participation in, and the local outcomes of, this rebellion, and at the same time addresses the effects of ‘socialist education’ and the acceleration of agrarian reform in the region, in the context of Cárdenas’ radical presidency.

To put these events in context, in the Prologue I briefly summarise the history of the region and its peoples before the outbreak of the revolution. I will also point out how many of the ideas of the Gran Nayar as a remote, hermetically-sealed world – a misconception integral to the revolutionary state’s policies in the region, and one that continues to sustain popular perceptions of the Gran Nayar today – have their origins in this period.

Prologue: Cultural and Historical Background to the Gran Nayar

The idea of the ‘Gran Nayar’ as a geographic region began to develop only after the arrival of the Spaniards in Mexico. When Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán and his army arrived in Western Mexico in 1530, the immediate predecessors of the Coras and Huichols, along with various related peoples, were spread throughout much of modern-day Nayarit and northwestern Jalisco,⁴⁸ while the Tepehuanos dominated most of modern-day Durango.⁴⁹ Guzmán conquered and incorporated the former regions into the ‘Reino de Nueva Galicia,’ and also founded the cities of Guadalajara, Tepic, Mazatlán and Culiacán.⁵⁰ However, his forces barely penetrated the Tepehuano lands, which were finally conquered in 1562 and incorporated into the ‘Reino de Nueva Vizcaya’ (which included most of the modern territories of Durango and Chihuahua, as well as parts of Sinaloa, Sonora and Coahuila).⁵¹

As control of what is today the Gran Nayar was initially contested between Nueva Galicia and Nueva Vizcaya, the region’s mountains became a refuge for Indians seeking to escape the domination of the Spaniards. The Franciscans, who were at first responsible for the evangelisation of both ‘Reinos,’ founded a number of missions on the peripheries of the Gran Nayar over the course of the sixteenth century.⁵² However, the warlike nature of the mountain peoples, whose numbers had been bolstered by the arrival of ‘defeated but still well-organized Caxcáns and trans-Tarascan groups’ after

⁴⁸ P. C. Weigand, A. García de Weigand, ‘Huichol Society...’ pp.2-5, pp.23-4

⁴⁹ S. M. Deeds, *Defiance and Deference...* pp.12-5

⁵⁰ P. Gerhard, *La frontera Norte...* pp.55-8

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*, p.145

the conclusion of the Mixtón War (1532-42),⁵³ frequently forced the missionaries to flee before they had been able to concentrate populations or spread the gospel. By 1606, a mission had been founded in the heart of the region at Huazamota,⁵⁴ but this was abandoned during the Tepehuano rebellion of 1616, during which the rebels also destroyed much of the region's other colonial infrastructure.⁵⁵ This early local resistance to Spanish authority is the foundation of modern myths of the region's isolation and of the 'primitive' nature of its peoples.

After the defeat of the rebellion, Spanish colonial officials and Franciscan missionaries were posted to the Tepehuano region.⁵⁶ However, the Tepehuanos, whom Franciscan missionary Francico del Barrio had noted before the rebellion had 'ni señor ni tlatoani,'⁵⁷ and seemed instead to be led by ritual specialists,⁵⁸ proved resistant to the attempts of the Franciscans to settle them permanently in new 'reducciones.' The Tepehuanos of the Jesuit missions in the north of Durango were notorious for returning to their dispersed rancherías to hunt, gather and participate in their pre-hispanic rituals,⁵⁹ and Riley asserts that a similar situation prevailed in the Franciscan missions of the south, whose inhabitants frequently fled to the most remote parts of the Sierra in order to avoid forced labour as 'encomenderos.'⁶⁰

However, as the seventeenth century progressed the Franciscans did manage to settle

⁵³ P. C. Weigand, A. García de Weigand, 'Huichol Society...' p.23

⁵⁴ P. Gerhard, *La frontera Norte...* p.100

⁵⁵ S. M. Deeds, *Defiance and Deference...* pp.29-33

⁵⁶ P. Gerhard, *La frontera Norte...* p.264, p.252: While the Jesuits had by now been charged with the evangelisation of Nueva Vizcaya, the Franciscans of northern Nayarit and southern Zacatecas continued to dominate the far south of the Reino.

⁵⁷ Del Barrio, in P. C. Weigand, A. García de Weigand, 'Huichol Society...' p.28

⁵⁸ cf. C. Cramausell, 'La rebelión tepehuana de 1616...'

⁵⁹ S. M. Deeds, 'Los tepehuanes en misiones jesuitas...' p.220-1

⁶⁰ C. L. Riley, 'Los tepehuanes del sur...' pp.129

some of the Tepehuano population. A mission was established at San Bernadino, with a dependent settlement – or *visita* – at San Francisco de Lajas;⁶¹ the re-founded mission at Huazamota counted *visitas* at San Pedro Jícoras, San Antonio de Padua, and San Lucas de Jalpa; while Temoaya, Xoconoxtle, Taxicaringa, Teneraca, Santa María Ocotán and San Francisco Ocotán were established as *visitas* of Mezquital.⁶² Each settlement was centred around a church whose resident saint, and often various others, were quickly integrated into local costumbre as ‘Spanish gods,’ whose cult was entrusted to members of the new civil-religious communal authorities established by the missionaries. However, the local shamans – who continued to head the lineage groups between which the Tepehuano population was divided, and to lead their ritual *xiotalh* dances⁶³ – gained a monopoly on communicating with the saints, who sent messages to them through ‘dreams or accidents.’⁶⁴ The Tepehuanos also began to form strong cultural and religious links with their Huichol and Cora neighbours during this period, accompanying them on their pilgrimages to sacred peyote grounds far to the east of the Gran Nayar.⁶⁵

Further to the south, two Cora-speaking polities had by the late sixteenth century united into a single, independent priest-kingdom.⁶⁶ From his capital at La Mesa del Nayar, a politico-religious leader known as the ‘Tonatí,’ or ‘Rey Nayar,’⁶⁷ ruled over

⁶¹ C. Cramaussel, ‘Historia del poblamiento...’ p.12

⁶² P. Gerhard, *La frontera Norte...* p.266

⁶³ A. Reyes Valdez, *Los que están...* pp.410-1; idem., ‘The Perpetual Return...’ p.16; see also ‘Glossary,’ this thesis.

⁶⁴ idem., ‘The Perpetual Return...’ p.92

⁶⁵ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.155

⁶⁶ P. Gerhard, *La frontera Norte...* p.142-5

⁶⁷ The skull of ‘Nayarit,’ the eponymous founder of the Cora kingdom, is housed in La Mesa’s church, and is still an object of veneration for many Coras today.

the Alta and Baja regions of today's Sierra Cora,⁶⁸ and beyond into the western part of the modern-day Sierra Huichola.⁶⁹ Spanish Colonial sources referred to the inhabitants of this Cora-ruled polity as 'nayaritas,' amongst whom there were 'gentile' and apostate Indians from across the region, as well as escaped African slaves and renegade mulattos and Spaniards.⁷⁰ Although neither Catholic missionaries nor Spanish soldiers were normally permitted to enter the territory of the Tonatí, the 'nayaritas' kept up a lively trade in salt and livestock with the settlements of Nayarit's coast and altiplano, and frequently left their settlements to work in the mines of Durango and Zacatecas.⁷¹ As a result of these contacts, the Coras adopted Spanish technology and elements of the Catholic faith into their own culture over the course of the sixteenth century.⁷²

However, the Cora priest-kingdom was held together by resolutely non-Christian practices that centred around mass 'mitote' ceremonies⁷³ – which included dancing and human sacrifice – overseen by the Tonatí at La Mesa, which was thus the focal point of a 'centralised political and religious tradition'⁷⁴ that united a population organised at a lower level into descent-groups defined, as they continue to be today, by blood-ties and participation in mitotes linked to the agricultural cycle.⁷⁵ Although the population's unity was key to the priest-kingdom's resistance to Spanish attempts to conquer it, Colonial-era missionaries and soldiers used geography to explain away the continued independence of 'this annoying little pocket of resistance in an area that

⁶⁸ See 'Glossary,' this thesis.

⁶⁹ A. Arias y Saavedra, in P. C. Weigand, A. García de Weigand, 'Huichol Society...' p.28

⁷⁰ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.75

⁷¹ J. Neurath, *Las fiestas...* p.21,

⁷² *ibid.*, pp.21-28; Hinton, 'Pre-Conquest Acculturation...' p.166

⁷³ See 'Glossary,' this thesis.

⁷⁴ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.82

⁷⁵ J. Jáuregui, *Los Coras*, p.12

should have been colonized more than a century earlier,⁷⁶ describing the region as ‘furious and horrible... It is not even possible to ride horseback in this country as the abruptness of the terrain is hard on the horses and the steepness of the slopes frightens the horsemen.’⁷⁷

While many Huichols owed their ultimate allegiance to the Cora priest-king, they were governed, at lower level, by ‘a series of well-defined, lineage-based councils,’ each one based at a particular *tuki* (pl. *tukipa*),⁷⁸ or Huichol temple, and headed by a politico-religious ceremonial specialist called a *kawiteru* (pl. *kawiterutsixi*).⁷⁹ These specialists and their councils represented and ruled over the extended families that inhabited the *rancherías* surrounding each *tuki*, where many of the rituals that held these groups together were performed. The Huichols were also in contact with the colonial world, however. As the Spaniards established mines and missions in the lands to the east of the Huichols, which were colonised by Tlaxcaltecan ‘indios flecheros,’⁸⁰ Liffman argues that the Huichols themselves adopted a policy of ‘alternately accommodating, appropriating and resisting colonial Spanish institutions through a shifting strategy of commercial exchanges, mercenary services, apostasy, and raiding, sometimes against their indigenous neighbours.’⁸¹ By 1649, although today’s Sierra Huichola was as yet unconquered, some of the Huichols of the Huejuquilla valley had been settled at Tenzompa,⁸² and missions had also been

⁷⁶ P.E. Coyle, ‘The Customs...’ p.516

⁷⁷ J. Ortega, in *ibid.*

⁷⁸ See ‘Glossary,’ this thesis.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.31

⁸⁰ R. E. Güereca Durán, ‘Las milicias de indios flecheros...’ p.92

⁸¹ P. Liffman, *Huichol Territoriality...* p.42

⁸² P. Gerhard, *La frontera Norte...* p.102

founded in the far south, at Ostoc and Huajimíc.⁸³ By 1727 the Franciscans had also established a mission at San Sebastián, upon which the *visitas* of San Andrés and Santa Catarina were dependent,⁸⁴ and the inhabitants of these new settlements, along with many Tepehuanos,⁸⁵ apparently took part in the final conquest of the Cora priest-kingdom in 1722.

However, despite these accommodations to Spanish influence, only a few years later the colonial authorities accused the Huichols of San Andrés and Santa Catarina of conspiring with rebellious Coras.⁸⁶ Meanwhile the Catholic ceremonialism and new communal authorities introduced by the missionaries were integrated into the existing politico-religious framework of Huichol *costumbre*. The different *tukipa* did not disappear, but rather became the centres of semi-autonomous districts (still governed by councils of *kawiterutsixi*), within the wider communal territory allotted to each mission settlement by the Colonial government. Catholic churches also evolved into something like communal – rather than lineage-based – *tukipa*, each one consecrated to particular Catholic saints, as well as to the Huichol deities with which each saint was synonymous. Just as the influence of the *kawiterutsixi* was validated by their leadership of *tukipa*-centred ceremonial cycles,⁸⁷ the new power of the communal authorities was legitimised by the development and practice of new communal rituals at the churches, and also linked back to older power-structures through the evolution of an additional role for the *kawiterutsixi*, as advisors to these authorities. This

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.101

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.100

⁸⁵ AGA-BC/276.1/411/leg.1/Comunal/Restitución/Santa María Ocotán y Xoconoxtle, INI Report, N.D.

⁸⁶ R. E. Güereca Durán, ‘Las milicias de indios flecheros...’ p.99

⁸⁷ P. C. Weigand, A. García de Weigand, ‘Huichol Society...’ p.24-5

ensured the continued community-level cohesion of the multitude of rancherías between which the population was still divided.⁸⁸

A similar phenomenon occurred in the Sierra Cora after its conquest in 1722. The Spanish civil-military authorities, and the Jesuit missionaries who had been made responsible for evangelising the defeated Coras (along with a number of ‘indios tecualmes que habían perdida su propia lengua y hablaban mexicano o castellano’),⁸⁹ congregated the local population into new mission settlements at Jesús María, La Mesa, Santa Teresa, San Juan Peyotán, San Francisco, San Juan Corapan, San Pedro Ixcatán, Rosarito, Dolores, Saycota and San Blasito.⁹⁰ Within each of these new settlements, elements of Catholic ceremonialism were absorbed into Cora *costumbre*,⁹¹ and after the expulsion of the Jesuits from Mexico in 1767 (and their replacement by ineffective Franciscans), the Coras returned ‘to their original settlement pattern of dispersed ranches,’ and to their practice of descent-group *mitotes*, but retained the new settlements and their churches ‘as ceremonial and assembly centres.’⁹² By the late eighteenth century, the Coras thus possessed ‘a half-digested Christianity but a well organised and functioning civil-religious hierarchy.’⁹³ This helped to unite disparate descent-groups together, which in turn increased the effectiveness of their responses to outside threats.

The subsequent participation of the Coras, Huichols, and Tepehuanos in the Mexican War of Independence and the later War of Reform forced missionaries, secular priests

⁸⁸ P. Liffman, *Huichol Territoriality...* p.42

⁸⁹ L. Gómez Canedo, ‘Huicot: Antecedents Misionales,’ p.138

⁹⁰ P. Gerhard, *La frontera Norte...* p.147

⁹¹ Hinton, ‘Indian Acculturation...’ p.22

⁹² P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.85

⁹³ Hinton, ‘Indian Acculturation...’ p.22

and government officials to abandon the Sierra,⁹⁴ leaving local people to enjoy almost complete autonomy. The fighting also forced various Náhuatl-speaking families to flee from the Cora region to the far south of Durango, which may have given rise to Durango's Mexicanero population⁹⁵ (although this hypothesis remains controversial).⁹⁶ The subsequent rebellion of Manuel Lozada also attracted the support of many local communities, further disrupting the Mexican state's control of the Gran Nayar between 1853 and Lozada's final death in 1873.⁹⁷

While many of Lozada's followers joined his rebellion as a way to regain communal lands lost as a result of the Liberal Reform Laws,⁹⁸ the Coras who formed the core of Lozada's army had been little affected by these laws. Their support for Lozada was probably more to do with the typically *serrano* desire to hold on to their autonomy, which had been threatened by the sudden appearance of Federal troops in the Sierra in the early 1850s, in pursuit of Lozada's forces.⁹⁹ Lozada was also joined by the Huichols of Huajimic and Ostoc,¹⁰⁰ who had been displaced from their lands around the turn of the century.¹⁰¹ Other Huichols who had been little affected by the reform laws probably supported Lozada for the same reasons as their Cora neighbours.¹⁰² Lozada also apparently won the support of some of the communities of southern Durango, particularly Huazamota and San Lucas.¹⁰³ Indian support for Lozada's cause

⁹⁴ P. Gerhard, *La frontera Norte...* p.265; see also *Mezquital, monografía*, José René García Nájera, p.52

⁹⁵ J. Jáuregui, Laura Magriñá, 'Estudio etnohistórico...' pp.64-6

⁹⁶ N. P. Alvarado Solís, *Atar la vida...* pp.58-69

⁹⁷ A. Hernández Chávez, 'Lozada no muere...' pp.209-20

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ J. Jáuregui, 'Del reino de Lozada...' p.149-50

¹⁰⁰ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* pp.129-133; pp.138-39; pp. 147-8

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, pp.132-3

¹⁰² J. Jáuregui, 'Del reino de Lozada...' p.159

¹⁰³ J. Meyer, 'El reino de Lozada...' pp.250-1

allowed journalists and politicians alike to condemn his rebellion as the attempt of a savage Indian mass to stir up a ‘caste war’ that aimed at the ‘destruction of the white race,’¹⁰⁴ which compounded Colonial ideas of the Gran Nayar as a remote and impenetrable bastion of savagery.

It was during this period that much of the *costumbre* of the peoples of the Gran Nayar further coalesced into forms that are still recognisable today.¹⁰⁵ Given the absence of either priests or government officials in the civil-religious *cabeceras* of each community,¹⁰⁶ pre-hispanic forms of worship and governance came out into the open, while Spanish-Catholic rituals often developed into surreal burlesques of the rites introduced by the missionaries. The communal power structures – or ‘*gobiernos tradicionales*’ – that developed in this period varied according to ethnic group, and from community to community; but, generally speaking, they were based around cargo systems legitimised by a year-long cycle of Church-based fiestas and communal *mitote*, *xiotalh* or *tukipa* rituals that emphasised the political and territorial integrity of the entire community. These festivals and sacred dances were interlinked with a separate set of descent-group and/or *ranchería*-specific *mitote*, *xiotalh* or *xiriki*¹⁰⁷ rituals that equated individual life-cycle progressions with the different stages of the seasonal-agricultural cycle. The descent-group ritual cycle often revolved around a five-year timeframe, and was led by ceremonial elders who sometimes inherited their ‘*cargos*’ for life. As well as being responsible for their own descent-groups or lineages (and the dispersed *rancherías* in which these groups lived), the leaders of each

¹⁰⁴ Quevedo y Zuvieta, *México...* p. 140

¹⁰⁵ B. Rojas, ‘Los Huicholes: Episodios...’ pp.254-64; P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* pp.74-95; A. Reyes Valdez, ‘The Perpetual Return...’ p.167

¹⁰⁶ See ‘Glossary,’ this thesis.

¹⁰⁷ See ‘Glossary,’ this thesis.

descent-group usually sat on their community's 'Consejo de Ancianos,' and were therefore responsible for selecting the men who would form each year's 'gobierno tradicional,' and advising them once they were in office.

The existence of a united priest-kingdom in the Sierra Cora prior to 1722,¹⁰⁸ and the region's total domination by pro-Lozada forces, contributed to the development of an additional system of inter-communal Cora costumbre during the mid-nineteenth century. Just as preparations for both descent-group and communal Cora mitotes involved the depositing of votive objects and the gathering of water from the sacred sites and springs that define the limits and centre-point of descent-group or communal territory,¹⁰⁹ the governors of each Cora community also gathered in Jesús María (which had been the Spanish colonial administrative centre of the region) after their election to office, where they exchanged votive objects with the latter community's governor, who in turn ritually confirmed them in their new positions.¹¹⁰ While each Cora community constituted a self-governing entity – as guaranteed by Lozada's defense of each community's 'derecho de absoluta independencia y soberanía'¹¹¹ – this inter-community costumbre, with Jesús María at its centre, facilitated the political and military coordination of the region's authorities in defense of pan-communal interests. To this end, each Cora community also counted a 'comandancia militar' (defined as 'cargos político-militares desempeñados por indígenas nombrados por Lozada'),¹¹² while the whole Cora region was ruled by a 'gobernador del territorio indio,' who owed his allegiance to Lozada and his Cora lieutenant Dionisimo

¹⁰⁸ J. Jáuregui, *Los coras*, p.12

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, pp.20-3; P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...*; pp.41-7

¹¹⁰ Bruno Gómez Estrada; Nicasio Rodríguez Rodríguez; Aurelio Cánare

¹¹¹ Manuel Lozada, 'Plan Libertador...'

¹¹² J. Meyer, *De cantón...* p.158

Gerónimo and was replaced each year.¹¹³ In contrast to the chronically divided Huichol and Tepehuano communities, the Coras thus enjoyed into the early twentieth century a politico-military cohesion that, while less solid than that of the Yaqui communities of Sonora,¹¹⁴ is perhaps comparable to the ethnic solidarity that existed between the ‘Eleven Pueblos’ of Michoacán.¹¹⁵

After the final defeat of Lozada’s rebellion in 1873, the Indian landholdings of the Gran Nayar came under renewed pressure from both the state and from neighbouring towns and haciendas. In the Sierra Huichola, which lay in the 8/o Cantón of Jalisco, Tenzompa (which had by now lost its character as Huichol community) seized parts of Santa Catarina’s lands,¹¹⁶ while San Sebastián and San Andrés in turn accused Santa Catarina of invading their own communal territories.¹¹⁷ Santa Catarina’s leaders subsequently travelled to Guadalajara to counter-accuse San Andrés of invading their lands, and in 1890 took their complaints all the way to president Díaz.¹¹⁸ Both San Andrés and Santa Catarina were also invaded by the hacienda of San Juan Capistrano, in Zacatecas, which probably contributed to the increasing tensions between them. Meanwhile San Andrés’ anexo of Guadalupe Ocotán, which had been settled by Huichol refugees from Huajimic, was threatened by the territorial ambitions of the mestizos who had settled in their former community, and by the newly independent ‘Territory of Tepic,’ which had been officially separated from Jalisco after the defeat of Manuel Lozada and whose authorities now claimed jurisdiction over Guadalupe’s

¹¹³ A. Hernández Chávez, ‘Lozada no muere...’ p.211

¹¹⁴ E. Hu-Dehart, *Yaqui Resistance...* p.140-1, p.152-3

¹¹⁵ P. Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt...* p.100; J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* p.139

¹¹⁶ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.144

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.145

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.146

lands.¹¹⁹ In this period the Huichols of Ostoc, who had been living as refugees in San Sebastián for decades, also returned to the site of their old community, now officially within San Sebastián's territory, and constructed a new settlement which they named Tuxpan.¹²⁰ The ambiguous, semi-independent status of this ostensible 'anexo' would later embroil it in serious conflicts with San Sebastián.

The communities of the Sierra Tepehuana, now divided between the 'partidos' of Mezquital, Pueblo Nuevo, and Huazamota, were also threatened by Porfirian land reform, which in turn increased the tensions between them. San Francisco de Lajas and Taxicaringa contested their communal territorial boundaries,¹²¹ while the inhabitants of San Lucas sent a commission all the way to Guadalajara in search of their colonial land title in an (ultimately unsuccessful)¹²² attempt to prove their ownership of disputed lands.¹²³ Meanwhile, in 1889, Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle won government certification of their right to around 421,000 hectares of communal territory,¹²⁴ of which they immediately lost 120,000 hectares to a mestizo lawyer, as payment for his work as their 'Defensor de Bienes Comunales.' The owners of the hacienda of San Juan Capistrano also took advantage of the as-yet undefined state boundary between Zacatecas and Durango to claim control of parts of Santa María Ocotán's landholdings,¹²⁵ while the latter community's authorities were furthermore accused of abusing the inhabitants of its anexo, Candelaria el Alto.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.146-7, pp.150-1, p.160

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p.148

¹²¹ AHED-D/C/1/E/66, residents of Taxicaringa to Gob.Dgo., 22 May 1907; AGA-D/276.1/31/leg.1/Comunal/RTBC, San Francisco de Lajas, Salvador Molinar Flores to Supreme Court, 11 Mar. 1966

¹²² AHED-A/C/3/E/19, Martínez to Jefe Pol. Huazamota, 4 Mar. 1910

¹²³ AHED-A/C/3/E/19, Residents of San Lucas to Gob.Jal., 14 Feb. 1910

¹²⁴ AGA-BC/276.1/411/leg.1/Comunal/Restitución, Santa María Ocotán y Xoconoxtle, INI Report, N.D.

¹²⁵ AHED-L/C/1/E/16, Gob. de Dgo. to Gob. Zac., 30 Apr. 1909

Tensions thus existed both between, and within, Tepehuano communities at this stage, which contributed to the rise of territorial and factional conflicts during the Revolution.¹²⁶

In the Territory of Tepic, the Cora communities were insulated from such threats to their lands by a combination of local uprisings (often backed by the Cora communities),¹²⁷ the difficulties of transport and communication presented by the mountainous terrain of the region, and the wealth of more productive land available to speculators and landowners elsewhere in the Territory. Thus while Tepic was one of the ten entities most affected by the *desamortización* of communal lands during the Porfiriato,¹²⁸ the Cora communities escaped largely unscathed – with the exception of San Juan Peyotán, which by the end of the nineteenth century had been totally colonised by mestizos,¹²⁹ and San Pedro Ixcatán, which was increasingly threatened by neighbouring haciendas.¹³⁰ Around the turn of the century the government also tried, and failed, to reduce the autonomy of the Cora communities, appointing a ‘juez auxiliar’ in each to represent the state. In the Cora Alta these jueces were dependent on an official in Jesús María, and in the Cora Baja on local municipal governments. However, they were either ignored by the Cora population, or integrated into the existing Cora communal authorities ‘mediante ceremoniales curiosos,’¹³¹ and ultimately ‘obedec[ía] en todo al gobernador.’¹³²

¹²⁶ AHED-C/3/E/25, residents of Candelaria to Gob.Dgo., 30 May 1908

¹²⁷ J. Meyer, *De cantón...* pp.139-49

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.94

¹³⁰ J. Meyer, *De cantón...* pp.162-3; J. Jáuregui, ‘Del reino de Lozada...’ pp.182-3

¹³¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877, E/36, Navarro to DEFN, 26 Oct. 1927

¹³² R. de la Cerda Silva, ‘Los coras,’ in *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* (Vol. 5, No. 1, 1943), p.111

Around the turn of the century, foreign explorers, ethnological researchers and scientific collectors of plants, animals, and human skulls were drawn to the ‘remote mountain fastnesses’¹³³ of the Gran Nayar in search of ‘primitives’¹³⁴ who perhaps resembled ‘early man.’¹³⁵ These men – chief among them Carl Lumholtz, a Norwegian explorer, Aleš Hrdlička, a Czech doctor, Konrad Theodor Preuss, a German ethnologist, and León Diguet, a French photographer and collector – were naturally reluctant to undermine their reputations as adventurers by pointing out the long history of contact between the peoples of the Gran Nayar and the outside world.¹³⁶ Their exaggerated descriptions of the Indians as ‘primitives’ and ‘savages,’ totally isolated from the rest of the world and forgotten by time, pleased their sponsors, captured the imaginations of the domestic and foreign public, and reinforced the idea of the Gran Nayar as cut off from the rest of the world. However, their accounts of day-to-day life in the region provide clear evidence of the complexities of each people’s culture, and the ways in which both individuals and communities struggled to preserve their distinctive identities.

The reports of these early anthropologists show that – in the face of increased mestizo pressure on communal landholdings that had already caused various outlying communities to lose their indigenous character – conflicts between different Indian communities, as well as between Indians and mestizo colonists, by now wracked the Sierra Tepehuana and especially the Sierra Huichola. In the latter region, Catholic missionaries of the Josefino order had established a new mission at San Sebastián, and

¹³³ C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico...* ii, p.183

¹³⁴ L. Diguet, *Por tierras occidentales...* p.109

¹³⁵ C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico...* i, p.494

¹³⁶ Neurath, *Las fiestas de la casa grande*, p.14

a *vistita* at San Andrés, and had brought with them large numbers of mestizo settlers. In the Sierra Cora, too, various communities were now home to mestizos, while in Jesús María both Preuss and Lumholtz found a few Coras who had internalised the prevalent national discourses of Indian ‘primitivism’ and abandoned their old *costumbre*, due to extensive contact with mestizos and long sojourns outside of their communities.¹³⁷ However, such characters were at this point far from influential within their communities,¹³⁸ and across the Gran Nayar, traditional authorities, elders and ritual specialists continued to regulate the communal life of peoples described as ‘practically self-governing tribes.’¹³⁹ While the Porfirian state by now regarded the Gran Nayar as ‘pacified territory,’¹⁴⁰ and Lumholtz predicted that ‘these primitive people will soon disappear by fusion with the great nation to whom they belong,’¹⁴¹ Hrdlicka was ultimately correct when he noted that in the Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros had ‘not given up the thought of armed resistance’ to the political, economic and cultural pressures exerted upon them by mestizo colonists, state and Federal authorities, and Catholic missionaries.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ J. Jáuregui, J. Neurath (eds.), *Fiesta, literatura y magia...* p.224; C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico...* i, p.505

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

¹³⁹ Hrdlicka, *Observations*, p.35

¹⁴⁰ J. Pérez González, *Ensayo estadístico...* p.10

¹⁴¹ C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico...* i., xvi

¹⁴² Hrdlicka, *Observations*, p.35

Chapter One: Revolution, Civil War and ‘Pacification’ in the Gran Nayar (1910-1920)

During the ten years of the armed phase of the Mexican Revolution – from Madero’s initial revolt against the regime of Porfirio Díaz in 1910 through to 1920, when Álvaro Obregón and his Sonoran allies mounted Mexico’s last successful military coup and overthrew President Carranza – the Gran Nayar was the site of almost continuous fighting. Federal, Maderista, Orozquista, Huertista, Villista and Carrancista forces all marched back and forth across the region, whose rugged mountains also provided a refuge for the defeated remnants of these forces, as well as for a variety of bandit gangs – just as they had during the War of Independence, the War of Reform, the French Intervention and the rebellion of Manuel Lozada.

Historians and anthropologists working on the Gran Nayar have largely ignored the participation of the Cora, Huichol, Tepehuano and Mexicanero Indian communities of the region in the revolutionary struggles of this period. The few works that do mention this participation tend to do so superficially, oversimplifying the story and repeating the errors of earlier scholars. For example, the idea that the young Villista commander Rafael Buelna controlled the Cora and Huichol sierras until at least 1917, when in fact he broke with Villa and fled to the US in September 1915 and did not return to Mexico until four years later,¹⁴³ seems to have originated in an article on the Cora and Huichol by Grimes and Hinton (‘by the end of the armed phase of the Revolution [in 1917] the entire sierra area adhered to the Villista faction led by Rafael

¹⁴³ J. C. Valadés, *Rafael Buelna...* pp.87-93

Buelna'),¹⁴⁴ which was picked up by Rojas ('desde noviembre de 1917... al general Santiago... le tocó organizar la campaña contra el villista Rafael Buelna, que había montado su cuartel general en la región de Jesús María y desde allí dominaba gran parte de esta zona de la Sierra Madre'),¹⁴⁵ and from there has passed into the work of Van Young ('by the end of the armed phase of the Revolution the entire sierra area adhered to the Villista faction led by Rafael Buelna').¹⁴⁶ This misconception then becomes the foundation of further inaccuracies – for example regarding the breadth of support for Villismo on the part of the Huichols, whom Rojas claims were 'predominantemente villistas,'¹⁴⁷ and of whom Weigand states that they 'declared almost to a person for Villa.'¹⁴⁸

In fact, the very idea of entire ethnic groups siding with a particular revolutionary faction in the Gran Nayar is problematic. While cultural-political bonds did exist between the different Cora communities in the revolutionary period, there was scant political solidarity between the different Huichol, Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities. Although each of these latter groups shared its language and costumbre with neighbouring communities, which can thus be regarded as belonging to the same ethno-linguistic grouping, there were no overarching 'tribal' political structures between them, and each community instead formed an independent polity, with its own politico-religious authorities, its own fiercely guarded territory, and its own unique identity. Sweeping assertions about entire ethnic groups behaving in one way or another overlook the fact that alliances between the Indians of the Gran Nayar and

¹⁴⁴ J. E. Grimes, T. E. Hinton, 'The Huichol and the Cora,' i, p.795

¹⁴⁵ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.164

¹⁴⁶ E. Van Young, 'The Indigenous Peoples of Western Mexico...' p.167

¹⁴⁷ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.163

¹⁴⁸ P. C. Weigand, 'Role of the Huichol...' p.169

different revolutionary bands were generally formed at communal level – or even by specific groups within communities – in order to fulfil particular local objectives, which could differ greatly from one community to another depending on the historical, geographical and socio-cultural conditions of each.

This chapter aims to demonstrate *why* different Indian individuals or communities participated in the events of the Revolution in markedly different ways. By drawing on interviews with the children or grandchildren of those who lived in the region during this period, together with available documentary sources, we can build up a picture of widespread involvement in the Revolution on the part of the Indians of the Gran Nayar, even though in many cases this is downplayed by the authors of these sources. Ivor Thord-Gray, a military commander active in the region in 1914, provides a good example of such inconsistency, as he seems to superficially endorse the academic myth of the Gran Nayar as an isolated ‘region of refuge’ home to ‘closed corporate communities,’¹⁴⁹ while at the same time his accounts of expeditions into the Sierras of Nayarit and Jalisco shows that the turmoil of the Revolution had a very real – and disruptive – effect on the local indigenous communities. Taken together with Josefino missionaries’ descriptions of events in San Sebastián and San Andrés, Thord-Gray’s narrative also shows that communities took an active interest in the activities of armed bands in the region, and selectively confronted or cooperated with these external forces to their own advantage.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ G. Aguirre Beltrán, *Regiones de refugio*; E. R. Wolf, ‘Closed Corporate Peasant Communities...’

¹⁵⁰ I. Thord-Gray, *Gringo Rebel...* pp.125-314

This chapter also highlights the importance of the militias that first emerged in many communities during the tumult of 1910 to 1920, and of the role that these so-called *Defensas Sociales* played in defeating both regional Villista forces and bandit gangs.¹⁵¹ Inextricably linked to these military successes was the evolution of Defensa commanders into political bosses, or *caciques*,¹⁵² whose behaviour, and very existence, challenged the costumbre-based power of traditional communal authorities, leading to the growth of internal discord and factional feuds that eventually came to dominate life throughout the region in the post-civil war period.

The Revolution in the Gran Nayar

The Mexican Revolution arrived in the sierras of Durango, Zacatecas and Jalisco, and of the then-Federal Territory of Tepic (which would not become the modern state of Nayarit until February 1917), soon after Madero launched his ‘Plan de San Luis Potosí’ in November 1910. With events at national level moving rapidly, Madero’s old friend Luis Moya soon declared himself in rebellion against Díaz, assembled an armed force in Chihuahua, and marched south towards his hometown of Chalchihuites – in Zacatecas near the border with Durango and Jalisco – where he began his revolutionary campaign. Félix and Santos Bañuelos, Justo Ávila and Pánfilo Natera (all of whom would become revolutionary leaders of both regional and national importance), as well as Antonio Amaro (who died soon after but was the father of future Defence Minister and architect of the modern Mexican army, Joaquín Amaro

¹⁵¹ cf. A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, pp.437-40; cf. cf. F. R. Almada, *La revolución...* ii, pp.326-333; D. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges*, pp.83-5; T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* pp.36-7, pp.43-4;

¹⁵² cf. D. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges*, pp.98-9; M. Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs...* pp.48-53

Domínguez), rallied to Moya's cause.¹⁵³ By February 1911, the rebels had taken most of the major towns on the northern and eastern edges of the Huichol homeland, including the municipal seat of Mezquitic,¹⁵⁴ as well as nearby Mezquitil, Durango, whose authorities governed, at least on paper, much of the state's Tepehuano and Mexicanero population.¹⁵⁵

The local Porfirian authorities collapsed in the face of these rebel gains.¹⁵⁶ An expeditionary force of cavalry and rurales set out from Tepic for 'la Sierra de este Territorio, a expedicionar con objeto de proteger aquellos pueblos y evitar la invasión que pudieran hacer los sublevados de Zacatecas y Durango,'¹⁵⁷ but failed to to achieve its objectives. Luis Moya took the city of Zacatecas in April, and Tepic itself fell to the revolutionary forces of Martín Espinosa in May, without a shot being fired.¹⁵⁸ A few days later President Díaz himself was forced from power, following the defeat of his Federal Army by the forces of Madero and Pascual Orozco at Ciudad Juárez.

While there are few direct references to the participation of the Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros in this early stage of the revolution, in either documentary or oral sources, it is clear that the some of the communities of the Gran Nayar were affected by the breakdown of Porfirian control over the states and municipalities to which they belonged, and by the rise to power locally of new

¹⁵³ 'Félix Bañuelos,' in *Mi Pueblo*, Jan. 1995, p.6

¹⁵⁴ AHJ-G-12-911/C/331/E/18852, Manuel Camargo to Gob.Jal., 23 Jan. 1911; Jefe Pol. de Colotlán to Gob. Jal., 30 Mar. 1911

¹⁵⁵ A. Avitia Hernández, *Los Alacranes...* p.23

¹⁵⁶ AHJ-G-12-911/C/332/E/18865, Manuel Muro to Gob.Jal., 18 May 1911

¹⁵⁷ AHSDN-C/C/105/E/XI/481.5/187, Mariano Ruíz to Sec. de Guerra, 27 Mar. 1911

¹⁵⁸ J. Meyer, *De cantón...*, p.191

Maderista authorities. In November 1911 Madero acceded to the Mexican presidency, and Alberto Robles Gil became governor of Jalisco. In an attempt to cement his authority over the state, Robles Gil launched a series of administrative reforms, adjusting political boundaries and posting new authorities to previously autonomous communities. In the municipality of Mezquitic, San Andrés Cohamiata was named the centre of a new ‘Comisaría Política y Judicial’ encompassing the neighbouring Huichol communities,¹⁵⁹ which was rapidly transferred to the more accessible San Sebastián,¹⁶⁰ which also functioned as a *residencia* of the Zacatecan Josefino missionaries then attempting to evangelise the Huichols. It is interesting to note that the official reasons given for this change were San Andrés’ distance from the municipal seat of Mezquitic (approximately 180 km.),¹⁶¹ the lack of efficient communications (documents sent from San Andrés took at least fifteen days to arrive in Mezquitic),¹⁶² and the impassability of the Chapalagana river during the rains,¹⁶³ which closed access between San Andrés and Mezquitic. However, documents uncovered by Rojas instead indicate that

‘[los huicholes] en San Andrés decidieron oponerse a que hubiera comisarios políticos en sus pueblos [y] [t]ambién optaron por rechazar al maestro de la escuela oficial, que se dedicaba a comerciar y a extorcionarlos, y mandaron a sus hijos a la escuela católica.’¹⁶⁴

If would therefore seem that, on the one hand, the Huichols continued to tolerate – for the moment – the presence of the missionaries in their communities. The Bishop of Zacatecas was able to visit Santa Catarina for several weeks in January 1912, and

¹⁵⁹ AHJ-G-5-912/C/34/E/7786, State government decree, 2 Apr. 1912

¹⁶⁰ AHJ-G-5-912-913/C/34/E/7787, State government decree, 11 Sept. 1913

¹⁶¹ AHJ-G-5-912-913/C/34/E/7787, Mariano de la Torre to Gob.Jal., 11 Dec. 1912

¹⁶² *ibid.*

¹⁶³ AHJ-G-5-912-913/C/34/E/7787, Mariano de la Torre to Gob.Jal., 10 Aug. 1912

¹⁶⁴ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* pp.161-2

even dismantled a nearby Huichol shrine without provoking much opposition.¹⁶⁵ The Josefinos also continued to hold weekly masses in San Andrés and San Sebastián and to carry out marriages, baptisms and doctrinal teaching sessions in all of the Huichol communities of the region (although the success of these efforts is certainly exaggerated in the missionaries' reports).¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, the population of San Andrés opposed the presence of representatives of the state, perhaps because they believed that state intrusions into communal life posed a greater threat to traditional politico-religious structures than the relatively ineffective missionising efforts of the Josefinos. The same suspicion of state power would later lead many Huichols to form an alliance of convenience with Cristero rebels, in response to the revolutionary regime's state-building projects in the Sierra Huichola in the 1920s and 1930s.

Meanwhile Santa Catarina seems to have had more contact with rebels than with Robles Gil's short-lived reformist administration. In March 1912, the communal authorities wrote to the state government that many local people wanted to join the bands of 'zapatistas' then active nearby – probably a reference to the forces of Camilo Rentería, who had seconded Pascual Orozco's recent rebellion against Madero and was thus also loosely allied with Zapata, and was based in Huaynamota, just across Jalisco's border with the Territory of Tepic.¹⁶⁷ Similar alleged friendly contacts between Cheche Campos,¹⁶⁸ who took refuge in Santa Catarina¹⁶⁹ after razing the rival pueblo of Huejuquilla to the ground,¹⁷⁰ may have been the basis for a local

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ AGMJ/FUN-01-MJ, Calixto Guerrero, 'Informe,' 22 Oct. 1917

¹⁶⁷ B. Rojas, *Huichols: Documentos...* pp.243-4

¹⁶⁸ Campos was an Orozquista from the Laguna region who 'espoused a form of *de facto* agrarian reform' (A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, p.287)

¹⁶⁹ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.162

¹⁷⁰ 'Exposición...' in *Mi Pueblo*, Mar. 1995, p.10

Federal commander reporting in December that ‘los huicholes ya se habían armado.’¹⁷¹ Such contacts do not, however, contradict another of Roja’s claims: that in the same month a group of Huichols – perhaps from neighbouring San Sebastian, which had a long history of conflict with Santa Catarina – aided Maderista General Cándido Aguilar by capturing and sending him ‘algunos de los rebeldes que se internaban en la sierra.’¹⁷²

Meanwhile, in the Territory of Tepic, continuous fighting made any attempted intrusions by the Federal or Territorial government in the Cora communities almost impossible (although a short-lived ‘escuela rudimentaria’ was set up by the Church in Jesús María in October 1912).¹⁷³ Pascual Orozco’s revolt against Madero had been seconded almost immediately in Tepic by an ex-Federal Lieutenant, Miguel Guerrero,¹⁷⁴ who carried out raids on the western edge of the Cora Baja.¹⁷⁵ Later joining forces with those of the rancher, some-time bandit chief and grandson of a Lozadista *caudillo*, Camilo Rentería,¹⁷⁶ the rebels attacked Tepic on 29 April, and although they were repelled – with the Federal commander claiming that Rentería had died in the battle¹⁷⁷ – the city’s elite were alarmed by the sudden appearance of a rebel army at their gates, and the Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Tepic warned President Madero that:

¹⁷¹ B. Rojas, *Los Huicholes...* p.162

¹⁷² *ibid.*

¹⁷³ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 25 Jan. 1922

¹⁷⁴ Guerrero had been lauded as a hero in 1911 for his role in the defence of Tijuana against Magonista revolutionaries, regarded by many Mexicans as a front for an American invasion (M. A. Samaniego, ‘La revolución mexicana en baja California...’ pp.172-4)

¹⁷⁵ AHSDN-C/C/105/XI/481.5/188, Unsigned military report, 28 Mar. 1912

¹⁷⁶ M. Flores Flores, E. Flores Sánchez, *Memorias políticas...* p.29

¹⁷⁷ AHSDN-C/C/105/XI/481.5/188, Unsigned military report, 29 Apr. 1912

‘esta ciudad no queda con guarnición suficiente de soldados federales al mando de un ameritado jefe militar... sigue existiendo la amenaza consiguiente a numerosos elementos perversos armados y a los indios de la Sierra de Álica...

‘Es sabido que la intención del ex-teniente Guerrero era apoderarse de Tepic y reunir aquí los elementos para en seguida atacar a la ciudad de Guadalajara, y evocamos la memoria ingrata del cavecilla Lozada, para demostrar los perjuicios que un hombre resuelto puede causar á la Nación una vez posesionado de Tepic.’¹⁷⁸

Although references to Indian rebellion had long been used by the elites of both Tepic and Guadalajara to tarnish political opponents (such as Manuel Lozada),¹⁷⁹ and to elicit Federal intervention in local disputes by invoking the spectre of a Yucatan-style ‘caste war,’¹⁸⁰ the Cámara’s appeal probably also reflects the real presence of Coras amongst Rentería’s troops, which, since he found his recruits in the Sierra, there is no reason to doubt. Whatever reassurance reports of Rentería’s death might have given the Tepiqueños proved fleeting, however, as it was reported shortly afterwards that Rentería was actually back in Huaynamota, ‘teniendo ya un efectivo de 200 hombres,’¹⁸¹ amongst whom there were also, according to Rojas, ‘algunos huicholes, sobre todo de Guadalupe Ocotán.’¹⁸² Rebel forces under Rentería and Guerrero skirmished with Federal troops throughout the summer, and by July ‘el número de bandidos que merodean en aquel Territorio pasan de 800 sin contar las gavillas pequeñas,’¹⁸³ although Rentería and a number of rebels were dispersed by the Coras of Jesús María later that month, after arousing local hostilities by ‘exigiendo préstamos a una Sra.’¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ AHSDN-C/C/105/XI/481.5/188, Unknown to Madero, 11 May 1912

¹⁷⁹ eg. J. Pérez González, *Ensayo estadístico...* p.560; P. López Díaz, *Fuego...* p.150

¹⁸⁰ cf. T. Rugeley, *Yucatán's Maya Peasantry...* pp.33-60

¹⁸¹ AHSDN-C/C/105/XI/481.5/188, Juan Castillo to Sec. Guerra, 22 May 1912

¹⁸² B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.162

¹⁸³ AHSDN-C/C/105/XI/481.5/188, Unsigned military report, 8 July 1912

¹⁸⁴ AHSDN-C/C/124/XI/481.5/250, J. Arzamendi to Sec. Gob., 23 July 1912

Although we know little about the situation in the Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities of Durango during this early period of the Revolution, it seems likely that their experiences were similar to those of the Coras. With much of Mezquital and Pueblo Nuevo dominated by Orozco's so-called 'Colorado' rebels,¹⁸⁵ there was little if anything that the new state authorities could have done to impose their military or political control over the area – even if the Durango state coffers had not been empty. As in Jalisco and Tepic, the Indians of southern Durango would have come into contact with Orozquista forces, such as the large band of rebels reported in 1912 as active near Mezquital, whose authorities were worried that the 'indígenas de Yonora se les junten'¹⁸⁶ – an indication of the threat that Indian rebellion posed to government control of the region, and also a portent of the important role that Dámaso Barraza, cacique of Temoaya and its anexo Yonora, would play in both the later stages of the Revolution and the Cristiada. The Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros would have also encountered the Federal detachments sent to combat the rebels. The inhabitants of San Andrés Milpillas Grande, for example, were 'trasladados en masa y congregados en la ciudad de Acaponeta por el gobierno de Nayarit,'¹⁸⁷ while according to Pastor Rouaix,¹⁸⁸ the inhabitants of many other communities were also forced into temporary exile in this period.¹⁸⁹ Both exile and incorporation into the revolutionary forces increased Tepehuano and Mexicanero interaction with mestizos, and also created new land conflicts and exacerbated old ones, which would influence their later

¹⁸⁵ E. Gamíz Olivas, *La revolución...* pp.39-40

¹⁸⁶ AHED-R/C/3/E/122, Jefe Pol. Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 1 Dec 1912

¹⁸⁷ J. G. Sánchez Olmedo, *Etnografía...* p.42

¹⁸⁸ Rouaix was a revolutionary intellectual and agrarian reformer from Puebla who helped draft Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution and twice served as governor of Durango (A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, p.475)

¹⁸⁹ P. Rouaix, *Diccionario geográfico...* pp.261-2

participation in the Revolution in southern Durango.

In February 1913, over the course of the ten days known as the *Decena trágica*, Madero was overthrown and assassinated by his former general Victoriano Huerta (himself a native of Colotlán and of rumoured Huichol descent). Venustiano Carranza, governor of Coahuila, refused to recognise Huerta, and was joined in his opposition to the new government by Villa, Zapata, and Obregón, who turned their arms against Huerta, the Federal Army, and Orozco's Colorados (who had been transformed from rebels into Federal auxiliaries after Huerta made Orozco a general). An all-out civil war resulted and, as it progressed, disparate groups of revolutionaries and bandits – often indistinguishable in documentary sources, given the vague and politically prejudiced language of official reports – passed through the Gran Nayar. Any tenuous steps on the part of the Mexican state towards expansion in the region were halted in this period, and references to the direct participation of local communities in the Revolution begin to proliferate.

In the Sierra Huichola, plans to establish a postal service linking Mezquitic with Santa Catarina and San Sebastián, aimed at fomenting the economic development of the area,¹⁹⁰ were abandoned, and the new 'comisaría' established in San Sebastián was forgotten. Rebels raided the main mestizo towns of the 8/o Cantón,¹⁹¹ and although the threat these posed was cavalierly dismissed by Huerta's commander in Mezquitic, who insisted that 'no exist[en] sublevados, sólo bandidaje [que] pequeños grupos

¹⁹⁰ AHJ-G-5-912-913/C/34/E/7787, L. Sanibañez, 'Cuestionario,' 2 Feb. 1913; Dir. Pol. Mezquitic to Gob.Jal., 1 Feb. 1913;

¹⁹¹ AHJ-G-15-913/C/436/E/32389, Maximiliano Rangel to Gob.Jal., 11 Mar. 1913

persigo tenazmente,¹⁹² the Federal troops soon found themselves in a hopeless position, with the regional capital of Colotlán ‘destruida por incendios revolucionarios’ and its garrison left ‘sin armas y municiones.’¹⁹³ In Durango, meanwhile, rebels under Domingo and Mariano Arrieta and Calixto Contreras took the capital from pro-Huerta forces in June 1913.¹⁹⁴ Pancho Villa played a key role in the revolutionary campaign that followed, and as his División del Norte began to dominate the north-central part of the country, Álvaro Obregón – who had also pledged allegiance to Carranza – took control of Sonora and Sinaloa. By the end of 1913, as forces allied to Obregón moved down into the Sinaloa-Tepic border region, the Gran Nayar was surrounded by rebel forces on all but its southwestern flank.¹⁹⁵

In early 1914, Obregón’s army began its march on Tepic, en route to Guadalajara. Ivor Thord-Gray’s account of the 1913-14 campaign directly discusses the participation of the Indians of the Gran Nayar in the revolution.¹⁹⁶ Although Thord-Gray has a tendency to exaggerate the daring of his own exploits and the importance of his role in the revolution, he was also an amateur ethnologist who took a keen interest in the Indian cultures which he encountered in Mexico (indeed, he later wrote an English-Tarahumara dictionary), and his descriptions of the Gran Nayar, its inhabitants and their attitudes in this period are often perceptive.

During the early stages of the 1914 Tepic campaign, Thord-Gray met ‘some Cora

¹⁹² AHJ-G-15-913/C/436/E/32389, Bernabé Salazar to Gob.Jal., 11 Apr. 1913

¹⁹³ AHJ-G-15-913/C/436/E/32389, Luis Gutiérrez Pérez to Gob.Jal., 22 May 1913

¹⁹⁴ E. Gámiz Olivas, *La revolución...* p.44

¹⁹⁵ J. C. Valadés, *Rafael Buelna...* p.50

¹⁹⁶ Thord-Gray was a Swedish adventurer and mercenary who had joined Villa’s forces as part of a bet with a friend, and ended up serving as a colonel in Obregón’s cavalry division under General Luis Blanco

Indians who were most friendly and said they came from somewhere near Acatán' – most likely San Pedro Ixcatán or San Juan Corapan. 'All but one carried bows and arrows, a primitive kind of sling, and a long knife. Their dress was primitive and all wore sandals. Several of them had joined the revolutionaries against the government, they said.'¹⁹⁷ A few weeks later, after the fall of Acaponeta in early May, Thord-Gray was sent into the nearby mountains in search of a Federal cavalry force that had been reported active in the area. Near Saycota he was joined at his campfire by 'an old Indian with a family of four,' who had been hiding from Federal troops and 'had not eaten anything for some time except roots and maggots.' Although by May – at the very end of the dry season – supplies often grew scarce in the Gran Nayar, the explicit link made here between hiding and hunger hints at the way in which the presence of armed outsiders in the region obstructed access to stored food supplies, and may have also disrupted the normal agricultural cycle. Such disruption is also implied by Thord-Gray's subsequent encounter with five Tepehuanos roaming nearby, who had left their homes in southern Durango and were all armed with 'short bow, arrows and machetes.' These men joined Thord-Gray outside Acaponeta a few days later, together with six other Tepehuanos whom they had recruited to the revolutionary cause.¹⁹⁸ They proved invaluable in a skirmish with government forces soon after, which left eight Federals dead, each 'with an arrow in the back.' The Tepehuanos then took possession of the Federals' rifles and ammunition, but much to their disgust were not allowed to take the soldiers' horses, which 'automatically became the property of the army.'¹⁹⁹ That these Tepehuanos were wandering far from their homes, and so quickly agreed to join Blanco's troops when promised rifles and money, again points

¹⁹⁷ I. Thord-Gray, *Gringo Rebel...* p.125

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, pp.237-8

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.243-4

to the disruptive effects of revolutionary unrest in the Sierra Tepehuana.

Thord-Gray returned to the Gran Nayar shortly after taking part in the victorious battle for Tepic on 16 May. Just as Obregón had his battalions of Yaqui and Mayo Indians, so Blanco was interested in the fighting potential of the Coras and Tepehuanos, whom he had heard ‘would make good material for soldiers under their own chiefs, especially “If you promise them absolute control over their own land, affairs and religion.”’ So Thord-Gray was sent off through the mountains of Nayarit to ‘Huichol Country,’ in search of a Federal cavalry force that some Tepecano scouts had reported moving south across the Sierra from Valparaíso, Zacatecas, but also with the aim of arming local Indians to fight for the revolution. He and his fifty-three men (mainly Yaquis) were guided by two Tepehuanos, one Cora and one Huichol, and he took with him twenty Winchester carbines, with fifty rounds per gun, to distribute in the region.²⁰⁰

Thord-Gray wrote of the expedition that ‘the whole territory seemed deserted, and we met only two half-starved Indians in four days,’ probably reflecting the flight of the inhabitants, in the wake of local fighting, to hiding places in forests and canyons. Passing through Huajimic, where his guides did not trust the ‘mostly half-breed Mexican’ inhabitants,²⁰¹ they arrived in Guadalupe Ocotán, which he described as ‘very run-down looking, especially the temple and the god-houses,’²⁰² and where he recruited two local Huichol scouts. Thord-Gray and his men then crossed into Jalisco, heading past Ratontita towards Ocota, one of San Sebastián’s most important anexos,

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp.277-278

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, p.284

²⁰² *ibid.*, p.281

where his guide's family had their ranch. Although Thord-Gray describes the Huichols as 'not anywhere near as warlike as their neighbours, the Cora, who are few in number,'²⁰³ the men of Ocota, just like the Tepehuanos he had earlier recruited, were eager to get their hands on the Winchesters. His Huichol guide, José, and his father, 'a famous singing-shaman' (and probably Ocota's kawiteru),

'spent the early part of the morning trying to persuade me to issue the fifteen guns to his men in the community of Octota. About twenty men were presented as responsible enough. When I informed José and his father that the remainder would be selected from other settlements, it started a strong remonstrance against the idea. They advised me forcefully to confine the recruiting to their community only; outside men could not be mixed with theirs as it would invite trouble. The old man said, "If you pick men from two or more settlements, they will soon quarrel and break up into several parties, each group being members of their own community under their own recognized leader."' ²⁰⁴

After moving on to San Sebastián, Thord-Gray found rather more reluctant and unreliable allies. A Huichol arrow killed one of the Yaquis guarding their party's weapons and ammunition in the night, which nearly caused a reciprocal massacre of the locals by the other Yaqui troops. The next day, after an unsuccessful search for the perpetrators, whom the men of San Sebastián claimed must have been from another community – presumably Santa Catarina, to the borders of which their man-hunt took them²⁰⁵ – Thord-Gray was eager to leave the area, especially as he himself only narrowly escaped an assassination attempt in his camp that evening. At the last minute, however, he decided to leave one gun with his guide's father in Ocota, and then made a deal with the authorities of San Sebastián, arming the governor, the community's chief 'shaman' and a group of local men in exchange for their help in

²⁰³ *ibid.*, pp.278-279

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p.296

spreading rumours of a ‘huge’ rebel army marching through the Sierra towards Bolaños and Chimaltitán. This ruse successfully panicked the local Federal garrisons, allowing Thord-Gray’s men to take both towns with barely a shot fired. They then marched on southwest, towards Ixtlán del Río.²⁰⁶ On their return, Blanco and the other generals were eager to know about the potential of the serrano Indians as revolutionary fighters. ‘I advised them not to waste any more time on the Huichols,’ Thord-Gray replied, ‘but did recommend them as excellent trackers and scouts, [although] suspicious by nature.’²⁰⁷

Three key points emerge from Thord-Gray’s account of his time in the Gran Nayar. First, he makes it clear that there was little solidarity between Huichol communities in this period. While the inter-tribal solidarity between the Yaquis and Mayos allowed them to be ‘formed into individual regiments’ within Obregón’s army,²⁰⁸ amongst the Huichols ‘each community was a complete little state, with its own government and headman,’²⁰⁹ and it was clear that this was not conducive towards turning the Huichols into an effective revolutionary fighting force, especially outside their communal territories. Second, although Thord-Gray asserts that each of these ‘mini-states’ had ‘little truck with outsiders except, perhaps, for such small commercial enterprises that may exist, and pilgrimages to ancient and distant holy places located outside their mountainous homeland,’²¹⁰ and hardly ‘knew or cared of the world outside their tribe,’²¹¹ it seems clear from his own narrative of the expedition that, while they probably cared little about the ideologies or programmes professed by the

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p.306-311

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p.314

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p.234; cf. E. Hu-DeHart, *Yaqui Resistance...* p.9

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*

²¹⁰ *ibid.*

²¹¹ *ibid.*, p.282

different revolutionary factions, the Huichols were in fact rather well informed about regional military developments. Huichol informants from Guadalupe Ocotán, Ocotá and San Sebastián all gave him valuable information regarding the movements, activities and even the morale of the Federal forces both in the Sierra and beyond, as far as Mezquitic, Colotlán, Bolaños and even Tlatenango, Zacatecas – where, for example, they reported that ‘the Federal regiment... was shanghaiing peons and Indians to work for them and sometimes into the army.’²¹² Thord-Gray’s testimony is also early evidence of the way in which the Huichols, Coras and Tepehuanos all sought to use the Revolution to their advantage. In the following years, as fighting in the Gran Nayar grew fiercer and the number of armed groups roaming the region increased, the indigenous communities of the area would increasingly form alliances with these outsiders, not only to obtain the arms, ammunition and horses emphasised by Thord-Gray, but also in pursuit of bolder, more obviously political objectives, such as the defense of their communal identities and political autonomy.

After rebel forces forced Huerta’s resignation in July 1914, tensions rose between Carranza and Obregón, on one side, and Villa and Zapata on the other. By the end of the year a new revolutionary war had broken out between the rival factions, and both Carrancistas and Villistas marched through the Gran Nayar on their way from one theatre of war to the next, while elements of Villa’s army, which began to disperse in the wake of Villa’s defeats in the Bajío in April 1915, subsequently took refuge in the region. This served to increase contacts – both friendly and hostile – between the Indian communities and armed outsiders, and gave rise to two interconnected phenomena: the establishment of community militias – the ‘Defensas Sociales’ – and

²¹² *ibid.*, p.302

the rise of a new generation of *caciques* – some mestizo, some Indian – across the region.

The Revolution had already seen the formation of ‘Defensas Sociales,’ for example in Durango, where a force drawn from ‘voluntarios, integrados por empleados de Gobierno, del comercio y de los hacendados’ was set up by Huertista authorities in 1913 to defend the capital from rebels.²¹³ However, the Defensas formed across the country from late 1915 were less an armed manifestation of elite power, and more an expression of ‘a shift in the popular mood,’ as communities, exhausted by the constant depredations of ‘rebels, bandits, and even, sometimes, rapacious government troops,’ banded together to defend themselves.²¹⁴ Given that remnants of Villa’s forces, often supported by local mestizos, frequently raided the communities of the Gran Nayar in this period, it is not surprising that their Carrancista rivals armed many of the local Indian Defensas. In the wake of their occupation of a community, a Carrancista commander would often simply assemble the local notables, either charge them with selecting a suitable leader or pick one out himself (often whoever among them had the most extensive military training, or the most money, and therefore the most to lose from Villista attacks), and then leave whatever arms could be spared to equip a militia made up of selected local inhabitants (although there were often fewer arms than needed, and many Defensa members initially had to arm themselves).²¹⁵

The Defensas of the Gran Nayar played a key role in Carrancista victories against

²¹³ E. Gámiz Olivas, *La revolución...* p.42; AHJ-G-15-1913/C/435/E/32366, Fed. Circular, 28 Aug. 1913

²¹⁴ A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, p.437

²¹⁵ I. Landa Rentería, in M. Caldera and L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.49; P. Landa, in *ibid.*, pp.55-56

Villista forces still active in the region. But when not on official campaigns, they were subject to little Carrancista oversight. Defensa leaders thus not only defended their communities from bandit or Villista raids, but, in order to legitimise their positions and secure local support, also used their arms to pursue popular goals such as expelling mestizo settlers and missionaries from communal territories, reclaiming lands lost during the Porfiriato, and violently prosecuting disputes, some of which dated back hundreds of years, with neighbouring communities.

Across Mexico, the Defensas Sociales also pursued personal and factional interests. In spite of strongly worded reminders that they were *not* to act as policemen, levy fines or otherwise usurp the powers of weakly constituted (or even non-existent) civil authorities,²¹⁶ the ‘external protection’ that the Defensas of the revolutionary era provided their communities was often ‘complemented, [or] even outstripped, by internal extortion.’²¹⁷ Given the combination of armed force and financial opportunity thus offered by the institution of the Defensa Social, it is not surprising that many Defensa commanders were able to establish themselves as local ‘bosses,’ somewhere between ‘petty caudillos’ and ‘municipal caciques.’²¹⁸ The Carrancistas knew that without local support, harnessed through the Defensas Sociales and their commanders-turned-caciques, they would struggle to wipe out Villismo and banditry in the more remote parts of the country.²¹⁹ Therefore, the Carrancista government further rewarded the loyalty of these men – like Gabriel Barrios in the Sierra Norte de Puebla – with arms, approval and pledges of non-interference in local matters, which

²¹⁶ AHED-FR/C/5/E/274, Circular 15 to Jefes de Defensa, 28 Aug. 1919

²¹⁷ A. Knight, ‘Caciquismo...’ p.44

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp.25-30; cf. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges...* pp.83-5

²¹⁹ A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, p.438

in turn boosted both the *de facto* power and the perceived legitimacy of the cacicazgos that they had established.²²⁰

However, the Cora, Huichol, Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities had managed to preserve into the twentieth century a much higher level of autonomy *vis-à-vis* the Mexican state than that enjoyed by their mestizo neighbours, or by Barrios' Nahuas, and were governed not by the political bosses, rich merchants and Catholic priests who dominated life in most mestizo communities, but by politico-religious cargo-holders selected by a gerontocracy of ritual specialists – the 'Consejo de Ancianos.' The power of these authorities was 'traditional' in the Weberian sense, in that it was claimed and believed in 'on the basis of the sanctity of the order and the attendant powers of control as they have been handed down from the past,'²²¹ and was legitimised by the performance of ritual.

The emergence of an alternative, military-orientated community leadership thus caused controversy in the communities of the Gran Nayar. It is important to note that this was not because military *caciquismo* was an entirely new phenomenon in the region, especially amongst the Coras. Military caciques had emerged in many of the Gran Nayar's communities during the Lozada era, and, as Weigand and Liffman have pointed out, the 'power shift to younger, bicultural war chiefs during a crisis is a broad historical pattern among central Uto-Aztecan peoples.'²²² The traditional power structures in many communities included 'military cargos' (such as 'Capitán' or

²²⁰ See K. Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics...* pp.43-5

²²¹ M. Weber, in A. Knight, 'Caciquismo...' p.14

²²² Weigand, 'Differential Acculturation...' in P. M. Liffman, *Huichol Territory...* p.46

‘Alférez’) which sometimes came with three-year terms in place of the usual one-year limit, squaring the need for temporary military control of a community during wartime with the costumbre-based forms of authority overseen by communal elders. However, once the immediate military threat had passed, these war leaders generally receded again into the political background.

During the revolution, the new Jefes de Defensa therefore sought to bolster their power by pursuing popular agendas such as the restitution of lost lands or the expulsion of outsiders from their existing territories. The respect that this earned them, combined with the support – and in particular the weapons – given them by powerful external allies, allowed them to reach positions of unparalleled influence within their communities during the revolution. In the long term, however, their very existence – as leaders without ritually-defined term-limits, whose power rested on their guns and status as intermediaries between their communities and external interests, rather than on their successful progression through a hierarchy defined by age, ritual and status within one of the community’s constituent kinship groups – increasingly polarised the communities of the Gran Nayar, giving rise to internal factional disputes.

Caciquismo in the Sierra Huichola

The bloody career of Colonel Patricio Mezquite – the first of the caciques of the Gran Nayar for whom we possess reliable information – is an early demonstration of the way in which ambitious leaders were able use the violence of the revolutionary upheaval, and the availability of powerful, ‘foreign’ allies, to secure for themselves

unprecedented levels of power and influence, only for their success to precipitate their downfall, such was the opposition that it generated within their own communities. Mezquite rose to power in the Sierra Huichola at a time of widespread violence in the north of Jalisco, which was such that at the Constitutional Congress in Querétaro in early 1917, there was a failed attempt to swap some of its territory with neighbouring Zacatecas, so as to even out the strangely-shaped state borders and thus improve ‘las malas condiciones generales en que se encuentran las mencionadas regiones.’²²³ Mezquitic had been governed by a pro-government administration for several years, as had Huejuquilla, where Carrancista forces had named local rancher (and future Cristero general) Pedro Quintanar the commander of ‘un destacamiento de setenta y cinco hombres.’²²⁴ However, Villista remnants continued to control much of the countryside, raiding towns and ranches and fighting fierce running battles with the local Defensas.

Zingg, the first scholar to mention Mezquite, describes him as a ‘Villista general,’²²⁵ and Rojas who, as we have seen, also claims that the majority of Huichols were Villista sympathisers, reiterates Mezquite’s Villista allegiance while also asserting that ‘falta confirmar lo que hasta ahora parece leyenda.’²²⁶ Weigand, however, contends that while many local mestizos sided with the Villistas, the Huichols of San Sebastián instead

‘saw a chance for renewed comunidad autonomy and, under the leadership of a Huichol named Patricio Mezquite (who had traveled to Guadalajara to solicit the backing of Carranza)... declared against Villa (and, therefore, against the

²²³ AHJ-G-5-916/C/35/E/7825, Diputación de Jal. to Congreso Constituyente, 3 Jan. 1917

²²⁴ I. Landa Rentería, in M. Caldera, L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.49,

²²⁵ R. Zingg, *Los Huicholes...* i, pp.132-3

²²⁶ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.163

local vecinos). Revolutionary ideology had little or nothing to do with the choice.²²⁷

The latter version of events is in part corroborated by the reports of Josefino missionary J. Calixto Guerrero, according to whom the ‘General Mezquite’ of Huichol legend was a San Sebastián notable called Juan Patricio de la Torre, nicknamed ‘Mezquite.’ Guerrero claims to have officiated at Mezquite’s marriage (hinting that the latter was at least nominally Catholic), and afterwards used his influence ‘ante los “Viejos”’ to help get him elected governor of San Sebastián in 1913, ‘en cuyo tiempo se hizo rico’²²⁸ – suggesting that Mezquite was perhaps the ‘Gobernador’ whom Klineberg reported as having leased land to an American silver prospector in 1913 or 1914, who then ‘began the work of looking for silver until under cover of a revolutionary skirmish both he and the Gobernador were killed.’²²⁹ In return for the political support of the Josefinos, Mezquite secured them the labour they needed to construct a new ‘residencia’ building, and was rewarded with three hundred ‘piezas de ropa’ donated by Catholics in Mexico City, which were handed out to San Sebastián’s inhabitants ‘por manos del mismo Gobernador Mezquite,’²³⁰ an act that must have helped him cement his influence in the community. However, the alliance of convenience between Mezquite and the Josefinos began to fall apart in the wake of Villa’s defeats in the Bajío, as elements of his forces took refuge in the Sierra Huichola and the area was transformed into a ‘teatro de los horrores de la guerra y crímenes que la acompañan.’²³¹

²²⁷ Weigand, ‘Co-operative Labor Groups...’ p.19

²²⁸ AGMJ/FUN-01-MJ, Calixto Guerrero, ‘Informe,’ 22 Oct. 1917

²²⁹ O. Klineberg, ‘Notes on the Huichol,’ p.446

²³⁰ AGMJ/FUN-01-MJ, Calixto Guerrero, ‘Informe,’ 22 Oct. 1917

²³¹ *ibid.*

In May 1916, the Villista Félix Díaz (no relation to Don Porfirio's nephew, then fighting in Veracruz) arrived in San Sebastián with 120 men, pillaging the community, terrorising the inhabitants and roughing up the Josefinos and their assistants. They stayed sixteen days, devouring the community's grain and animals, until Carrancista General Carlos Martínez arrived from Fresnillo with 400 men and drove them out.²³² The rival groups then alternately occupied San Sebastián some eight times, until the local Carrancistas,

‘comprendiendo que solo los mismos naturales concedores del terreno podían evitar la posesión y permanencia de rebeldes en la sierra Nayarita, armó a cuarenta huicholes dando a uno de ellos el nombramiento de Coronel. Este nuevo escuadrón concedor del terreno y armado más que de armas de fuego con la ferocidad de su instinto natural, comenzó a operar contra los alzados y a obtener ventajosos triunfos, por lo que engolfados con sus victorias y creyendo tener todo apoyo por el Gobierno para cometer cuantos atropellos quisiesen, comenzaron por tomar ellos mismos por cuartel la Casa cural o Misión que antes veían con sumo respeto, disponiendo de lo que en ella encontraban. Y como la colonización de vecinos [mestizos] en sus terrenos nunca les había cuadrado, al verse con armas y absolutos en sus propiedades, sin piedad arrojaron a los vecinos colonos, despojándoles de lo que apetecían, dando muerte a algunos de ellos y manifestando que no querían Padre Misionero porque por él había siempre vecinos.’²³³

The Josefinos and the surviving mestizo colonists fled to San Andrés, but a Carrancista force, together with the newly-appointed ‘Colonel’ Mezquite and his Huichol militia, arrived there soon after, in search of the Zacatecan Villista General Tomás Domínguez, who was rumoured to have taken refuge in the community. Domínguez escaped, much to the fury of the Carrancistas, who promptly murdered the four men they found in the community jail, looted the church, stabled their horses there, and took the Mission buildings as their headquarters. Guerrero's brother, Padre Moisés, and his assistant were about to be murdered at a nearby rancharía too, but

²³² *ibid.*

²³³ *ibid.*

were saved by the intervention of ‘un huichol que servía del guía a la tropa, llamado Clemente Villa, con grado de teniente coronel.’²³⁴

The same Clemente Villa then promptly established a Defensa in his native San Andrés (a first step towards the establishment of his own cacicazgo, which lasted well into the 1920s), and together with Mezquite began to force out the mestizos who had been settled in San Andrés by the Josefinos, or who had found a refuge there from the violence of the Revolution – around twenty families in total. Guerrero claims that:

‘Todos los huicholes dejados llevar por un momento de su instinto salvaje, vomitaban rayos y centellas por ojos y boca contra el padre y vecinos, acusándoles que por vivir en sus terrenos, les habían despojados de ellos.’²³⁵

Having cleared their traditional territories of mestizo civilians, they turned their attentions to the last bands of Villistas still active and raiding in the region. Joining up with Carrancista Colonel Lacarra and auxiliaries drawn from the ‘Defensas Sociales’ of San Juan Capistrano and Huejuquilla under Pedro Quintanar, they defeated the Villistas near Huaynamota.

‘A todos los prisioneros que agarraban los soldados de Lacarra o los defensas, se los entregaban a los huicholes... en calidad de prisioneros, mientras regresaban de campaña. Nunca lo hubieron hecho. A su regreso encontraron a todos los villistas colgados de los pinos más altos. Eran desalmados esos huicholes, pero los villistas no tenían perdón.’²³⁶

Over the next few years, Mezquite’s forces took advantage of their alliance with the Carrancistas (whose ‘Primer Jefe’ Venustiano Carranza had been elected president in May 1917), to expel the mestizos who had settled on the western frontier of the Sierra

²³⁴ *ibid.*

²³⁵ *ibid.*

²³⁶ I. Landa Rentería, in M. Caldera and L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.50

Huichola, in the border areas disputed between Jalisco and the newly created state of Nayarit. Padre Francisco del Real reported that in early 1919 the Huichol Carrancistas murdered ‘treinta y ocho cristianos entre chicos y grandes de un rancho inmediato a Amatlán,’²³⁷ forcing him to flee the region in April with around 400 parishioners.²³⁸ The inhabitants of Camotlán and Huajimic – who had territorial conflicts with San Andrés and San Sebastián – were also ‘amagados con la muerte’ and driven from their homes. In Camotlán, Padre del Real was able to save the local church’s ‘ornamentos y vasos,’ but in Huajimic

‘no saqué nada, porque temí encontrarme con... el Mezquite, quien no perdona la vida a nadie. A los pocos días de haber corrido los fieles de Huajimic, supe que se habían robado de la Iglesia todo lo que pudo servirles, y lo que no, lo hicieron pedazos. Llegó a tanto su barbaridad, que en voz de burla sacaron de la Iglesia a Sr. Sn. José para ponerlo en la carcel, y enseguida hacerlo pedazos simulando fusilarlo.’²³⁹

Having evicted the settlers and missionaries who had established themselves in San Andrés and San Sebastián, and exterminated the Villista bands that had previously harassed them, the Huichols, according to Weigand,

‘recuerdan este periodo como una época dorada – un tiempo sin vecinos, sin sacerdotes, durante el cual el maíz crecía grande y las cosechas eran buenas (y no estaban gravadas), y las ceremonias nativas florecían y se podían practicar sin la censura de los católicos.’²⁴⁰

However, although Mezquite ‘sí logró preservar la existencia de la comunidad,’²⁴¹ and his rule saw an important resurgence in the practice of costumbre, the Huichol colonel himself began to challenge traditional norms. He took one wife after another,

²³⁷ AHAG-Amatlán, Francisco del Real to Arzobispo, 3 Sept. 1920

²³⁸ AHAG-Amatlán, Francisco del Real to Arzobispo, 11 Apr. 1919

²³⁹ *ibid.*

²⁴⁰ P.C. Weigand, ‘El papel de los indios huicholes...’ p.125

²⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.126

‘posiblemente cerca de nueve en total’ (a scandalous act, as in this period only powerful ceremonial elders were permitted to have more than two or three wives), and his regime changed from one that operated on communal consensus and in accordance with the advice of the Consejo de Ancianos, to ‘una dictadura despreciable, basada en el terror.’²⁴² This culminated in a massacre of his Huichol opponents that left ‘varias docenas de muertos, cuyos huesos aún se pueden ver en la Mesa Hueca, cerca del pueblo de San Sebastián.’²⁴³ After the pacification of the region had been accomplished, he also seems to have overplayed his hand with the mestizos of the nearby towns, selling ‘cuatro bovinos a unos comerciantes mexicanos y luego mand[ando] a sus hombres para que los mataran en la alta sierra y trajeran de nuevo los animales.’²⁴⁴ It must have been at some point soon after this – probably around mid-1919, given that our last document directly relating to Mezquite is from April of that year – that Carrancista forces under the hard-line General de Santiago, who was probably less worried by Villista remnants than by the threat that Huichol militarism posed to the political stability of the region, arrested Mezquite near his ranch at Las Minitas. Weigand is probably right to assert that ‘incluso sus seguidores se sintieron aliviados’ when he was subsequently murdered ‘bajo la aplicación de de la *ley fuga*.’²⁴⁵

Caciquismo in the Sierra Cora

By this point, communal Defensas Sociales had also become an important part of Carrancista efforts to combat Villista remnants, and general ‘banditry,’ in the

²⁴² *ibid.*

²⁴³ *ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Zingg, *Los huicholes*, i, p.133

²⁴⁵ P. C. Weigand, ‘El papel de los indios huicholes...’ p.126

Territory of Tepic. It is difficult, given the lack of available documentary sources, to say exactly when these armed groups were first organised. However, it seems likely that the Cora Defensas began to coalesce at around the same time, and in response to the same pressures, as their equivalents in the Sierra Huichola, given the ease with which Villistas raiders moved between the two regions in this period.²⁴⁶ Jefe Político General Torres Sur's decision to work with the pre-existing authorities in the Sierra Cora, rather than reform or replace them,²⁴⁷ probably helped to consolidate the *de facto* political power of the commanders of these Defensas, which further increased after Carranza's elevation of the Federal Territory of Tepic to the category of 'Estado Libre y Soberano' in January 1917 (with the new state named 'Nayarit' after the Cora endonym, *náyerite*).²⁴⁸

General Jesús M. Ferreira, Carranza's appointment as the new state's governor, alleged that continued rural unrest in Nayarit was the fault of 'agitadores que escudándose de garantías constitucionales aumentan ambiciones insanas entre las clases analfabetas,' and Carranza authorised him to undertake 'una acción energética y violenta' to stop Nayarit falling 'en mismas condiciones que estuvo en tiempo Lozadaa [sic].'²⁴⁹ The practical effects of Ferreira's campaign in the countryside only exacerbated the violence wracking the state, which 'aumentó de una manera alarmante, a tal punto, que ya en los últimos días del interinato del General Ferreira, era casi imposible el tránsito del estado.'²⁵⁰ The local Defensas thus became increasingly vital in combatting this rural disorder, while their role as protectors of the

²⁴⁶ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.117

²⁴⁷ AGN-G-195/C/48/E/46, J.Torres Sur to Carranza, 20 Oct. 1916

²⁴⁸ Meyer, *Del canton...* p.192

²⁴⁹ AGN-G-195/C/42/E/7, Ferreira to Carranza, 15 May 1917

²⁵⁰ AHSDN-C/C/105/XI/481.5/193, M.Diéguez to Carranza, 19 Jan. 1918

civilian population from bandit raids boosted their power and legitimacy within their communities. By the time that General de Santiago was appointed governor of Nayarit in early 1919,²⁵¹ following his successful anti-Villista campaign in the Sierra Huichola,²⁵² *de facto* control of the entire Sierra Cora was in the hands of two Carrancista-aligned Jefes de Defensa – Mariano Mejía in the Cora Alta, and Eutimio Domínguez in the Cora Baja – whose politico-military power had eclipsed that of their fellow militia commanders and the region’s traditional authorities.

Eutimio Domínguez, remembered with pride in his home community of San Juan Corapan ‘por haber sido uno de [nuestros] hermanos de raza que peleó a lado del Gobierno revolucionario, encabezado por don Francisco I. Madero,’²⁵³ was a full-blooded Cora born in 1882.²⁵⁴ His father was also a native of San Juan and a relatively wealthy rancher, while his mother, according to some accounts, was originally from San Francisco – reflecting the strong links of trade and kinship which continue to exist between the Cora Baja and Cora Alta regions today.²⁵⁵ Domínguez seems to have been an early participant in the Revolution in Nayarit – perhaps joining the forces of ‘el ex-teniente Guerrero’ active around El Venado in early 1912, or those of Thord-Gray in 1914. He eventually returned home to San Juan with the rank of Colonel in the Constitutionalist Army,²⁵⁶ and there established a Defensa Rural to defend both his community, and his father’s cattle, from the raids of the ‘bandidos’ then active in the area.²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ J. Meyer, *De cantón...* p.193

²⁵² B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* pp.163-4

²⁵³ AHSEP-84-85/C/X/E/60, Martimiano Serrano to DEFN, 21 May 1961

²⁵⁴ AGN-Censo/1930/Nayarit/San Juan Corapan

²⁵⁵ Filiberto Sánchez

²⁵⁶ AHSEP-84-85/C/38876/E/17, Orozco to DEFN, 9 Feb. 1928

²⁵⁷ Sandalio Sánchez Sánchez; Filiberto Sánchez; Agustín Lamas

After his father's death in one of these raids, Domínguez inherited his herds.²⁵⁸ This wealth would have enabled him to sponsor ceremonies that increased his status within the local descent-groups groups with which he was associated through blood and ritual kinship, while his status as a ranking military officer, and his command of a well-armed *Defensa*, would have certainly limited the opposition of rival families or factions to his increasing influence in San Juan and the other communities of the Cora Baja. Later described by a SEP official as an 'indio cora de relativa cultura,'²⁵⁹ Domínguez could speak Spanish, and had learned to read and write while in the army, which allowed him to act as a bridge between the local Cora population and mestizo authorities.²⁶⁰ This would help him to cement his influence over the traditional authorities of the entire Cora Baja region – whose community *Defensas Rurales* were under his authority by 1920 – as well as his clout with the state government, which would depend on him to harness the military potential of the Coras for the Federal government during the *Cristiada*.

Domínguez's friend and then-ally Mariano Mejía was more powerful still, and represented the Constitutionalist government throughout the entirety of the Cora Alta and beyond into neighbouring parts of Durango²⁶¹ and Jalisco.²⁶² While described by author Juan Rulfo as a 'mestizo de sangre cora,'²⁶³ oral sources agree that he was actually a native of Huaynamota (by the mid-nineteenth century a predominantly

²⁵⁸ Erasmo González; Filiberto Sánchez;

²⁵⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Navarrete to DECI, 4 May 1925

²⁶⁰ cf. P. Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt...* p.71-2

²⁶¹ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, San Lucas de Jalpa to Pres., 12 Mar. 1925

²⁶² AHJ-G-9-920-921/C/52/E/11171, Clemente Villa to Gob.Jal., 17 Feb. 1921

²⁶³ J. Rulfo, 'Valentin de la Sierra...' p.162

mestizo and Mexicanero settlement),²⁶⁴ the son of a mestizo rancher from Arandas, Jalisco, and a local mother.²⁶⁵ Mejía was born in 1879,²⁶⁶ and was raised by his uncle, the local priest, after ‘revolutionaries’ – most likely ex-Lozadista rebels – killed his father, and his mother disappeared north. Mejía’s grandson Juventino Mejía Rivera states that ‘así tuvo el la escuela,’²⁶⁷ making Mejía, together with Domínguez, one of the few literate individuals in the Sierra at the time.

Mejía arrived in Jesús María some years before the outbreak of the Revolution, after his uncle was appointed parish priest there. Mejía was able to use the inheritance left him by his late father – ‘un cantero de dinero, de puro oro’ – to buy cattle and set himself up as a rancher in Arroyo de Santiago, an anexo of Jesús María then inhabited by Coras and a few mestizos.²⁶⁸ His herds increased rapidly, and he became a rich – and thus influential – local figure, hiring mestizos from across the region to work on his ranch.²⁶⁹

However, Mejía was also careful not to distance himself too much from his Indian neighbours. As a mestizo himself, Mejía would not have belonged to any local descent-groups, and therefore lacked costumbre-derived kin; but he married a local Cora woman and also established alternative, Catholic-style kinship ties with other Coras – such as the Contreras family of Arroyo de Santiago – through the institution of *compadrazgo*.²⁷⁰ He also presumably hired Coras, as well as mestizo immigrants,

²⁶⁴ J. Juárezgui, L. Magriñá, ‘Estudio etnohistórico...’ pp.55-6

²⁶⁵ Enendino Escobedo Mejía; Juventino Mejía Rivera; Cándido Contreras Rosales

²⁶⁶ AGN-Censo/1930/Nayarit/Arroyo de Santiago

²⁶⁷ Juventino Mejía Rivera

²⁶⁸ Enendino Escobedo Mejía

²⁶⁹ Juventino Mejía Rivera; cf. P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* pp.185-6

²⁷⁰ Enendino Escobedo Mejía

to help him with his herds and his crops, establishing patron-client ties with his neighbours.²⁷¹ Such economically-grounded relationships were rare in the Sierra at this time, given that most inhabitants – whether Cora or mestizo – were engaged in household-based subsistence agriculture, with occasional migration to the coast of Nayarit on short-term contracts to work on tobacco or sugar cane plantations, in which personal relationships with the ‘boss’ would probably have been absent. But the establishment of these ties between Mejía and his neighbours allowed him to expand his influence in the region, which would further increase during the armed phase of the revolution.

In the absence of any ‘hoja de servicio’ or other official documents for Mariano Mejía, and given the vagueness of our oral sources for the period, it is impossible to be certain of his early revolutionary activities. Rojas claims he was originally a Villista,²⁷² but oral sources tend to agree that Mejía was not in fact an active revolutionary of any kind, and never left the Sierra to fight for a particular faction. Instead, he was simply a rich and literate local mestizo who also commanded the respect of the Cora majority – a man with huge potential, then, to become a ‘revolutionary’ cacique in the *serrano* tradition.²⁷³ Given the high level of autonomy already enjoyed by the Coras in this period, the Villista faction’s pro-autonomy, *serrano* tendencies would not have compensated, at least in the eyes of wealthy locals like Mejía, for their tendency to rob and pillage, for as Rojas points out, ‘a estas

²⁷¹ J.C. Scott, ‘Patron-Client Politics...’ p.92

²⁷² B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.164

²⁷³ A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, i, p.115–27; cf. K. Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics...*; T. Rugeley, *Yucatan’s Maya Peasantry...* p.101

alturas, villismo y bandolerismo eran casi una misma cosa.’²⁷⁴ For Mejía – just as for Domínguez – his wealth, and in particular his extensive herds of cattle, would have made him a natural target for the Villista bands who roamed the Sierra, and it is not surprising, then, that at some point during the revolutionary upheaval,²⁷⁵ Mejía obtained arms from the Carrancistas for himself and eleven men – very possibly selected from the peons who worked for him – to set up a local self-defence militia in Arroyo de Santiago, ‘para que cuidaran aquí el buen orden.’²⁷⁶ It was a natural alliance of convenience: the Carrancistas obviously welcomed the chance to increase their influence in the Sierra by allying with an important local figure, while for Mejía the alliance gave him the opportunity to protect his own private property along with that of his adopted community, in turn enabling him to further increase his local power and prestige – a perfect example of patron-client ties working to a cacique’s advantage.

After he had demonstrated his loyalty to the Carrancistas by murdering José Gallegos, a Villista leader who had taken refuge in the Sierra,²⁷⁷ he became their most important representative in the region. Gallegos apparently possessed supernatural powers – ‘traíba un diablo pintado aquí en la espalda, no le entraban los balazos, nada’²⁷⁸ – which, having vanquished him, Mejía symbolically took on himself, allowing him to ‘subi[r] a un poder más grande, no sé... que cargo le daría, pero sí, ya él mandaba

²⁷⁴ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.164

²⁷⁵ Perhaps in late 1916, when the Defensas Sociales of Chihuahua were first established by Carrancista General Enríquez (F. R. Almada, *La revolución...* ii, p.326); cf. D. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges...* p.83

²⁷⁶ Enendino Escobedo Mejía; Cándido Contreras Rosales

²⁷⁷ Juventino Mejía Rivera; Enendino Escobedo Mejía; Cándido Contreras

²⁷⁸ Juventino Mejía Rivera

más.²⁷⁹ The mythical elements of the story of Mejía's rise to power fit within a well-documented Mexican Indian tradition of attributing supernatural qualities to influential leaders – including Zapata²⁸⁰ – which in turn served to bolster the charismatic power of these men and further legitimise their authority.²⁸¹ Gabriel Barrios Cabrera, *cacique* of the Sierra Norte de Puebla throughout the Revolutionary era, was seen by the Nahuatl inhabitants of the communities under his control as 'a man who never appeared to need sleep; who would rest at night in one village only to appear early the next morning in another many miles away... [and] who was witnessed to have been in two places at the same time.' All of which points towards the idea that, for the Nahuatl, Barrios was accepted as 'one of their own.'²⁸² Closer to home, much the same could also be said of Manuel Lozada, to whom some older Coras and Huichols attribute supernatural powers to this day. These powers are often described as having been gained through passing spiritual tests in caves,²⁸³ which have been seen as portals between the material and spirit worlds in many cultures, and represent the sacred space *par excellence* in the Indian cultures of the Gran Nayar.²⁸⁴

Even discounting the similarities between the supernatural tales told about both Mejía and Lozada, it seems clear enough that the general precedent by the latter – as a mestizo leader who rose to power over the Indian communities of the Sierra – must have helped boost local acceptance of Mejía's influence some fifty years later. Just as Lozada was aided by his Cora lieutenant Dionisio Gerónimo, Mejía was helped by his

²⁷⁹ Juventino Mejía Rivera

²⁸⁰ S. Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata...* pp.238-9

²⁸¹ M. Weber, *On Charisma*, p.19; see also Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space*, p.350

²⁸² K. Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics...* pp.57-8, pp.60-1

²⁸³ J. Jauregui, J. Meyer (eds.), *El Tigre de Alica...*

²⁸⁴ eg. C. S. Lumholtz, i; J. Jáuregui, J. Neurath (eds.), *Fiesta, literatura y magia...*; cf. B. Feinberg, *The Devil's Book...*

Cora *compadre*, León Contreras, to rise from commanding eleven men in Arroyo de Santiago, to commanding the Defensas Rurales of every Cora and mestizo community in the Cora Alta. His influence even extended beyond state lines as far as Huazamota and San Lucas in Durango,²⁸⁵ and San Andrés in Jalisco²⁸⁶ – which were also the only communities outside of the Territory of Tepic to sign Lozada’s 1870 political manifesto,²⁸⁷ further reflecting the parallels between the two men’s careers.

Mejía played an important role in Governor de Santiago’s pacification campaign in Nayarit in 1919 (to the extent that he was on first name terms with the general).²⁸⁸ Just as in the Lozadista era (and probably in part *because* of the example set in that period, and during the era of the Tonatí), the existence of a paramount chief in the Sierra Cora (or, in this case, of two), allowed the local Defensas to be called together to undertake larger-scale military operations, which boosted their military effectiveness, and thus their legitimacy. Mejía and Domínguez’s unifying influence also impeded the outbreak of inter-communal conflicts that might otherwise have fractured the bonds between the Cora communities, bringing to the region a level of political stability that would have been welcome after the chaos of the initial years of the revolution. Into the 1920s, however, as the threat posed to Cora communities by bandit gangs receded, and the pursuit of their own personal commercial and political interests increasingly tied Mejía, Domínguez and their armed subordinates to the revolutionary state’s attempts to ‘civilise’ and ‘integrate’ the Cora population into the

²⁸⁵ AHED-FR/C/5/E/54, Mariano Mejía to D. Arrieta, 24 July 1919; AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Residents of San Lucas de Jalpa to Gob. Dgo., 12 Mar. 1925

²⁸⁶ AHJ-G-9-920-921/C/52/E/11171, Clemente Villa to Gob. Jal., 17 Feb. 1921

²⁸⁷ M. Aldana Rendón, *La rebelión agraria...* p.181-209

²⁸⁸ AHED-FR/C/5/E/54, D. Arrieta to Mejía, 9 Aug. 1919

Mexican nation, resistance to their authority grew, causing factional conflicts in many Cora communities.

Caciquismo in the Sierra Tepehuana

The Tepehuano Defensas of southern Durango were also involved, from at least 1917, in the fighting between remnant Villista forces and Federal troops. In late 1915 the pro-Carranza Arrieta clan had taken control of Durango's military and civil administrations, bringing to an end official Villista domination of the state.²⁸⁹ The new governor, General Mariano Arrieta, immediately attempted to eliminate from the state government 'los elementos reaccionarios, tanto el villista, como los que pertenecieron a la Defensa Social [Huertista], lográndose que casi en su totalidad los actuales servidores del Gobierno sean elementos simpatizadores de la causa Constitucionalista y de su Supremo Jefe.'²⁹⁰ However, given the continued occupation of much of Durango's countryside by Villista guerrillas,²⁹¹ there were no Federal troops available for campaigning in Sierra Tepehuana, whose inhabitants thus continued to enjoy their *de facto* autonomy, but were likewise left on their own to defend themselves from the 'bandits' who plagued the region.²⁹²

In December 1916 a Defensa was established in the new regional capital of Mezquital. While not the 'guerrilla militar permanente' that the inhabitants had hoped

²⁸⁹ A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, i, pp.219-20

²⁹⁰ AGN-G-195/C/31/E/48, Gob.Dgo. to Carranza, 31 Dec. 1915

²⁹¹ *ibid.*

²⁹² AHED-FR/C/1/E/6, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 31 July 1917

for, the arms provided them by the state government allowed a group of Mezquitaleños, headed by Luis Luna, a local merchant, to

‘castigar á los rateros [y] cuidar del órden público cuando las ocupaciones me lo permiten, por tener que atender á mis negocios particulares... En cuanto a delitos graves, también los ha habido, pero como de los hechos no se han hecho aclaraciones y pedidos formales, he disimulado tales casos, reservándome hasta cuando haya autoridades civiles en este Municipio y se me conceden mas amplias facultades para el efecto.’²⁹³

Mezquital’s Defensa soon abandoned its pretence of having ‘ningún color político’ and began to play an active role in the Carrancista ‘pacification’ campaign launched by Mariano Arrieta’s brother, Domingo, after his election as Durango’s first constitutional governor in August 1917. It is in relation to this campaign that Tepehuano cacique Dámaso Barraza first appears in our sources. From being a Federal captain charged with coordinating the campaign against the Villistas in the far south of Durango, Barraza would become a powerful regional leader and one of Mexico’s first Cristero generals. He was born in 1879 in Yonora, an anexo of San Miguel Temoaya²⁹⁴ – a Tepehuano community on the arid, northern edge of the Sierra. Although by the outbreak of the Revolution it may have already been in the process of losing its distinctive ethnic character, in 1918 the community still possessed a ‘Gobernador’²⁹⁵ – indicating the continued survival of traditional power structures in the community – and although Barraza is described by Meyer as both a ‘mestizo’²⁹⁶ and a ‘Tepehuano aculturado,’²⁹⁷ oral accounts from Yonora agree that he was in fact a fluent speaker of Tepehuano who still took part in both communal and

²⁹³ AHED-FR/C/1/E/6, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 31 July 1917

²⁹⁴ ‘México matrimonios...’ Damazo Barraza and Nieves Valdés, 20 June 1907

²⁹⁵ AHED-M/C/3/E/175, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 17 Nov. 1918

²⁹⁶ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.143

²⁹⁷ *ibid.*, iii, p.29

family *xiotalhs*,²⁹⁸ hence his nickname – ‘El Indio.’ A physically powerful man and a natural leader, Barraza was described some years later as

‘un hombre grandote, grueso, mal encachado que nomás de verlo me dio miedo; traía un vestido de gamusa, en la cuera tenía muchos colgajes, en el pantalón por lo igual, un sombrero grande arrequeado de atrás y de adelante, unas espuelas grandes que nomás daba el paso y le sonaban, la .45 en la cintura y un máuser en la mano.’²⁹⁹

Probably drawing on the revolutionary-era political biographies put together by Francisco Naranjo,³⁰⁰ Meyer asserts that Barraza was a Villista, an idea he uses to highlight the supposedly strong links between Villismo and the Cristeros.³⁰¹ In reality, however, Barraza was much more closely associated with the Arrietas than with Villa. This does not rule out his having fought at one time as part of the División del Norte,³⁰² but it is more likely that Barraza was simply a relatively wealthy local ranchero who, like Eutimio Domínguez or Mariano Mejía (who was born in the same year as Barraza), rose to a position of regional military and political power through alliances with whichever local revolutionary forces would provide him with arms and ‘official’ support against local threats to himself and his community – perhaps from as early as 1912, when the inhabitants of Yonora first came into contact with rebel groups. Barraza eventually threw in his lot with the Carrancistas, in this case as represented by the Arrietas, who probably saw in Barraza a commander cut from the same *serrano* cloth as themselves, and a useful ally against local Villismo and the associated banditry that threatened both their control of the state, and the survival of the communities of the Sierra Tepehuana.

²⁹⁸ Felipe Venegas

²⁹⁹ F. Campos, ‘Santiago...’ in *David*, 22 Dec. 1955

³⁰⁰ F. Naranjo, *Diccionario biográfico...* p.43

³⁰¹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.94

³⁰² A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, p.220

By 1917, ‘Capitán 1/o Barraza’ was the commander of a well-equipped force of *Rurales* based in Yonora – a position he seems to have taken advantage of in order to settle his community’s agrarian accounts with a nearby landowner, who complained that his lands had been ‘invadido por indígenas de Temohaya’ the same year.³⁰³ Barraza also worked with the Defensa of Mezquital in local anti-Villista campaigns,³⁰⁴ especially after Villa himself entered northern Durango at the head of four hundred men in August 1917, and began a new recruitment drive across the state.³⁰⁵ Despite the activities of Barraza and Mezquital’s Defensa, the depredations of both Villista bandits and Federal troops in southern Durango increased over the following months,³⁰⁶ and widespread violence, banditry, the Spanish influenza epidemic, and the resultant disruption to local agricultural production, meant that 1918 was remembered locally as the worst year of the Revolutionary period: ‘el año del hambre.’³⁰⁷

It was impossible to hold elections in the region in March 1918, as the threat of Villista attacks had caused the breakdown of the local administration, whose officials fled at the first rumour of an enemy approach. Due to the ‘falta absoluta de fondos’³⁰⁸ caused by economic crisis, Mezquital’s Defensa was also disbanded, and many of the

³⁰³ AHED-D/C/13/E/161, Apolinar Venegas to Gob.Dgo., 25 Aug. 1935

³⁰⁴ AHED-FR/C/1/E/6, Gob.Dgo. to Barraza, 2 Aug. 1917

³⁰⁵ AHED-FR/C/1/E/6, Gob.Dgo. to Carranza, 5 Aug. 1917

³⁰⁶ AHED-A/C/3/E/55, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 15 Aug. 1917

³⁰⁷ A. Avitia Hernández, *Los Alacranes...* p.110. In Morelos, too, ‘many villages were empty shells’ by 1918 (A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, p.371). Conversely, Spanish influenza, drought and banditry had devastated Michoacán a year earlier, and thus 1917 was remembered there as ‘el año del hambre’ (L. González y González, *Pueblo en vilo...* p.127)

³⁰⁸ AHED-M/C/3/E/175, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 30 Oct. 1918

town's inhabitants fled to the surrounding mountains.³⁰⁹ However, although the number of Villistas active in the region had risen to four hundred men by May,³¹⁰ Barraza's forces scored a number of victories against the rebels, decisively defeating them at the hacienda of El Capulín³¹¹ (where Barraza would later rout Federal troops during the Cristiada).

Another group of Villistas subsequently took control of the main road between Durango and Mezquital, but they were unable to take Mezquital itself 'debido principalmente a la fuerza armada que comanda el C. Dámaso Barraza, quién se le ha impuesto más a dicho enemigo por lo mismo éste ni siquiera a buelto atacar a esta población.'³¹² However, due to the failure of the state government to pay for the upkeep of his force, Barraza planned to leave Mezquital for the hacienda of El Refugio, which offered to pay him and his men for their protection. Mezquital's notables desperately petitioned the state governor to make Barraza a counter-offer to secure 'la permanencia en esta de la citada fuerza armada, por unos dos meses más, cuando menos entre tanto se acaba de organizar el Cuerpo de defensa que aún no se a podido equipar del todo.'³¹³ This request was positively received in Durango, and Domingo Arrieta promised to make the financial arrangements necessary 'para que permanezca en ese Municipio el C. Capitán Barraza, para que con su gente preste las garantías y resguarde el orden que hasta hoy ha sabido conservar.'³¹⁴ By October, however, Barraza, while officially the 'Jefe de Rurales' of the municipality of

³⁰⁹ AHED-M/C/3/E/57, Visitador de Munic. to Gob.Dgo., 7 Mar. 1918

³¹⁰ AHED-M/C/3/E/175, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 30 Oct. 1918;

³¹¹ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* pp.84-5

³¹² AHED-M/C/3/E/127, M. Rojas et al to Gob.Dgo., 10 Aug. 1918

³¹³ *ibid.*

³¹⁴ AHED-M/C/3/E/131, Gob.Dgo. to PM.Mezquital, 28 Aug. 1918

Mezquital as a whole,³¹⁵ had returned to his ranch in Yonora, ‘por lo que dado el caso, no podría prestarnos en [Mezquital] auxilio oportuno, no pudiendo permanecer en el mismo, por falta de puntualidad en los pagos de sus haberes.’³¹⁶

By this time Spanish influenza had also devastated Mezquital, where a new graveyard was urgently requested, ‘por haberse llenado de cadaveres el [panteón] de esta Cabecera, con motivo de la epidemia.’³¹⁷ The resultant movement of the remaining mestizo population to the countryside, combined with the continued decline of Villismo – whose remnants in Nayarit, Jalisco and Zacatecas were also retreating to increasingly remote areas – helped to shift the main theatre of revolutionary violence south from the devastated municipal capital and the ruined haciendas nearby, to the Indian communities dispersed in the Sierra.³¹⁸ By October 1918, banditry in southern Durango had reached such levels that the state government issued a decree banning ‘la salida de mulada, caballada y de ganado en general de [la región], sin el previo permiso de ese Supremo Gobierno, a efecto de que, en lo sucesivo, se siga comerciando con animales robados.’³¹⁹ Increasing banditry in turn fostered the formation and growth of more Carrancista-armed (but politically and economically autonomous) Defensas in the Sierra Tepehuana.

The Defensa of Santa María Ocotán was commanded by Gregorio Aguilar, a native of Xoconoxtle who first appears in the documentary record in 1915, as commander of

³¹⁵ AHED-M/C/3/E/151, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 4 Oct. 1918

³¹⁶ *ibid.*

³¹⁷ AHED-M/C/3/E/206, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 7 Dec. 1918

³¹⁸ AHED-M/C/3/E/175, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 30 Oct. 1918

³¹⁹ AHED-M/C/3/E/151, ‘Circular 19,’ 23 Oct. 1918

‘una partida de hombres armados’ active near Santa María’s anexo of Candelaria.³²⁰ While it thus seems likely that his Tepehuano militia had already been active for several years, mentions of Aguilar, and other local Defensa commanders, begin to proliferate from 1918, indicating that they were now increasingly cooperating with the local mestizo authorities and with the Federal military. And just as had happened in neighbouring parts of Nayarit and Jalisco, their connections with these outside forces enabled the local Defensa commanders to become communal caciques, whose growing influence was increasingly disconnected from traditional, ritual-based power structures. Thus by late 1918 Aguilar commanded the same captain’s rank as Barraza and worked closely with him in the persecution of local bandits,³²¹ and while officially ‘Jefe de Armas’ in Santa María Ocotán, also continued to exercise his influence in Xoconoxtle, where his literacy made him an important communal leader.³²²

However, although the increasing power of the Defensas allowed communities to better defend themselves from the depredations of Villistas and bandits, the increased availability of weapons to local commanders willing and able to lead their men in raids to plunder other communities also exacerbated old conflicts, and created new ones. In December, for example, José María Gutiérrez, the ‘governor suplente’ of San Francisco Ocotán, wrote to Domingo Arrieta, asking him to

‘mandarnos una orden para nuestra defensa para no ser atropellados por alguna introducción de gente armada como lo asen algunos Jefes de los pueblos que nos

³²⁰ AHED-R/C/6/E/85, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 1 Feb. 1915

³²¹ AHED-M/C/3/E/175, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 30 Oct. 1918; PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 17 Nov. 1918

³²² Aguilar’s subsequent participation in the agrarian claims of both communities would set in motion the events that led to their eventual fusion as a single ‘comunidad agraria’ during the Cárdenista agrarian reform.

rodean... queremos bivar libremente como siempre emos vivido pasíficos desde mucho tiempo y no queremos meternos en ninguna cuestión de ninguna clase de revolución sino estar vajo las ordenes de esa superioridad.³²³

The state government responded by authorising the community to organise a Defensa, adding that it would then ‘extenderle el nombramiento a favor de la persona que designan como Jefe de dicho Cuerpo.’³²⁴ In simply reaffirming as Jefe de Defensa whoever had been selected for the post by the community itself, the state government followed exactly the same procedure that it continued to use in relation to each Indian community’s civil authorities,³²⁵ clear evidence of the *de facto* political autonomy that both the Defensa and the traditional government of San Francisco Ocotán, as well as their equivalents in the other communities of the Sierra Tepehuana, enjoyed in this period, provided they at least pledged their loyalty to the government.

The autonomy of these communities as a whole, and in particular of the Defensas, is made all the more explicit in Gutiérrez’s accusation that those who had been attacking San Francisco de Ocotán were not ‘bandidos’ or ‘Villistas’ but the ‘Jefes’ of neighbouring communities, including those of Mexicanero San Buenaventura and San Pedro Jícoras, and – given that ill-defined state borders had become meaningless in the midst of the revolutionary upheaval – the Defensas of Tepehuano San Andrés Milpillas and mestizo Picachos, across the state line in Nayarit.³²⁶ As local leaders like José María Gutiérrez deliberately attempted to secure Arrieta’s support by invoking the affront to Durango’s pride posed by the actions of interlopers from other states, disputes over communal territory became increasingly enmeshed with older

³²³ AHED-M/C/3/E/200, José Gutiérrez to Gob.Dgo., 31 Dec. 1918

³²⁴ AHED-M/C/3/E/200, Gob.Dgo. to Gutiérrez, 21 Jan. 1919

³²⁵ AHED-M/C/3/E/200, José Gutiérrez to Gob.Dgo., 31 Dec. 1918

³²⁶ *ibid.*

conflicts over the location of state borders with Nayarit and Zacatecas.³²⁷ Gutiérrez claimed that the Defensas of Nayarit had not only invaded San Francisco, but were also behind the conflict between San Francisco and San Buenaventura, since in the latter community they had tried to force the local authorities to ‘independisarse del mando de estas autoridades del Estado y pretenden anexarse al vecino estado de Nayarit.’³²⁸ Such attempts were successful, as the state government immediately ordered the authorities of San Andrés and Picachos to halt their attacks on San Francisco,³²⁹ and instructed the Jefe del Cuartel in San Buenaventura that

‘no sean molestados [los de San Francisco] por los vecinos de aquel pueblo, igualmente se le recomienda ponga en conocimiento de este Gobierno, cualquiera gestión que se haga en el sentido de que ejersan jurisdicción en aquel lugar autoridades de Nayarit.’³³⁰

Grateful for this support, in December Gutiérrez informed the state government that

‘éste pueblo esta deseoso de saber los asuntos relativos a las nuevas leyes de reformas, como el periodico oficial, la Constitución Federal y demás libros de ley que sirvan de base en el juzgado para su administración y demás reglamentos que sean útiles al mismo y en virtud de ser nosotros todos indígenas analfabetas... solo esperamos nos mande dichas utiles por ser de mucha importancia... o al menos nos conste a donde agamos a pedirlos.’³³¹

The traditional authorities of San Francisco thus made their loyalty to the new revolutionary order in Durango explicit, even as the plea for all and any information

³²⁷ Just as in the border regions of Nayarit and Jalisco, where Guadalupe Ocotán, which had always regarded itself as belonging to the latter state, saw its lands being invaded by mestizos from Huajimic, Nayarit, who claimed that these lands were actually on the other side of the state border, and thus rightfully theirs.

³²⁸ AHED, Mezquital, C/3, E/200, José Gutiérrez to Gob.Dgo., 31 Dec. 1918

³²⁹ AHED-M/C/3/E/200, Gob.Dgo. to Jefes de Cuarteles de San Andrés and Picachos, 21 Jan. 1919

³³⁰ AHED-M/C/3/E/200, Gob.Dgo. to Aut. Trads. San Buenaventura, 21 Jan. 1919

³³¹ AHED-M/C/3/E/200, José Gutiérrez to Gob.Dgo., 31 Dec. 1919

as to what this revolutionary order actually consisted of demonstrated how far removed from the control of any outside forces the community remained.

Further to the south-east, where Durango bordered Jalisco, Zacatecas and Nayarit, land conflicts that had existed since before the Revolution were also exacerbated by the growth of the Defensas. Here, south of the Sierra Tepehuana proper, the most important community was mestizo Huazamota,³³² whose Jefe de Defensa, Primo Ortiz, was by May 1919 embroiled in conflict with Gregorio Aguilar. Aguilar complained to the state government that ‘la gente del pueblo de Santa María de Ocotán, continuamente son molestados’ by Ortiz and his forces,³³³ an accusation that Ortiz vigorously rejected, counter-accusing Aguilar himself of committing ‘muchas arbitrariedades... en terrenos de esta jurisdicción; pero tiene la palabra favorita que todo lo hace con acuerdo de esa Supremo Gobierno.’³³⁴ Ortiz was also caught up in a factional conflict in Huazamota itself, where brothers Vicente, Tiburcio and Nabor Muñoz headed a faction opposed the twenty-year rule of this ‘Capitalista’ and his allies.³³⁵ Los Muñoz, who had unsuccessfully allied with Villista forces of northern Jalisco in an effort to unseat Ortiz,³³⁶ had since returned to Huazamota, where they presented Ortiz with ‘un solicitud de indulto.’ This he granted them on the condition that they retired to private life, but Ortiz claimed they were now in league with the ‘el ex-federal [Felipe] Ángeles’³³⁷ and were conspiring against him – and by extension against Carranza himself – ‘con el fin de que se ponga en sus manos la jefatura de

³³² AHED-L/C/1/E/16, ‘Municipio de Huazamota,’ 1915

³³³ AHED-FR/C/5/E/38, Gob.Dgo. to P. Ortiz, 31 May 1919

³³⁴ AHED-FR/C/5/E/41, P. Ortiz to Gob.Dgo., 11 May 1919

³³⁵ AHED-M/C/4/E/24, Vicente Muñoz to Gob.Dgo., 4 Oct. 1919

³³⁶ AHED-FR/C/5/E/38, P. Ortiz to Gob.Dgo., 2 July 1919

³³⁷ Ángeles had recently returned from exile in the US, and was captured and executed by the Carrancista government in November 1919 (F. R. Almada, *La revolución...*, ii, p.347)

armas que es a mi cargo.³³⁸ In response to these accusations Domingo Arrieta confirmed Ortiz in his post as Jefe de Armas and authorised him to apprehend ‘los sediciosos’ and to send them to Durango if ‘haya plena seguridad de que son culpables.’ In the meantime he ordered Ortiz to prepare for state-wide ‘elecciones municipales extraordinarias’³³⁹ – a sign that the Carrancista pacification campaign was bearing fruit and a relative measure of political stability had been achieved in Durango.

However, while Ortiz was lobbying Arrieta, Tiburcio Muñoz had travelled to Jesús María to ask for the help of Mariano Mejía, who supplied Tiburcio with a letter of recommendation to safeguard ‘sus personas vida e interés y armas, por tratara de una persona onrada,³⁴⁰ and also wrote separately to Domingo Arrieta, advising him that the Huazamotecans

‘no estan conformes con el Jefe de armas de su pueblo por siertos y cuales motibos que sería larga enumerar yo conociendo que qué es una obligación bigilar por los hijos de ese pueblo de Huazamota me bí obligado a manifestar a Ud. de acuerdo con el C. Gral Francisco de Santiago, por tratarse de un pueblo becino que colinda con el estado de Nayarit, por lo que suplico a Ud. bea que mas puede aser un favor de ese pueblo, y ayudar en todo le sea posible al Sr. C. Tiburcio Muñoz, y demás personas que representan el Pueblo, por tratarse de una persona que no a manchado el de la onrrades.’³⁴¹

The support of Mejía – and by association of General de Santiago – for Ortiz’s rivals caused an about-turn in Durango state government policy, and within two weeks Vicente Muñoz had been named Huazamota’s new Jefe de Defensa. Mejía was thanked for ‘la buena voluntad que Ud. demuestra para dar garantías a los vecinos del

³³⁸ AHED-FR/C/5/E/38, P.Ortiz to Gob.Dgo., 2 July 1919

³³⁹ AHED-FR/C/5/E/38, Gob.Dgo. to P.Ortiz., 26 July 1919

³⁴⁰ AHED-HZ/C/4/E/106, Mejía to ‘autoridades militares de Dgo.,’ 24 July 1919

³⁴¹ AHED-FR/C/5/E/54, Mejía to Gob.Dgo., 24 July 1919

Municipio de Huazamota,’ and was asked to help Muñoz ‘llevar a feliz termino su cometido,’ and to pass on ‘extensivos agradecimientos al Sr. Gral. Francisco de Santiago, de parte del C. Gobernador de esta Entidad.’³⁴²

Ortiz, however, was determined not to give up control of the community without a fight, refusing to hand over to Vicente Muñoz and his newly reconstituted Defensa ‘ni un fucil y ni un cartucho,’³⁴³ while he rallied his own regional allies, including the municipal president of Mezquitic and the Jefes de Defensa of Huejuquilla (Jalisco) and San Juan Capistrano (Zacatecas), to his defence.³⁴⁴ The ‘vecinos’ of San Juan wrote to Durango asking that Vicente Muñoz’s appointment be revoked, on the grounds that the Muñoz clan had caused ‘tantos perjuicios’ in Zacatecas during their time as Villistas. They claimed that they would be the first to suffer if los Muñoz again rose against the government, especially as they had previously fought alongside Ortiz, the Defensas of Mezquitic and Huejuquilla, and the ‘hombres honrados de San Juan Peyotán’ (Nayarit) in the anti-Villista – and thus anti-Muñoz – campaign in the cross-border region.³⁴⁵

Against an alliance between Ortiz and the Defensas of San Juan Capistrano and Huejuquilla, los Muñoz formed an alliance with Gregorio Aguilar and his Tepehuano fighters.³⁴⁶ In order to avoid a wider conflict breaking out in the far south of Durango, the state government appointed a supposedly ‘neutral’ individual, Antonio Gutiérrez, as Huazamota’s Jefe de Defensa. The Muñoz clan refused to recognise Gutiérrez,

³⁴² AHED-FR/C/5/E/54, Gob.Dgo. to Mejía, 9 Aug 1919

³⁴³ AHED-FR/C/5/E/54, V. Muñoz to Gob.Dgo., 29 Aug. 1919

³⁴⁴ AHED-M/C/4/E/24, J. Tello Herrera to Gob.Dgo., 2 Sept. 1919; Avelino Rimoldi to Gob.Dgo., 2 Sept. 1919; Regino López to Gob.Dgo., 3 Oct. 1919

³⁴⁵ AHED-M/C/4/E/24, Residents of San Juan Capistrano to Gob.Dgo., 3 Sept. 1919

³⁴⁶ AHED-FR/C/5/E/54, Gob.Dgo. to V. Muñoz, 4 Sept. 1919

regarding him as an ‘instrumento siego del Sr. Ortiz, por lo que creemos en perjuicio de todo este pueblo.’³⁴⁷ According to a letter sent by San Juan Capistrano’s Jefe de Defensa, Regino López, to the state government, Gutiérrez, Ortiz and fifty armed followers then met with Vicente Muñoz and Gregorio Aguilar and one hundred of their men, ‘donde hizo presente Gregorio Aguilar un orden de recoger armas, siendo la referida orden de fecha anterior a los nuevos nombramientos que expidió el C. Gobernador.’ A firefight broke out, and Gutiérrez was captured while Ortiz escaped. López requested that

‘se sirva hordenar a Gregorio Aguilar se retire de hayí así como solicitar del Gobierno de Tepic para el C. Mariano Mejía preste garantías al C. Antonio Gutiérrez, en caso de que no lo hayan asesinado, y a la jente de horden de aquel punto.’³⁴⁸

According to Aguilar, however, Ortíz and seventy men ambushed him and his force of one hundred and fifty troops on the road to Huazamota. Aguilar and his men escaped, made contact with Vicente Estrada, and again went in search of Ortíz, who attacked them again, provoking four hours of combat, after which Ortíz and twenty followers escaped, while the rest of his men surrendered.

‘el pueblo de Huazamota dejó lla posesionado al señor Muñoz y parece que las autoriades están caminando lla de acuerdo y el Jefe de armas segira persiguiendo a Ortis tenasmente para que aiga pronto la tranquilidad en el pueblo que es lo que desean los abitantes de este.’³⁴⁹

In the short term, Aguilar’s aggressive action against Ortiz allowed him to increase his influence south beyond Santa María and Xoconoxtle to Huazamota and even – at least according to Aguilar himself – to San Pedro Jícoras, whose inhabitants now saw

³⁴⁷ AHED-M/C/4/E/24, V. Estrada to Gob.Dgo., 30 Sept. 1919

³⁴⁸ AHED-M/C/4/E/24, R. López to Gob.Dgo., 3 Oct. 1919

³⁴⁹ AHED-M/C/4/E/24, G. Aguilar to Gob.Dgo., 7 Oct. 1919

him as an ally against Ortiz, by whom they had been ‘molestado y abusado.’³⁵⁰ However, Durango’s zone commander now accused Aguilar of interference in local political matters beyond his remit as Santa María and Xoconoxtle’s Jefe de Defensa, and promised to support Gutiérrez against him;³⁵¹ while the state government itself was sufficiently confused by the factional violence that it commissioned Adolfo Bermúdez to investigate on its behalf and to try to broker a peaceful settlement between the two sides.³⁵²

Bermúdez arrived in Huazamota at the end of October and reported that the inhabitants, fearing for their lives amid the violence, had fled their homes and left the community completely abandoned. However, the next day he managed to meet with Vicente Estrada and other members of the local ‘*junta provisional de gobierno*,’ who encouraged the rest of the population to return, Bermúdez having assured them that his presence as a representative of the state government would guarantee their safety. The Defensa then handed over twenty-three of its weapons to Estrada, and a neutral figure was given temporary command of the force until elections, set for 30 October, could decide its new leader, ‘*procurando que entre los candidatos no figuraran ninguna de las dos personas que encabezan los partidos contendientes*.’ The elections, according to Bermúdez, involved the majority of the inhabitants of the municipality, ‘*compuesta en su totalidad de indígenas pertenecientes de distantas tribus, tales como las llamadas Tepehuanes, Coras y Huicholes*’ – the latter probably refugees from the (relatively) nearby community of San Andrés Cohamiata, who presented ‘*un aspecto*

³⁵⁰ AHED-C/C/10/E/3, G. Aguilar to Gob.Dgo., 6 Oct. 1919

³⁵¹ AHED-M/C/4/E/24, Gob.Dgo. to Gutiérrez., 11 Oct. 1919

³⁵² AHED-FR/C/5/E/21, Gob.Dgo. to Bermúdez, 19 Oct. 1919

triste por ser de los más atrasados y pobres pues viven en la mas completa miseria y andan casi desnudos.’³⁵³

Vincente Estrada, although still head of the provisional local government and an ally of los Muñoz, was elected Jefe de Defensa. Bermúdez approved his appointment, and further recommended that Estrada be replaced as chief civil authority by Tiburcio Muñoz – giving total control of Huazamota to the Muñoz faction³⁵⁴ – which was approved by the state government shortly after.³⁵⁵ However, Bermúdez’s support for the enemies of Primo Ortiz did not extend to Gregorio Aguilar or Dámaso Barraza. Instead, he seemed to regard all of these regional caciques as part of the same problem, and complained that:

‘La Justicia ha estado aquí desde hace varios años a merced únicamente de los Jefes de Fuerzas de Seguridad o Jefes de Acordada, verdaderos caciques quienes son absolutos en administrarla, empleando los procedimientos mas bárbaros. Aún recojí informes de que estos Jefes especialmente los de Sta María de Ocotán y el de Yonora proceden en la actualidad como vengo indicando. Además, en mi estancia en éste pueblo, al que vengo haciendo referencia, recibí innumerables quejas de todos estos mencionados Jefes; quejas, que según supe, ya tiene conocimiento ese Supremo Gobierno.’³⁵⁶

Conclusions

Although a lack of sources prevents a more detailed analysis of the early rise to power of caciques in the other communities of the Gran Nayar during the revolution, it is clear that revolutionary violence at once provided communities with opportunities to

³⁵³ AHED-FR/C/5/E/21, Bermúdez to Gob.Dgo., 12 Nov. 1919

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵⁵ AHED-M/C/4/E/24, Gob.Dgo. to Sec. Gob., 26 Nov. 1919

³⁵⁶ AHED-FR/C/5/E/21, Bermúdez to Gob.Dgo., 12 Nov. 1919

prosecute local feuds, and at the same time allowed individual leaders, operating outside the bounds of *costumbre*, to pursue personal and factional interests, leading to the appearance of new divisions within communities even as older tensions were alleviated. The rise of the *Jefes de Defensa*-turned-*caciques* is also evidence of active Cora, Huichol, Tepehuano and Mexicanero participation in the revolution. As other sources suggest, and as Thord-Gray makes clear, by 1914 many members of these groups had joined the various revolutionary bands operating in western Mexico. Carrancista ranks were bolstered by the addition of

‘quite a number of men from different tribes such as Tepehuanes, Tepecanos, Tarahumara and some Cora. However, these were not formed into individual regiments like the Yaquis and Mayos, but one did notice certain groupings in platoons and even companies.’³⁵⁷

Initially, most Tepehuanos, Coras and Huichols seem to have joined the Revolution on an individual basis, rather like the father of one of Coyle’s informants in Santa Teresa, ‘who fought with Pancho Villa at Zacatecas, eventually returning from that battle with a rifle and a mule, only to be killed by another band of Villistas near the town of San Miguel Zapote.’³⁵⁸ The collective participation of communities in the Revolution came only after the defeat of the Villistas as a conventional fighting force in 1915, when the number of armed men active in the Gran Nayar – either Villista guerrillas or the Carrancista forces pursuing them – greatly increased. In order to guarantee the continued integrity and autonomy of their communities, while defending their families, crops and cattle, the men of the Gran Nayar – no strangers to warfare – secured arms and allies and, under the leadership of small-scale warlords, tried to turn these external forces to their own advantage.

³⁵⁷ I. Thord-Gray, *Gringo Rebel...* p.234

³⁵⁸ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.183

These ‘petty caudillos’³⁵⁹ owed their authority to their positions as brokers of ‘relations between communities and “outside forces”, both governmental and non-governmental.’³⁶⁰ They were therefore by nature less hostile to collaboration with outsiders – when it suited them – than many of their compatriots (as Mezquite’s initially friendly relations with the Josefinos and later cooperation with the Carrancistas shows). And as time passed and internal opposition to their often arbitrary rule grew, they associated themselves ever more closely with outside forces in order to fortify their local positions. Meanwhile the ‘traditional’ authorities, especially elements within the ‘Consejos de Ancianos,’ moved in the opposite direction, increasingly seeing the Jefes de Defensa and their external allies as a threat to not just their own power, but also to the continued existence of *costumbre* itself.

As will be outlined in the following chapter, conflicts between ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘conservative’ factions would increasingly grow to dominate communal life in the post-civil war era, as the newly-constituted revolutionary state, mestizo regional authorities and local commercial interests all sought to extend their reach into the Gran Nayar in the post-civil war period. As these bodies depended on the mediation of caciques to guarantee the success of their state-building programmes, land-grabs or exploitation of local natural resources, they also reciprocally boosted the power and position of these leaders, exacerbating existing tensions within communities and generating increasing opposition to both the caciques of the Gran Nayar and to the Mexican state itself.

³⁵⁹ A. Knight, ‘Caciquismo...’ p.41

³⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.37

Chapter Two: State-Building and Autonomy in the Gran Nayar (1920-1925)

In April 1920, President Carranza was overthrown by a group of disaffected former allies led by Sonoran generals Obregón, De la Huerta and Calles, and was killed a few weeks later. Interim president De la Huerta was succeeded by Obregón in December 1920, which heralded the beginning of a period of revolutionary consolidation in Mexico under the ‘Sonoran’ dynasty. Revolutionary policy, when taken to an anti-clerical extreme by Calles, precipitated a series of local rebellions that by late 1926 had merged together to become a major national Catholic uprising – ‘the Cristiada.’ This chapter deals with the period between Obregón’s accession to the presidency and the outbreak of the Cristiada. It looks at the ways in which the revolutionary state attempted to integrate the Gran Nayar – racially, socially, and economically – into the fabric of the new, Mexican nation-state that it sought to create, and the consequences of these efforts on the Cora, Huichol, Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities.

The Federal Army was intimately involved in the process of state building in much of Mexico.³⁶¹ However, as an institution it exercised little authority over the Gran Nayar in this period, as the Delahuertista rebellion of late 1923 divided and weakened the army’s local presence, while the revolutionary generals appointed as zone commanders in Nayarit, Jalisco and Durango were usually more concerned with increasing their political and economic influence in the wealthier regions under their control,³⁶² than with state-building in the peripheral Sierras, and were often

³⁶¹ T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* pp.23-30

³⁶² cf. P. Gillingham, ‘Military Caciquismo...’ p.219

transferred to other states by Obregón and Calles to prevent them amassing too much local power, making their presence in the Gran Nayar transient and ineffective.

The Gran Nayar therefore remained under the military control of the communal Defensas established there during the revolution, which in the Sierras of Jalisco and Durango were commanded by essentially autonomous local chiefs, and in Nayarit by Mariano Mejía and Eutimio Domínguez, who had established solid cacicazgos in the Cora Alta and Cora Baja regions by the early 1920s. The leaders of these Defensas increasingly contested political control of the region with the cargo-holders and elders who had traditionally been the paramount authorities within their communities. The ineffective state and municipal authorities that also claimed nominal control of the Gran Nayar in this period were unwilling – and unable – to seriously contest the military and political autonomy of these Jefes de Defensa and traditional authorities, whom they preferred to co-opt as (sometimes unreliable) allies, or to ignore altogether. Therefore the Sonoran regime's main instrument in its attempts to 'integrate' the Gran Nayar and its inhabitants into the revolutionary Mexican nation-state – and the main source of documentary evidence for regional events in this period – was the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), founded by revolutionary intellectual and politician José Vasconcelos in October 1921.³⁶³

The SEP was divided into a number of different departments, each responsible for organising the implementation of a particular policy. One of the most important of these was the Departamento de Educación y Cultura Indígena (DECI) which, under

³⁶³ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.44

the leadership of Enrique Corona, attempted to ‘forjar patria’³⁶⁴ in regions regarded (often falsely) as ‘isolated,’³⁶⁵ via the establishment in indigenous communities of federally-funded and administered schools, first called ‘casas del pueblo’ and later simply ‘escuelas rurales indígenas.’³⁶⁶ The responsibilities of the DECI were delegated to ‘maestros ambulantes’ based in each of Mexico’s states and federal territories, who were to work with the local ‘departamentos de educación federal’ (which had been set up in each state to carry out the SEP’s programme there), and were charged with establishing schools and appointing teachers in local Indian communities.

Soon renamed ‘maestros misioneros’ – their nomenclature reflecting Vasconcelos’ hope that they would emulate the Catholic orders that had earlier taken upon themselves the task of ‘civilising’ Mexico’s Indians – the initial efforts of these SEP officials in the Gran Nayar were unsuccessful. In part, this was because their precise role still lacked definition: they were first instructed to explore their assigned regions with a view to founding ‘Casas del Pueblo’ in remote communities;³⁶⁷ then ordered to abandon exploration and focus on organising literacy campaigns in their centres of residence;³⁶⁸ and then to establish themselves in indigenous communities where possible, until the DECI declared that as it was not possible to ‘fijar límite entre el indígena y el indio campesino... las escuelas rurales no pueden fijar límite para indígena o para mestizos.’³⁶⁹ Budgetary problems, and the poor quality of the teachers

³⁶⁴ cf. Manuel Gamio, Fernando Armstrong-Fumero (tr.), *Forjando Patria...*

³⁶⁵ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.29

³⁶⁶ *ibid.*, pp.45

³⁶⁷ AHSEP-42/C/36051/E/76.38, Circular No. 5, 15 May 1922

³⁶⁸ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 27 July 1922

³⁶⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36339/E/13, ‘Primer Congreso de Misioneros: dictámenes y proposiciones aprobadas,’ 18 Sept. 1922

available to run the schools established by the maestros misioneros (or ‘*inspectores-instructores*,’ as they were again renamed after Calles acceded to the presidency in 1924, and Vasconcelos was replaced by Calles’ close ally José Puig Cassaranc),³⁷⁰ also hindered the SEP’s mission in the Gran Nayar. But more important still was the resistance of the local Indian population to sending their children to the government schools.

Before the revolution, Lumholtz reported that ‘the Indians do not want schools,’ on the grounds that they caused Indian children to ‘lose their native tongue and their ancient beliefs.’³⁷¹ Lumholtz had thus recommended that ‘the white teacher’s aim should be to incite the desire for instruction rather than to force his pupils to listen to his teachings; not to destroy the Indian’s mental world, but to clear it and raise it into the sphere of civilisation.’³⁷² However, Vasconcelos and other SEP policy-makers saw the loss of Indian languages, beliefs and traditional socio-political structures as an essential prelude to their ‘incorporation,’ given that the idealised nation-state which they envisaged was an inherently mestizo one.³⁷³ The SEP also aimed to integrate Indian communities into the national economy, and open up local natural resources for exploitation, ‘by introducing new skills and behaviours.’³⁷⁴ Thus the SEP’s project threatened the cultural identities of local communities, their political autonomy, and their control of lands and the resources contained therein. This chapter supports Vaughan’s observation that in such cases ‘the discourse between communities and

³⁷⁰ J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*... p.292

³⁷¹ C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*... i, p.458

³⁷² *ibid.*

³⁷³ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics*... p.46; see also *idem.*, *The State, Education*... pp.238-66

³⁷⁴ *idem.*, *Cultural Politics*... pp.28-9, referencing the work of Marjorie Becker and Brian Street

teachers is likely to be antagonistic, characterised by resistance, or absent,³⁷⁵ by showing that the SEP's activities in the Gran Nayar in the early 1920s provoked the concerted opposition of many local people, and exacerbated factional conflicts caused by the continued existence of the Defensas and their leaders, who by nature tended to be more open to cooperation with mestizos, and saw the teachers that arrived in their communities as potential allies.

As this chapter makes clear, revolutionary state-building in many Cora and Huichol communities led rival factions to envisage radically different futures. On the one side, many conservative elders and associated factions opposed the mestizo teachers and their allies – whether the home-grown Defensas or mestizo colonists – in order to defend both the physical integrity of their communal territories and a way of life defined by *costumbre*, in which civil, religious and political authority were inseparable, and upon which depended the health and well-being not just of the community, but also of mankind, the gods, and all of the world. On the other side, the *Jefes de Defensa*-turned-*caciques* increasingly embraced the ideas of 'progress,' 'productivity' and 'civilisation' which, as defined and promulgated by the SEP teachers and mestizo colonists with whom they forged social and economic links, and the federal state that lent them 'official' legitimacy through civil and military titles, were to be the foundation of a new Mexican nation-state. Increased cooperation with the state and its local representatives and allies not only provided the *caciques* with opportunities to boost their own power and wealth, but was also seen by some as the only way to preserve for themselves, and their communities, a measure of autonomy within the new revolutionary Mexico. This version of autonomy would, however, be

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*, pp.15-16

safely overseen by themselves and a few other members of the emerging elite of young, ambitious Indians who had all been exposed to wealth, violence and mestizo Mexican society during the upheaval of the revolution.

Meanwhile, in Durango, local and state-level political instability and economic crises prevented the SEP from expanding its programme to the Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros. Untroubled by interfering maestros misioneros, their communities escaped the control of the remote and feeble Mexican state. However, local uprisings, associated political violence and the attempts of local mestizos to invade indigenous lands, exacerbated the conflicts between and within communities that had originally emerged during the armed phase of the revolution. For different reasons, then, factional conflicts flourished across the Gran Nayar as a whole. When national-level tensions between Church and State erupted into open conflict in 1926, and armed outsiders once again began to roam the region in search of hiding places, supplies and allies, many Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros would again see an opportunity to pursue their own local goals, and joined in the fighting, just as they had done during the Revolution.

Nayarit: the Coras

General de Santiago's brutal crackdown on all those associated with 'disorder' in Nayarit – particularly agraristas and trade union militants in the local cotton and sugar industries³⁷⁶ – had successfully 'pacified' the state by 1920. The Sierra Cora had been administratively divided between the 'Subprefectura de la Sierra,' which

³⁷⁶ J. Meyer, *De Cantón...* p.193

included the entire Cora Alta region and was officially dependent on Tepic, and the municipalities of Rosamorada, Santiago Ixcuintla and Acaponeta, between which the communities of the Cora Baja were divided. In practice, however, control of the region remained in the hands of Mejía and Domínguez, who worked with Federal troops to crush the last Villista remnants active locally. The last skirmishes with these groups (routinely dismissed as ‘bandidos’)³⁷⁷ took place in February of that year, when Federal troops routed a rebel band lead by Herminio Díaz and Margarito Rodríguez at the ‘arroyo de San Pablo,’ and another 150 rebels, led by the same Félix Díaz who had earlier occupied San Sebastián, were defeated close to the ‘arroyo de San Rafael’ soon after.³⁷⁸ Despite the final defeat of the Villistas, however, Nayarit was still cursed by instability. General de Santiago’s government fell in the wake of Carranza’s overthrow in April 1920, and over the next six years it was succeeded by fifteen different governments, as state deputies, Federal military chiefs and local political and commercial factions all fought for power.³⁷⁹ It was into this situation of chronic instability that the SEP plunged soon after its creation in October 1921.

Antonio C. Navarrete was the first maestro ambulante posted to Nayarit by the DECI, and he quickly developed an active interest in the Cora communities of Nayarit. Arriving in Tepic in December 1921, he soon gained first-hand experience of the state’s problems, as he was caught up in the conflict between Pascual Villanueva and Juan Espinosa Bávara, who established rival state governments following chaotic and disputed elections.³⁸⁰ Villanueva, recognised by the Federal government as state

³⁷⁷ Nabor Castañeda; Sandalio Sánchez Sánchez; Agustín Lamas

³⁷⁸ AHSDN-C/C/105/E/XI/481.5/193, Col. Esquivel to JOM Nay., 3 Feb. 1920; Col. Esquivel to JOM Nay., 10 Feb. 1920

³⁷⁹ J. Meyer, *De Cantón...* p.193

³⁸⁰ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 10 Jan. 1922

governor shortly after, offered Navarrete ‘todo su apoyo para que la misión que se me ha conferido tenga el fruto apetecido, toda vez que de ella depende la reconstrucción de esta entidad.’ However, Navarrete remained convinced that the Federal government should take back control over the provision of education in the state, such was the ‘descuido que han manifestado los gobernadores anteriores.’³⁸¹ While this recommendation was not adopted for the rest of Nayarit, for the next few years educational policy and the running of schools in the Sierra stayed firmly in the hands of the Federal government, and of Mejía and Domínguez, given the continued lack of state or municipal government presence in the region.

A month into his tenure in Nayarit – and even before a SEP circular explicitly ordered the maestros misioneros to establish themselves in ‘un centro rural, de preferencia indígena’³⁸² – Navarrete asked to leave his appointed zone of Compostela to take charge of education in the Sierra. He argued that establishing ‘Casas del Pueblo’ in the Cora communities was the best way to incorporate into the nation an a region ‘que desde 1914 ha estado fuera del control del gobierno,’³⁸³ and by way of justification offered his superiors a detailed report on the region – the first to be produced in the post-Civil War era.

Navarrete informed his superiors that the communities of San Juan Peyotán and Huaynamota were relatively compact settlements inhabited by non-Indians (defined by their speaking ‘sólo el castellano’). Meanwhile the Coras of Jesús María, San Francisco, La Mesa, Dolores and Santa Teresa enjoyed possession of ‘ilimitado

³⁸¹ *ibid.*

³⁸² AHSEP-42/C/36051/E/76.38, ‘Circular No. 5,’ 15 May 1922

³⁸³ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 25 Jan. 1922

terreno’ – an exaggeration, perhaps, but also an acknowledgement of the limits of demarcation and parcellation of communal landholdings in the Sierra during the Porfiriato – and lived in family rancherías, usually at least a four-hour walk from the political-ceremonial cabeceras of each community. Navarrete concluded that

‘Este unánime instinto de los coras y huicholes de tener sus pueblos abandonados y huír de la sociedad y de los centros poblados, revela todavía un rasgo de barbarie, porque gustan más de los animales salvajes que la de sus semejantes.’³⁸⁴

At first glance, such a comment seems to echo the disparaging views of the nineteenth century mestizo chroniclers of Nayarit, who stressed biological inferiority as the root cause of ‘la ignorancia, la inmoralidad y la falta de civilización de la raza indígena.’³⁸⁵ However, in line with the new *indigenista* intellectual current, which rejected biological racism,³⁸⁶ Navarrete also believed the Coras naturally possessed ‘facultades intelectuales robustas y potentes,’ and attributed their lack of ‘civilización’ to ‘gobiernos nefastas anteriores que solo se dedicaron a medrar el presupuesto [de educación] a cambio del desprestigio de nuestro indígena.’³⁸⁷

He was also the first – and one of the only – SEP officials of the Revolutionary period to recognise that the Coras’ dispersed settlement pattern was a product of economic necessity, as survival in the Sierra depended on raising sheep for wool, making cheese, weaving palm-fibre, bee-keeping and, most importantly, growing corn and beans – all of which required that ‘las familias... habitan en los ranchos de junio a

³⁸⁴ *ibid.*

³⁸⁵ J. Pérez González, *Ensayo estadístico...* p. 560

³⁸⁶ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.28-9

³⁸⁷ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 25 Jan. 1922

diciembre.’³⁸⁸ Of course, the isolation of these rancherías, and their distance from the prospective schools, would ‘perjudicar en mucho el avance de las escuelas.’ But only by teaching them ‘pequeñas industrias,’ and thus changing the nature of their economy, could Indian settlement patterns be changed, which Navarrete acknowledged would be a long-term project.

However, Navarrete reported that the SEP’s project in the Sierra faced more immediate difficulties. He claimed the SEP itself had caused problems by failing to supply the maestros rurales with enough food to last them the year, or to pay them enough to provide for themselves (especially given the inflated prices of transport and goods in the Sierra); so any teacher sent to the region risked starving to death, since the communities they were assigned to were either unwilling or unable to provision them. This made such a posting understandably unpopular amongst ‘profesores de reconocida suficiencia como lo reclama la sierra más que ninguna otra zona del estado.’³⁸⁹

More important still were the problems posed by the Coras themselves. Navarrete claimed that the region’s communal authorities were dominated by ‘miembros tan refractarios a la enseñanza... [que] lejos de fomentar el progreso de las escuelas, fomentaban su retroceso.’³⁹⁰ And he singled out Cora women as particularly obstructive, as they refused even to allow their children to learn Spanish:

‘aunque todas lo hablaran, como la tendencia especial de aquellos pueblos es conservar su idioma y costumbres, por más que la escuela se empeñe en que

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *ibid.*

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*

los niños hablen y entiendan el castellano, el hogar se opone abiertamente a ello, haciendole un contrarreste formal, lo que evidentemente viene a retardar en mucho la educación de los niños.’³⁹¹

Furthermore, amongst the Coras in general, Navarrete noted that there was a widespread belief that:

‘si sus hijos se educan en las escuelas, se hacen maliciosos, pierdan sus costumbres y muy pronto se mueren, y a tal grado predomina en ellos, que cierta ocasión las autoridades exhortaron a los padres de familia a cumplir con el precepto de la enseñanza obligatoria y algunos alejaron más sus ranchos para menos poder ser obligados a este respecto.’³⁹²

In order to overcome this resistance, Navarrete suggested that the region’s authorities would need to use force to ensure that ‘los padres de familia y tutores... observen la ley de instrucción, mandando a sus hijos a la escuela, sin excepción de edades.’ After thus strong-arming the region’s families into sending their children to the new Federal schools, a campaign of ‘hispanización’ would be essential, with every child spending at least one year in intensive Spanish classes before starting the normal school curriculum. To implement his recommendations, he proposed that an ‘Inspección permanente’ should be set up in the region, with a maestro ambulante, based in Jesús María, charged exclusively with overseeing the local schools, organising and invigilating exams, giving talks in the communities during the holidays, and resolving ‘todas las dudas y dificultades que le consulten los maestros, en materia de instrucción.’³⁹³

³⁹¹ *ibid.*

³⁹² *ibid.*

³⁹³ *ibid.*

Soon after submitting his report, Navarrete became the Sierra's *de facto* SEP supervisor. Under his leadership, for the next two years the majority of his recommendations became official SEP policy in the region. Jesús María was made the centre of a new Zona Escolar that encompassed the entire Cora region; local authorities – in this case, the regional *caciques* Mejía and Domínguez, and their pro-government subordinates in each community, the Jefes de Defensa – were enjoined to guarantee both the safety of teachers and the attendance of pupils in the new schools; and much of the curriculum consisted of teaching Cora pupils to speak Spanish. However, despite his efforts, the basic problems that Navarrete had outlined still obstructed the progress of the new schools in the Sierra: the poor quality of the teachers, the state legislature's alternating neglect of and interference in the Federal schools, and, most of all, resistance to the SEP's revolutionary state-building project on the part of both traditional Cora authorities and the population as a whole.

The first SEP schools were established in the Cora Baja zone, which was more easily accessible than the Cora Alta. In June 1922, after repeated requests to his superiors for permission and travel expenses, Navarrete set out on a 'viaje de estudio y exploración,'³⁹⁴ armed with thirty volumes of Tolstoy and seven of Romain Rolland (although exactly which titles remains unknown).³⁹⁵ In line with instructions issued by the SEP, in each community he gave lectures on 'Lengua Nacional y Aritmética... Higiene, Moral, [y] Educación Cívica,' and decided that he would establish his base in Rosarito. Like many of the maestros misioneros of the time,³⁹⁶ Navarrete saw himself as a man of action, describing his mission as 'semejante a la que desarrolló el

³⁹⁴ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 2 June 1922

³⁹⁵ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Jefe del Dept. Escolar to Dept. Bibliotecas, 7 Mar. 1922

³⁹⁶ eg. Lewis, *The Ambivalent Revolution...* p.25

notable Booker T. Washington,³⁹⁷ and declaring that while ‘en aquellos pueblos la vida de la gente civilizada está siempre en inminente peligro... cuando se lleva una misión sagrada, no se teme nada y mucho menos se toman en cuenta los peligros.’³⁹⁸ In spite of this ‘danger’ (which often necessitated the hiring of ‘mozos armados’ to accompany him on his tours of the Sierra),³⁹⁹ and the other obstacles outlined in his report, Navarrete was an active and enthusiastic educator, even offering to ‘renunciar a los derechos de viáticos correspondientes’ if it would secure the Department’s approval for his travel plans.⁴⁰⁰

In Rosarito, San Juan Corapan and San Pedro Ixcatán, Navarrete reported that the locals were anxious to receive education,⁴⁰¹ and asked that schools – which, in the quasi-religious discourse that characterised much revolutionary rhetoric, he referred to as ‘Templos de la Ciencia’⁴⁰² – be founded in each community in order to ‘emanciparlos de la ignorancia en que han vivido siempre.’⁴⁰³ Local cooperation was guaranteed by Eutimio Domínguez, who appears to have been particularly receptive to the establishment of schools in the communities under his control (a fact still remembered in San Juan Corapan today, where the local primary school carries his name).⁴⁰⁴ His status as one of the few literate Coras, and his involvement in both the regional cattle trade and the Revolution in Nayarit – which brought him into close contact with mestizos and with broader national, ‘Mexican’ culture – had no doubt made him aware of the advantages available to literate, Spanish-speaking Indians, to

³⁹⁷ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 20 Nov. 1922

³⁹⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹⁹ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 25 Sept. 1925

⁴⁰⁰ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 2 June 1922

⁴⁰¹ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 20 Aug. 1922

⁴⁰² M. Butler, ‘A Revolution...?’ p.5

⁴⁰³ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 26 Oct. 1922

⁴⁰⁴ Filiberto Sánchez; Sandalio Sánchez Sánchez

the extent that, before the SEP arrived in San Juan, Domínguez was ‘pagando de su peculio particular a un señor llamado Primitivo Mayorqín, para que imparta los primeros conocimientos del alfabeto.’⁴⁰⁵ And like Heliodoro Charis in Juchitán, who ‘displayed his revolutionary credentials by leading the drive for socialist education,’⁴⁰⁶ Domínguez also saw the support of Federal education policies as a convenient way of demonstrating his loyalty to the state, thus strengthening his position as cacique of the Cora Baja. With his support, the first school in the area was opened in San Pedro Ixcatán in August, its security guaranteed by Domínguez’s ally Eusebio González, head of the community’s Defensa. At the same time, Navarrete worked to secure funds for a special ‘Escuela Agrícola e Industrial’ in San Juan Corapan, an ambitious project which he hoped would prepare local children for a ‘vida práctica’ that would enable them to abandon their isolated rancherías and settle permanently in the community’s cabecera.⁴⁰⁷

In July 1922, Heriberto Parra became the second maestro misionero to establish schools amongst the Coras, in this case in the municipality of Acaponeta,⁴⁰⁸ where a small Cora population inhabited remote communities that, culturally and politically, were linked to those of both the Cora Alta and Baja regions.⁴⁰⁹ Parra seems to have been less clear than Navarrete as to the exact nature of his mission, which he blamed on bad communications in his ‘Zona Escolar,’ where the (already rather confusing) circulars issued by his department failed to reach him in good time.⁴¹⁰ Was his primary role to found new schools, or to supervise the few schools already in

⁴⁰⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Navarrete, ‘Informe,’ 4 May 1925

⁴⁰⁶ B. T. Smith, ‘Heliodoro Charis Castro...’ p.121

⁴⁰⁷ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 20 Aug. 1922

⁴⁰⁸ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 10 July 1922

⁴⁰⁹ G. González Ramos, *Los coras*, pp.82-6

⁴¹⁰ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 27 July 1922

existence in the region? Should he actually be teaching literacy in these schools himself?⁴¹¹ Regardless of this confusion, however, by September Parra had visited the Cora communities of San Diego, Saycota, San Blasito and San Pedro de Honor, as well as Santa Cruz de Guajolota (which he referred to as Cora, which either reflects the typical confusion that surrounds Mexicanero identity, or suggests that Mexicanero refugees from Durango⁴¹² had not yet arrived in the settlement). Parra reported that, although small, each community was surrounded by rancherías inhabited by numerous potential students. Initially Parra was enthusiastic about his successes in these communities, writing that the inhabitants promised him, ‘después de celebrar varias juntas con ellos, no sólo admitir de buen grado la escuela, sino prestar su ayuda moral y material para que ésta pudiera llevar a cabo el noble objeto que ese Departamento se ha propuesto.’⁴¹³ He asked that the Department fund schools in San Pedro and Santa Cruz, where he claimed to have the full support of the communal authorities. Indeed, in Saycota he had been offered two different buildings for use as classrooms: one in the pueblo itself, and the other in the settlement to which the inhabitants moved every summer, during the rains.⁴¹⁴

However, Parra soon realised founding schools in the region would be more complicated than he had assumed. Two seemingly contradictory statements which he made regarding the Coras – that ‘las autoridades nada pueden hacer sin contar con la opinion de la mayoría de las indígenas,’⁴¹⁵ but also that ‘en todos los pueblos de esta región, y muy especialmente en los de indios, nada hacen los habitantes sin la

⁴¹¹ *ibid.*

⁴¹² J. Jáuregui, L. Magriñá, ‘Estudio etnohistórico...’ p.70

⁴¹³ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 29 Sept. 1922

⁴¹⁴ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 8 Aug. 1922

⁴¹⁵ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 19 Nov.1922

anuencia de los Jueces [indígenas]⁴¹⁶ – perhaps indicate his growing awareness that the support of the traditional government for schools did not necessarily guarantee that of the community as a whole (and *vice-versa*). Especially as the support of the traditional government itself could be ephemeral, as traditional government offices were rotated every year.

The Cora communities of the Acaponeta zone lacking a single, powerful *cacique* to oblige local people to support Parra's educational plans, and he soon complained that, after such a promising start, 'ahora se negaron agresivamente a permitir el establecimiento de dichas escuelas.' The parish priest in Acaponeta, he continued, had instructed

‘a sus sencillos moradores que por ninguna motivo admitieron la escuela del Gobierno, por ser ‘LA ESCUELA SIN DIOS’; que cuanto antes mejor procedieran a establecer escuelas particulares para evitar que el Gobierno tomara la enseñanza por su cuenta; y, en efecto, así lo hicieron, poniendo como Directores de ellas a indios tan ignorantes y fanáticos, que pasaban el día enseñando a los niños a rezar.’

Angered by this defeat, Parra bitterly denounced

‘la sistemática propaganda de la Iglesia contra la labor civilizadora del Estado, especialmente en los centros rurales, donde la ignorancia y los prejuicios religiosos de la raza indígena brindan campo propicio a las actividades de los enemigos tradicionales de la Revolución.’⁴¹⁷

While the head of the Department forwarded his complaint to the Secretaría de Gobernación in Mexico City,⁴¹⁸ who in turn ordered the governor of Nayarit put a

⁴¹⁶ AHSEP-42/C/36023/E/48.13, Parra to DECI, 31 Aug. 1923

⁴¹⁷ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 19 Nov. 1922

⁴¹⁸ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, DECI to Parra, 28 Nov. 1922

stop to the priest's activities,⁴¹⁹ it seems there was more to communal resistance to the Federal school than just the meddling of the Catholic Church. In the same letter, Parra also wrote that rumours had spread throughout the region that, as soon as Federal schools had been established in the communities, the government would 'cobrarles contribuciones por las solares de sus casas y por las tierras que cultivan.'⁴²⁰ The idea that Federal teachers might also double as state or municipal tax collectors was clearly a misunderstanding of their role; but at the same time does suggest that local people recognised that the ultimate goal of the SEP's school-building programme was to end the *de facto* political, cultural and fiscal autonomy that they currently enjoyed.

In some communities Parra faced resistance from the majority of the population, despite the support of 'cosmopolitan' minority factions, which had acquired official, if not practical power. However, in Saycota – where a school had opened in November 1922,⁴²¹ with an initial attendance of 20 children⁴²² – the friendly traditional authorities whom Parra first encountered were replaced the next year by more hostile individuals (probably selected by elders who sought to resist the SEP), and in August 1923 Parra complained that the new Governor:

'se opone abiertamente a cooperar para el progreso de la Casa del Pueblo e intriga para que los demás no lo hagan. Al propio Presidente Municipal de esta ciudad [Acaponeta], cuya ayuda demandé para conseguir el terreno para el cultivo, le dijo que no daba nada.'⁴²³

The character of Pedro Flores, Saycota's teacher, only made matters worse. As Navarrete had pointed out, it was extremely difficult to persuade teachers to work in

⁴¹⁹ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, DECI to Parra, 11 Dec. 1922

⁴²⁰ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 19 Nov. 1922

⁴²¹ AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Parra to DECI, 24 Nov. 1922,

⁴²² AHSEP-42/C/35981/E/8.54, Saycota: school statistics, 21 Dec. 1922

⁴²³ AHSEP-42/C/36023/E/48.13, Parra to DECI, 31 Aug. 1923

the Sierra, especially when they were so poorly paid (when they were even paid at all, as the documentary record abounds with requests for overdue payment on behalf of teachers). Thus the teachers who ended up working in the Cora communities were a motley crew of earnest but inexperienced young men and women straight out of school themselves, older individuals who had worked in private schools in the region during the Porfiriato (and were far from the revolutionary ‘indigenistas’ envisaged by Vasconcelos as the saviours of the country’s Indians),⁴²⁴ and, it seems, whichever local drunkards – like Flores – could be persuaded of the economic opportunities available to teachers who agreed to work in the Sierra.

Flores was apparently posted to Saycota because, although himself of ‘escasa ilustración,’ he was familiar with the area, spoke some Cora, and also had ‘la ventaja de estar connaturalizando con el mal clima que allí reina.’⁴²⁵ However, in 1924, after two years in Saycota, there had been no progress in the school and the

‘estado moral y social de la Casa del Pueblo y de los vecinos se halla en abandono completo. En general, considero no solamente que no ha realizado nada en la Casa, en el tiempo que tiene establecida; sino que ha defraudado las esperanzas de ese Dept. y matado el proceso evolutivo del pueblo.’⁴²⁶

Flores sent his superiors ‘noticias engañosas acerca del adelantado de la escuela,’⁴²⁷ while apparently spending more time drinking and gambling than teaching. It is not difficult to see a connection between this loutish behaviour and local opposition to Federal schooling in Saycota. As one of his superiors noted, ‘Es pues, extraño que elementos como [Flores] hayan sido escogidos para renovar las costumbres de los

⁴²⁴ cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.57; D. L. Raby, ‘Los maestros rurales...’ p.191

⁴²⁵ AHSEP-42/C/36051/E/76.20, DEFN to DECI, 16 June 1923

⁴²⁶ AHSEP-45/C/36330/E/32, Loyola to DEFN, 13 Aug. 1924

⁴²⁷ AHSEP-45/C/36330/E/32, DEFN to ‘residents of Saycota,’ 17 Feb. 1925

indígenas e incorporarlos a la civilización.’⁴²⁸ However, various attempts to dismiss him failed, as no replacement could be found; and so he stayed in the community, which the Department of Indigenous Education decided was preferable to closing the school down,⁴²⁹ even if this caused more long-term damage to the SEP’s project in the region than closing the school temporarily would have done.

Flores was finally fired in late 1924, and the school was permanently closed, despite the ostensible protestations of ‘la comunidad’ and ‘los alumnos,’ whose letters claiming that Flores’ accusers were ‘enemigos de la raza indígena,’ and that his departure would leave them ‘sumergido en ignorancia,’⁴³⁰ were discovered to be Flores’ own forgeries.⁴³¹ However, the kind of problems caused by teachers like Flores – or that Parra experienced in the other Cora communities of Acaponeta, where he aroused both the hostility of the Church, and local suspicion of the SEP’s objectives – would only become more pronounced as the SEP tried to expand its reach into the Cora Alta. Despite the support there of Mariano Mejía, these same issues – compounded by the increasing interference of ambitious regional politicians, who sought to use the SEP’s programme to boost their own influence – obstructed the attempts of the Federal government to expand its power into the region.

Although forces loyal to President Obregón and his successor, Plutarco Elías Calles, managed to defeat the Delahuertista rebellion of late 1923, the revolt caused upheaval

⁴²⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36304/E.27, Loyola to DEFN, 9 June 1924

⁴²⁹ AHSEP-42/C/36023/E/48.13, DEFN to DECI, N.D., 1923

⁴³⁰ AHSEP-45/C/36330/E/32, Flores (in name of residents of Saycota) to DEFN, 10 Dec. 1924

⁴³¹ AHSEP-45/C/36330/E/32, DEFN to ‘residents of Saycota,’ 17 Feb. 1925

across the country,⁴³² and in Nayarit forced many schools to close.⁴³³ However, despite their old ally General de Santiago – now based in Veracruz – declaring for the rebels,⁴³⁴ Domínguez and Mejía stayed loyal to the government, and even in the midst of the uprising, Gonzalo Mota, head of the SEP's Nayarit division, petitioned his superiors for support in establishing schools in the Cora Alta.⁴³⁵ He blamed the fact that only forty-two of the roughly 2,500 school-age Cora children were currently even enrolled in Federal schools on their dispersed settlement pattern ('reuniéndose sólo de tiempo en tiempo en el pueblo a que pertenecen, para embriagarse y danzar en torno de su santo patrono'), but claimed that, although '[el Cora] no obedece en buen grado a las autoridades civiles, sino a sus caciques... la desconfianza propia de este indígena, desaparece con el trato amable y dadivoso del extraño.' In line with Vasconcelos' goal of 'harness[ing] rural society to the national project,'⁴³⁶ SEP officials had also been ordered to investigate the natural resources found in their regions, and Mota enthusiastically reported that the Sierra possessed 'incalculables riquezas naturales: maderas de todos clases, pastos de buena calidad para el ganado, tierras fértiles con el agua en abundancia... [y] minas inexploradas,' and advocated the extension of state control over the region as a matter of national economic interest.⁴³⁷

Aurelio Guerrero was named the new maestro in Jesús María after Navarrete was accused of siding with the Delahuertista rebels and dismissed.⁴³⁸ Following a grand

⁴³² J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* pp.67-8

⁴³³ AHSEP-45/C/36335/E/10, Navarrete to DECI, 1 May 1924

⁴³⁴ R. Davila, 'General Francisco de Santiago Villegas'

⁴³⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/16, DEFN to DECI, 24 Jan. 1924

⁴³⁶ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.28

⁴³⁷ AHSEP 45, C/36301, E/16, DEFN to DECI, 24 Jan. 1924

⁴³⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36335/E/10, DEFN to DECI, 19 Feb. 1924

banquet in Tepic attended by the new interim Education Secretary, Bernardo J. Gastélum, as well as regional notables like Juventino Espinosa and the chief of the 13/a Zona Militar, General Anatolio Ortega, Guerrero was sent to the Sierra in April 1924, to explore potential sites for new schools and to ‘ejercer su influencia sobre las tribus.’⁴³⁹ By the end of the year, Guerrero had requested a ‘dotación de tierras’ on behalf of Saycota⁴⁴⁰ (rather than the certification of the community’s existing landholdings, which would later prove controversial);⁴⁴¹ and claimed to have cultivated friendly relations with the traditional authorities of various other communities.⁴⁴² He proposed, in addition to an already approved Indian boarding school (or ‘internado’) in Jesús María, establishing Casas del Pueblo in San Miguel del Zapote, Huajimic (where he falsely claimed sixty percent of inhabitants spoke Cora), Dolores (where he was sure that reluctant parents could be forced to enrol their children by the ‘Gobernador de los indios que es mi buen amigo’), and Santa Teresa (where again, ‘los vecinos no están interesados en que haya escuela, pero yo juzgo necesario establecerla... atendido como estoy a la buena amistad que cultivo con el Gobernador Cora’).⁴⁴³

In December 1924, the newly inaugurated President Calles appointed José Manuel Puig Casauranc as Secretary of Education, and the latter included an allowance for the founding of schools in the Cora Alta in the SEP budget. However, Guerrero would not be able to use his self-proclaimed influence over the Cora communities’ traditional authorities to guarantee the success of these schools, as in January 1925 Navarrete

⁴³⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36337/E/29, clipping from ‘Eco de Nayarit,’ 14 Apr. 1924

⁴⁴⁰ AGA-D/23/147/leg.1/CCA/Dotación/Saycota, Guerrero to CNA, N.D, 1924

⁴⁴¹ cf. D. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges...* pp.87-91; pp.98-99

⁴⁴² AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Guerrero to DEFN, 27 Dec. 1924

⁴⁴³ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Guerrero to DEFN, 29 Dec. 1924; Guerrero to DEFN, 31 Dec. 1924

was rehired by the SEP and appointed inspector of the Jesús María zone in Guerrero's place.⁴⁴⁴ It appears that this was linked to the reshuffling of posts prompted by Puig Casauranc's appointment and his transformation of the DECI into the 'Departamento de Escuelas Rurales y Incorporación Cultural Indígena' (DERICI), which also involved Gonzalo Mota – whom Navarrete had accused of being a well-known Caballero de Colón, a supporter of the 'candidatura reacionara de Angel Flores,'⁴⁴⁵ a partisan of the privileged, and negligent of the Indians⁴⁴⁶ – being transferred to the SEP's Durango division and replaced in Nayarit by Francisco Nicodemo. But it also seems the machinations of an ambitious state depute, Colonel Ismael Romero Gallardo – who had long seen the SEP's political as project a way of boosting his own influence in the state – played a part in Navarrete's return to the Sierra.

Romero Gallardo first began to involve himself in education in Nayarit in June 1923. Claiming to know the southern, mainly mestizo part of the Sierra well, having fought there 'como revolucionario en los años de 1911 a 1916,' he reported to Vasconcelos that schools had been established in abandoned settlements, suggesting that teachers were cheating the department with phony reports. He then pledged to investigate the situation personally, and to bring supplies to any schools that really did exist, earning Vasconcelos' praise.⁴⁴⁷ In the following months Romero Gallardo criticised various maestros misioneros, whom he claimed 'se dedican solo a desprestigiar al Gobierno local y a provocar pugnas en la cuestión educativa,'⁴⁴⁸ and took it upon himself to set

⁴⁴⁴ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, DECI to DEFN, 16 Jan. 1925

⁴⁴⁵ Flores had been Calles' opponent during the recent presidential elections.

⁴⁴⁶ AHSEP-45/C/36335/E/10, Navarrete to DECI, 10 Dec. 1924

⁴⁴⁷ AHSEP-42/C/36023/E/48.60, Romero Gallardo to Vasconcelos, 9 June 1923; Vasconcelos to Romero Gallardo, 13 June 1923

⁴⁴⁸ AHSEP-42/C/36023/E/48.60, Romero Gallardo to Vasconcelos, N.D., 1923

up Casas del Pueblo in rural communities across Nayarit, even though some had schools already, which prompted protests on the part of several teachers.⁴⁴⁹

Romero Gallardo appears to have continued building a political base in the rural communities of Nayarit, appearing at the official openings of new schools, donating books to their libraries, and generally presenting himself as a bringer of education to the masses.⁴⁵⁰ By January 1925, he exercised enough influence in the state to petition for Navarrete's re-appointment, and to name teachers to run the newly founded schools in the Sierra, whom he promised a daily wage of three pesos (as opposed to the standard two peso daily rate in the Sierra).⁴⁵¹ Although Navarrete and Mariano Mejía tried hard to secure this sum from the SEP, eventually Romero Gallardo's new appointments were allotted only two pesos, hence only three of them actually appeared at the start the new term, in Huajimic, Huaynamota and Jesús María.⁴⁵² Francisco Nicodemo complained that Romero's meddling had undermined his authority and that his Department did not necessarily know who or where the rest of Romero's new appointments were, adding that 'de continuar así es muy triste el papel que le queda al Director de Educación Federal.'⁴⁵³ Soon after, ex-maestro misionero Guerrero wrote he had been removed from his post for political reasons (a claim backed up by several of his colleagues),⁴⁵⁴ and he accused Romero Gallardo of 'recomendando a personas que lo han ayudado en su propaganda y que nunca han trabajado en el Magisterio.'⁴⁵⁵ Nayarit's League of Agrarian Communities also wrote

⁴⁴⁹ AHSEP-42/C/36023/E/48.60, DEFN to DECI, 12 Sept. 1923

⁴⁵⁰ AHSEP-42/C/36056/E/81.24, Enrique Maldonado to Vasconcelos, 14 Oct. 1924

⁴⁵¹ AHSEP-45/C/36326/E.6, Romero Gallardo to DEFN, 10 Feb. 1925

⁴⁵² AHSEP-45/C/36326/E.6, Navarrete to DERICI, 17 Feb. 1925

⁴⁵³ AHSEP-45/C/36326/E.6, DEFN to DERICI, 5 Mar. 1925

⁴⁵⁴ AHSEP-45/C/36348/E/7, Juana Rocha et al., to DEFN, 27 Mar. 1925

⁴⁵⁵ AHSEP-42/C/36059/E/84.29, Guerrero to DECI, 11 Mar. 1925

to President Calles, asking him to ‘interponer su valiosísima influencia a fin de que esos malos elementos político-reaccionarios no nos manden su profesorado.’⁴⁵⁶

While departmental confusion, budgetary constraints and infighting prevented the creation of schools that had been proposed for the Sierra, it seems that, in those communities under the *de facto* control of Mejía and Domínguez where schools were actually operating, traditional authorities amenable to their presence were – for the moment – in the ascendent. Navarrete reported in March that, in Jesús María, the traditional authorities had worked together with Mejía to raise average attendance at the school to thirty-two, and managed to dispel the local belief that ‘el Gobierno quiere educar a los indígenas para asesinarlos después.’ Navarrete enthusiastically added – probably to impress his superiors and secure his position as inspector, as much as out of genuine conviction – that soon ‘la mayoría de los indios concurrirán a la escuela,’ although he continued, rather disapprovingly, that ‘la mayoría de ellos se les vé completamente desnudos, pues [los niños] llevan “tapa-rabo” como unica indumentaria.’⁴⁵⁷

He also reported that fourteen boys and eighteen girls were now enrolled in Santa Teresa’s new school, and that he would enrol twenty more with the help of the apparently cooperative local authorities (although as the majority of the population lived in the ‘barrancas’ surrounding the pueblo, Navarrete claimed it was impossible to know the exact number of potential pupils in the community). Navarrete also wrote that the Tereseños were interested in acquiring four thousand fruit trees ‘de

⁴⁵⁶ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Liga de Coms. Agrarias Nay. to Pres., 9 Mar. 1925

⁴⁵⁷ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Navarrete to DERICI, 25 Mar. 1925

procedencia americana' that he promised them he would obtain from the Ministry of Agriculture, and he used similar offers of government agricultural aid to secure local support for a school in San Francisco, which was suffering a 'crisis de miseria' due to poor harvests.⁴⁵⁸

However, with the full support of Mejía and Domínguez, mestizo immigration to and settlement in the Sierra also increased in this period, raising tensions between the local Coras and the new settlers. Before the revolution, Lumholtz observed that various 'impecunious Mexicans' were employed as peons by the Cora inhabitants of San Francisco, and reported a few cases of intermarriage between them;⁴⁵⁹ while according to Preuss, a few years later, there were around one hundred mestizos living among the 1,500 Coras of Jesús María.⁴⁶⁰ By the mid-1920s, however, many more mestizos had arrived in the region, displaced by revolutionary unrest in neighbouring regions or drawn by the economic opportunities earlier highlighted by Gonzalo Mota in his report.⁴⁶¹ The government schools were intended to open up the nation's resources for exploitation, and given their tendency to infantilise the Coras, local SEP officials saw this exploitation as most efficiently accomplished in the Sierra by mestizo settlers, who would provide an example for the Coras to follow and thus help to educate them out of their traditional dependence on subsistence agriculture. This increased the tendency of the teachers sent to the Cora communities to establish social and commercial links with other mestizos in the region, rather than with the local Cora population.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹ C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico...* p.509

⁴⁶⁰ J. Jáuregui, J. Neurath (eds.), *Fiesta, literatura y magia...* p.127

⁴⁶¹ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/16, DEFN to DECI., 24 Jan. 1924

⁴⁶² AHSEP-84-85/C/38874/E/8, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 25 Jan. 1933

Meanwhile Mejía and Domínguez – one a mestizo himself, the other a fluent Spanish speaker who had fought alongside mestizos in the Revolution⁴⁶³ – encouraged further mestizo settlement because, as relatively wealthy ranchers, they had a personal interest in trying to boost the regional cattle trade.⁴⁶⁴ Mejía in particular enjoyed close ties to the local mestizos involved in the SEP's project in the Sierra, such as his *comadre* Petra Tovar de Aquino (a maestra rural initially charged with opening Jesús María's school),⁴⁶⁵ and her husband, and thus his compadre, Evaristo Aquino (who headed Jesús María's 'Comite Cultural Pro-Raza: Estudio y Progreso').⁴⁶⁶ Members of the local Defensas, under orders from Mejía and Domínguez and sometimes led by mestizos themselves,⁴⁶⁷ also generally supported schools and further mestizo settlement. This process generated increasing opposition from conservative factions, 'who used the *costumbre* as a platform to challenge the legitimacy' of Mejía and the local *Jefes de Defensa*.⁴⁶⁸ In the months after Navarrete wrote his initially optimistic report, the increasing resistance within the Cora communities to the presence of mestizo teachers and colonists, and the continued state-level instability in Nayarit, led SEP officials to moderate their attempts to incorporate the Coras into 'civilización.'

Meanwhile the SEP's local representatives, as well as Mejía and Domínguez, became increasingly involved in questions of party politics. In February 1925, President

⁴⁶³ AHSEP-84-85/C/859/E/60, Meza to DEI, 21 May 1961

⁴⁶⁴ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* pp.185-6

⁴⁶⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36326/E.6, DEFN to DERICI, 31 Aug. 1925

⁴⁶⁶ AGN/O-C/728-J-5, Evaristo Aquino to Pres., 15 Apr. 1925; in a proto-'*costumbrista*' style that prefigures that of Ángel Menéndez, he described his self-proclaimed mission as that of 'llevando la luz de la ciencia a todos los cerebros oscuros que vegetan en las fragosidades de las montañas, sin más esperanza que la luz del astro Rey.'

⁴⁶⁷ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* pp.185-6

⁴⁶⁸ *ibid.*

Calles deposed Nayarit's governor, Pascual Villanueva, who was an ally of Ángel Flores and José Guadalupe Zuno (governor of Jalisco, and another of Calles' enemies). In April, Nayarit's Diputados had deposed Calles' new appointee, General Miguel Díaz, and named Romano Gallardo governor in his place. Romano Gallardo was soon besieged in Tepic by elements of the municipal police and the army, and the state capital was temporarily moved to Ixtlán del Río, where the army was sent to crush the rebels. Coups, counter-coups and widespread political violence followed.⁴⁶⁹

The SEP was drawn into the conflict as Romero Gallardo attempted to persuade the Federal teachers and inspectors to aid him 'a toda costa,'⁴⁷⁰ which naturally interfered with their educational work. In May, Leopoldo Rodríguez Calderón took over as Nayarit's Director of Federal Education. Describing himself as a 'viejo Maestro, que durante 37 años de servicios en varios Estados de la República y en el Distrito Federal, se ha interiorizado de las necesidades de los Maestros,' Calderón promised to put an end to fraudulent or misleading reports, and urged the inspectors to 'corregi[r] con su ejemplo las deficiencias encontradas,'⁴⁷¹ and to stay out of politics.⁴⁷² This, however, proved impossible, and Navarrete and two other inspectors, Lucio Rosas and José Gallardo Topete (apparently a cousin of Romero Gallardo),⁴⁷³ were frequently accused of political campaigning throughout 1925.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁶⁹ J. Meyer, *De Cantón...* pp.194-5

⁴⁷⁰ AHSEP-45/C/36330/E/11, DEFN to DERICI, 11 May 1926

⁴⁷¹ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, DEFN, 'Circular 8,' 6 May 1925

⁴⁷² AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, DEFN to Inspectores, 4 Aug. 1925

⁴⁷³ AHSEP-45/C/36330/E/11, DEFN to DERICI, 11 May 1926

⁴⁷⁴ AHSEP-42/C/36056/E/81.24, clipping from 'El Socialista,' 14 Sept. 1925; AHSEP-45/C/36301, E/29, DEFN to DERICI, 14 Sept. 1925

In September, Calderón reported that Navarrete had not visited the Sierra for three months.⁴⁷⁵ It was impossible for Rosas to take over his zone, as had been suggested by other officials,⁴⁷⁶ as he had taken leave in order to run for political office.⁴⁷⁷ With both inspectors ‘apoyados por personas influyentes, esta Dirección ha salido siempre burlada,’ and the schools of the Sierra were left unsupervised as Calderón complained that he was being strangled by bureaucracy and government inefficiency.⁴⁷⁸ Navarrete had first asked to leave the Jesús María zone in April, citing its poor communications,⁴⁷⁹ and then claimed that an illness brought on by the rains had forced him to leave in June,⁴⁸⁰ while his stay in Tepic was then prolonged because his wife had fallen seriously ill, after which he had enjoyed another ten days of approved leave.⁴⁸¹ However, his long absence from the Sierra (and the ‘mil pretextos’ he used to justify his staying in Tepic and writing his ‘informes... en su casa’),⁴⁸² was probably also linked to his support for Romero Gallardo,⁴⁸³ and to the fact that both of the caciques of the Sierra were, in the same period, partisans of Romero Gallardo’s rival, and Calles’ new candidate for governor, Francisco Ramírez Romano.⁴⁸⁴

Despite the repeated references by the SEP’s maestros rurales and inspectores-instructores to the remoteness of the Sierra and its lack of ‘vías rápidas de comunicación’,⁴⁸⁵ it is clear that life there did not go on in total isolation from events

⁴⁷⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, DEFN to DERICI, 22 Sept. 1925

⁴⁷⁶ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Inspector Gral. del Pacífico to DERICI, 17 June 1925

⁴⁷⁷ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Lucio Rosas, political propaganda, N.D. 1925

⁴⁷⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, DEFN to DERICI, 22 Sept. 1925

⁴⁷⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Navarrete to DEFN, 10 Apr. 1925

⁴⁸⁰ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Inspector Gral. del Pacífico to DERICI, 17 June 1925

⁴⁸¹ AHSEP-45/C/36335/E/10, Navarrete to DEFN, 25 Sept. 1925

⁴⁸² AHSEP-45/C/36335/E/10, DEFN to DERICI, 30 Sept. 1925

⁴⁸³ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, DEFN to DERICI, 14 Sept. 1925

⁴⁸⁴ J. Meyer, *De Cantón...* p.195

⁴⁸⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36335/E/10, Navarrete to DEFN, 25 Sept. 1925

at national level. And so, just as Mejía and Domínguez had made alliances with political and military forces based outside the Sierra during the armed phase of the Revolution (and would again, to an even greater extent, during the Cristero rebellion), it is not surprising to find that they forged links with Ramírez Romano, who was, after all, backed by Calles and General Alejandro Mange, Nayarit's new zone commander. Mejía's support for Ramírez Romano against Zuno's local client, José de la Peña, spurred rumours that they were literally related (which were reaffirmed by a DGIPS agent a few years later).⁴⁸⁶ It was claimed that Ramírez Romano

‘tiene un gran ascendiente entre los indios de la sierra del Nayarit, por estar estos bajo las ordenes de un tío suyo, esto le consta al General Matías Ramos, tanto que ya lo ha comunicado al Señor Presidente de la República. El Gobernador de Jalisco partidario de de la Peña mandó unos individuos a la sierra de que hablo con objeto de conquistarselos en favor de de la Peña y hasta la fecha no se sabe de ellos, hay versiones de que fueron colgados por el Jefe de aquella Tribu. Zuno y de la Peña tienen compromisos políticos, según supe.’⁴⁸⁷

Domínguez too was obviously pro-Ramírez Romano, as evidenced by the complaint of his subordinate, Eusebio González, that the Rosamorada municipal government

‘fomenta por todos medios la imposición de la candidatura reaccionaria de Jose de la Peña, [y] ha pretendido obligar a todos los indios de esta región a que pasen a ejercitar sus derechos civicos al pueblo de EL VENADO, distante de aquí 15 kilometros, en donde se instalará una Casilla Electoral... se nos cortan nuestros derechos de ciudadanos libres, y por la misma razon se priva a toda la tribu de votar por un hombre de corazon noble y unico que garantiza el bienestar de las clases humildes que vegetan en estas montañas: nos referimos al LICENCIADO FRANCISCO RAMIREZ ROMANO, que siempre se ha preocupado por la Cultura Regional, y por el mejoramiento intelectual de estas razas... que no tienen ahora mas ayuda que las aguas del cielo y la luz del Sol.’⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ AGN-DGIPS/C/232/E/22, G. Ortega to Francisco Delgado, 2 Jan. 1928

⁴⁸⁷ AGN-DGIPS/C/169/E/2, Confidential report on Nayarit elections, 6 Nov. 1925

⁴⁸⁸ AGN-DGIPS/C/169/E/2, E.González to Sec. Gob., 25 Oct. 1925

The strength of this support for Ramírez Romano may well have worried Navarrete, and, given his own association with Romero Gallardo, prompted him to leave Jesús María. The subsequent lack of an inspector to supervise the new schools in the Cora communities, combined with resistance to these schools on the part of the Cora majority, and the conflict at state level (which, Calderón claimed, prevented state and municipal authorities from assisting the maestros rurales),⁴⁸⁹ outweighed the support of Domínguez, Mejía and their allies in the communities, further obstructing the SEP's attempts to make 'Mexicans' of the Coras, whom the increasingly embittered Navarrete now referred to as the 'razas indolentes que jamás se han preocupado por el progreso de aquella rica región.'⁴⁹⁰

The school in Jesús María, run by Mejía's mestiza comadre Petra Tovar, was closed in August for lack of pupils, despite the support given it by Mejía, who was by now described as 'un Cacique... quien goza de todo el poder de un rey.'⁴⁹¹ While Mejía tried to explain away the low attendance at the school as due to an epidemic, which prevented him from ordering 'los padres de familias que enbien a sus hijos a la escuela a fin de evitar el contagio,'⁴⁹² Calderón reported that low attendance was in fact because the Coras 'odian y temen a los blancos,' given which, he recommended that future teachers in the community 'deben tener tipo indígena para no sufrir atropellos.'⁴⁹³ By this time schools in La Mesa and San Francisco had also closed – if they had ever been open except on paper. Thus the only schools still functioning in Mejía's cacicazgo by late 1925 were the three that had been established in the mestizo

⁴⁸⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, DEFN to DERICI, 23 Nov. 1925

⁴⁹⁰ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Navarrete to DEFN, 25 Sept. 1925

⁴⁹¹ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, DEFN to DERICI, 22 Sept. 1925

⁴⁹² AHSEP-45/C/36326/E.6, Mejía to DEFN, 25 Aug. 1925

⁴⁹³ AHSEP-45/C/36326/E.6, DEFN to DERICI, 31 Aug. 1925

communities of San Juan Peyotán, Huajimíc and Huaynamota (where the incipient conflict between Calles and the Catholic Church had handicapped them from the beginning, accused as they were of being ‘escuelas protestantes’ by the local priests),⁴⁹⁴ and in the Cora communities of Dolores and Santa Teresa. However, the ‘ambiente’ in the latter community was also ‘completamente adverso a nuestra labor,’ according to an inspector based in southern Sinaloa, who ultimately blamed this on Navarrete:

‘Desde el más humilde campesino (sin excepción) hasta el más encumbrado de los pobladores de esta región, no expresan sino recuerdos nefastos contra [Navarrete], generalizando su concepto (por la ignorancia que domina) hacia todos nosotros y hasta a nuestra Institución.’⁴⁹⁵

Even in San Pedro Ixcatán, home to the oldest school in the entire Cora region, attendance was still a major problem. Despite the support of Eutimio Domínguez, Eusebio González, and the community’s traditional authorities, the ‘niños y adolescentes coras que estan acostumbrados a vivir en las montañas alejados de toda civilización’ continued to shun the school, which presented an ‘aspecto triste y miserable.’⁴⁹⁶ This problem was so great that Navarrete was forced to replace the school’s teacher,⁴⁹⁷ and the traditional authorities had to send their *alguaciles*⁴⁹⁸ to warn the dispersed inhabitants that, ‘sin excuso ni pretexto, se presenten en el término de 30 días a partir de la fecha, a inscribir a los niños y adultos que permanecen en abierta rebeldía contra el alfabeto.’⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁴ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Navarrete to DEFN, 25 Mar. 1925

⁴⁹⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36340/E/22, Loyola to Francisco Castorena, 4 Sept. 1925

⁴⁹⁶ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, Navarrete to DEFN, 9 Nov. 1925

⁴⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ See ‘Glossary,’ this thesis.

⁴⁹⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36303/E.27, Navarrete to DEFN, 3 Nov. 1925

Jalisco: the Huichols

After the assassination of Huichol cacique ‘Colonel’ Mezquite, Carrancista troops and northern Jalisco’s Defensas wore down the few other armed groups still active in the region, whose leaders were gradually killed, exiled or amnestied.⁵⁰⁰ Following Carranza’s overthrow in 1920, many of the surviving former Villistas were absorbed into the Federal military (for example Félix Bañuelos, a loyal companion of Villa who was named zone commander of Querétaro by Obregón).⁵⁰¹ However, across the mestizo districts of northern Jalisco, the resultant peace was overseen not by Federal or state authorities, but by the same caciques who came to power during the Revolution, and who now controlled the economic and political life of their municipalities as well as their local Defensas. In Mezquitic, the ‘ancestral grupo de poder de los terratenientes del pueblo’⁵⁰² retained civil, military and economic power, under the leadership of the Robles clan, who were allied with the caciques of Chimaltitán, Bolaños and El Salitre (soon to be renamed Villa Guerrero) to the east of the Huichol territories, drawn from the Guzmán, Valdés and Sánchez families.⁵⁰³ Further to the north, in Huejuquilla, Pedro Quintanar continued to exercise his influence, remaining Jefe de Defensa until 1923⁵⁰⁴ – although Jean Meyer takes the novel position of arguing that the town’s poverty meant that cacical control there was less complete, and the local population conserved more of its ‘tendencia democrática a la igualdad, escapando del puño de los poderosos.’⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁰ I. Landa Rentería, in M. Caldera, L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.41

⁵⁰¹ ‘Felix Bañuelos,’ in *Mi Pueblo*, Jan. 1995, p.6

⁵⁰² L. de la Torre, *1926: Ecos de la cristiada*, p.30

⁵⁰³ P. N. Valdés, in J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.42

⁵⁰⁴ *ibid.*, i, pp.107-8

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid.*, pp.19-20

The death of Mezquite had deprived the Huichol communities of a single influential leader to unite them – indicating a return to the pre-revolutionary *status quo* – but in San Andrés at least, Clemente Villa (who had been Mezquite’s lieutenant) continued to exercise influence into the 1920s. However, he was not as powerful as Mezquite had been, and his authority in San Andrés was contested by local ‘bandits,’ as well as Mariano Mejía, whose base in Jesús María was relatively close to San Andrés, the westernmost of the Huichol communities. In February 1921, Villa complained to the governor of Jalisco that:

‘An destruido el Pueblo de San Andrés Cohamiata, Luis de la Torre, Felipe de la Cruz, Jose Chalate, causando infinidad de abusos y casos orrorosas mataron veintitres indígenas entre hombres mugeres y niños, robaron sin compasión, que tambien formo parte Paulo Chino – estos bandidos son nativos del mismo Pueblo que a la sombra de la revolución cometieron todo lo que quisieron y lo ven están indultados con el señor MARIANO MEXIA, JEFE DE ARMAS DE JESUS MARIA DEL TERRITORIO DE TEPIC NAYARITE, los indígenas de este pueblo estan timoratos y no vacilan en que de cualesquiera muerte sigan perjudicando al Pueblo, pues aniquilo a los indígenas con sus semovientes... nos odian a las autoridades.’⁵⁰⁶

Villa, of course, was no stranger to violence himself, as the Josefinos and mestizo refugees in San Andrés had discovered. He probably now played up Huichol ‘timidity’ in the hope it would persuade the State authorities to intervene on his behalf, reinforcing his position *vis-a-vis* the ‘bandidos’ (who were also natives of San Andrés, and thus probably his local political rivals) and against Mejía, an interloper from a neighbouring state. But whatever its political motives, his complaint also paints a clear picture of the death and destruction that the Revolution had brought to

⁵⁰⁶ AHJ-G-9-920-921/C/52/E/11171, Villa to Gob.Jal., 17 Feb 1921

the Huichol communities, causing an exodus not only of mestizo colonists, but also of perhaps one fifth of the Huichols themselves.⁵⁰⁷

Zingg mentions that in Tuxpan, many residents had fled to the municipal seat of Bolaños, an exile from which some families never returned, and instead became ‘peones mexicanos vestidos de calzones.’⁵⁰⁸ Many families had also abandoned San Sebastián, where as a result of Villista raids and Mezquite’s subsequent reign of terror, ‘a portion of the pueblo... was destroyed,’ and ‘many ranchos were heavily damaged, destroyed, and/or abandoned as well.’⁵⁰⁹ The parish priest of Camotlán, Nayarit, which Mezquite’s forces had ‘extinguido’ during the revolution, reported in 1920 that ‘merodean algunos grupos de indígenas huicholes’ in the nearby area,⁵¹⁰ while around the same time Cristobal Magallanes, the parish priest of Totatiche, mentioned to the Archbishop of Guadalajara that in recent years more than a hundred Huichol exiles had settled near Azqueltán.

‘Viven en cuevas y jacales, diseminados por las diversas partes de la misma barranca, distantes unos de otros, y solo se reunen en determinados lugares en las diversas fiestas que hacen durante el año, tituladas: del esquite, del pinole, de los elotes, etc.; siendo todas ellas idólatras y supersticiosas, mezcladas con algo de cristianismo, ya que no falta en sus chosas y en las mismas fiestas, alguna imagen de Ntra. Señora de Guadalupe, algún Santo Cristo, según averiguaciones que he pedido hacer, fueron bautizados en Misión de S. Sebastián, de la Diócesis de Zacatecas, extinguida la revolución carrancista, en que algunos huicholes tomaron parte, aún para perseguir a uno de los Padres Josefinos, llamado Calixto Guerrero. Antes de la revolución eran salvajes armados de arco y flecha; hoy lo son con carabinas y maúser, pues aún están muchos de ellos. Los colonos procuran el bautismo para sus hijos, aunque algunos de los recientemente llegados del Nayarit, suele tener ya tres o cuatro años de edad y no estan bautizados.’⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ J. E. Grimes, T. E. Hinton, ‘The Huichol and the Cora,’ p.799

⁵⁰⁸ R. M. Zingg, *Los huicholes*, i, p.88

⁵⁰⁹ P. C. Weigand, ‘Co-operative Labor Groups...’ p.18

⁵¹⁰ AHAG-Amatlán, Lauro Márquez to Arzobispo, 1 Mar. 1920

⁵¹¹ AHAG-Totatiche/C/3/E/13, Magallanes to Arzobispo, 6 July 1920

Given their place of baptism, it appears most of these armed refugees were from either San Sebastián or its anexo Tuxpan (which had belonged to the same mission district and depended on San Sebastián for the loan of many of the holy images necessary for certain fiestas).⁵¹² Their arrival in the canyon in 1917 or 1918, and their continued presence there in 1920, also indicates the ongoing disruption to communal life caused by the revolution.

That some of the refugees had recently arrived from Nayarit – where they had stayed for three to four years without coming into contact with any priest who could baptise their children – also indicates that the modern-day Huichol presence in much of that state dates back to the flight of Huichols from Jalisco in this period. Many headed west because, although the major Huichol communities and their anexos were all within the borders of Jalisco (except for Guadalupe Ocotán, whose lands were disputed with Nayarit),⁵¹³ pilgrimages to sacred sites in Nayarit had been an important element of Huichol religious practice for hundreds of years. In the days of Lumholtz, this had resulted only in a temporary Huichol presence in the Territory of Tepic.⁵¹⁴ However, by 1922, Inspector Navarrete reported that forty percent of the Indians of Nayarit were in fact Huichol (although this is certainly an exaggerated figure).⁵¹⁵ ‘Profesor Normalista’ José G. González wrote of the Huichols in Nayarit at this time in terms that suggest their refugee status. Rather than settle in rancherías and carry out (at least during the rains) the seasonal, slash-and-burn maize cultivation so central to the Huichol ceremonial cycle, they now lived, he reported,

⁵¹² R. M. Zingg, *Los huicholes*, i, p.158; O. Klineberg, ‘Notes on the Huichol,’ p.158

⁵¹³ B. Rojas, *Huicholes: Documentos...* pp.223-4

⁵¹⁴ C. S. Lumholtz, ii., p.491, p.498

⁵¹⁵ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DEFN, 20 Nov. 1922

‘en estado completamente salvaje y en lugares más apartados y peligrosos a donde difícilmente se puede dar con ellos; llevan una vida mucho más miserable todavía [que la vida cora], pues por lo general se encuentran desnudos y se alimentan de la caza y de la pesca como los habitantes de los tiempos prehistóricos.’⁵¹⁶

However, despite the devastation caused by the Revolution in the Huichol communities and the consequent flight of many inhabitants, at the start of Obregón’s presidency in 1920 the majority of the Huichol population was still to be found within their traditional communal territories in Jalisco. At this point, priests and missionaries paid little attention to evangelisation among the Huichol communities, as the Church focused on the re-establishment of the old mestizo-inhabited parishes that had been dissolved, destroyed or depopulated in the regions surrounding the Sierra Huichola. In the years immediately following the revolution, then, the main interactions between Jalisco’s Huichol communities and outside forces involved Huichol attempts to protect their communal lands from invasion by local mestizos, and state efforts to ‘incorporate’ the Huichols into Mexican civilisation by means of government schools.

The upheaval of the Revolution had interrupted the attempts of neighbouring mestizo pueblos and the haciendas of southern Zacatecas to acquire Huichol land, and gave the Huichols the opportunity to drive out many of the mestizos who had already settled among them. In the years immediately following the revolution, preserving these achievements in the face of renewed mestizo land-grabs, and building on their earlier successes in order to further reclaim territory lost during the late Porfiriato, brought the Huichol communities into their first direct contact with the revolutionary Mexican state. In December 1920, the authorities of San Andrés submitted a petition

⁵¹⁶ AHSEP-42/C/35984/E/9.15, J. G. González to Vasconcelos, 12 Apr. 1922

to the state government of Jalisco, asserting that their community had lost its ‘título primordial’ during the revolution, and asking that a search be made for the original, ‘por que los dueños de la hacienda de San Juan Capistrano que linda con los terrenos de nuestro Pueblo, se an extendido sobre nuestros propiedades y tiene gran parte de ellos.’⁵¹⁷ A few months later, Clemente Villa headed a commission to Guadalajara to reiterate his community’s case against San Juan Capistrano and also to complain that

‘nuestros hermanos indígenas del Pueblo de Santa Catarina nuestros colindantes, queriendose estar a invadir gran parte de nuestro terreno, hemos creído oportuno ocurrir ante Ud. con todo en conocimiento, nos haga la gracia de concedernos la copia autorizada de nuestro título para poder defender lo que legalmente es de nuestra propiedad y que se nos quiere invadir por los ya indicados señores.’⁵¹⁸

In May, Villa submitted a third petition (with a ‘copia simple’ of the communal title attached), stating that the inhabitants of Santa Catarina were ‘muy ambiciosos que viven molestando a los Pueblos vecinos como son nuestro Pueblo, San Sebastián y Tenzompa por lo que nos queda una corta area de terreno lo cual no nos es suficiente para cultivar.’⁵¹⁹

In the same month Santa Catarina’s authorities, who since before the Revolution had also been seeking the restitution of lands seized by San Juan Capistrano, wrote to the governor of Jalisco, claiming in the name of 150 families that

‘nuestra población, dedicada exclusivamente a la agricultura, posee solamente de ejido una pequeña extensión de terrenos que no bastan para llenar las necesidades del vecindario, teniendo que trabajar en calidad de peones por un miserable jornal... Esa extensión que disfrutamos en calidad de ejido, esta amparado por título que en su oportunidad presentaremos, pudiendo juzgar que comprende mayor superficie, solamente que los terratenientes se las han

⁵¹⁷ AHJ-G-9-920-921/C/52/E/11171, de la Cruz to Gob.Jal., 31 Dec. 1920

⁵¹⁸ AHJ-G-9-920-921/C/52/E/11171, Villa to to Gob.Jal., 27 Feb. 1921

⁵¹⁹ AGA-D/276.1/103/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/San Andrés, Villa to Gob.Jal., 20 May 1921

adjudicado y a la sombra de los Gobiernos anteriores que nunca se preocuparon por el mejoramiento de la clase indígena.⁵²⁰

By concluding their petitions with the old Maderista slogan of ‘Sufragio Efectivo no Relección,’ mentioning their sufferings under the Porfirian regime, and linking their struggles for land with the ‘mejoramiento de la clase indígena’⁵²¹ that the revolutionary regime’s *indigenista* current saw as essential to the successful transformation of Mexico, the leaders of San Andrés and Santa Catarina demonstrated their awareness of the shift in political discourse that the Revolution had brought with it, and thus sought to legitimise their demands by emphasising their loyalty to, and their place within, that same revolution. It seems that Basilio Vadillo, the new governor of Jalisco and a ‘radical obregonista,’⁵²² responded sympathetically to these petitions, ordering that a search be made of the state archives for San Andrés’ original title,⁵²³ and approving the beginning of the *restitución* process for San Andrés,⁵²⁴ and of *dotación* for Santa Catarina.⁵²⁵ However, the fact that the authorities of San Andrés and Santa Catarina felt as threatened by each other as by powerful local haciendas, and San Andrés’ additional reference to Santa Catarina harassing San Sebastián (whether accurate or simply malicious), demonstrate that – in contrast to the situation among the Cora communities of Nayarit – territorial conflicts in the Sierra Huichola continued to define inter-communal relations in the post-revolutionary period, despite Mezquite having momentarily brought much of the region together under his control during the Revolution itself.

⁵²⁰ AGA-D/23/8465/leg.1/SRA/Dotación/Sta. Catarina, Juan García et al, to Gob.Jal., 7 May 1921

⁵²¹ *ibid.*

⁵²² M. Fernández Aceves, ‘José Guadalupe Zuno...’ p.98

⁵²³ AGA-D/276.1/103/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/San Andrés, Gob.Jal. to Archivo de Instrumentos, 5 Mar. 1921

⁵²⁴ AGA-D/276.1/103/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/San Andrés, ‘Solicitud de restitución,’ 20 May 1921

⁵²⁵ POEJ, 28 May 1921

Agrarian claims from San Sebastián and its anexo, Tuxpan, are conspicuously absent in the post-revolutionary period, given their history of agrarian lobbying in the years directly preceding the revolution.⁵²⁶ Perhaps their lack of agrarian activism can be explained by Mezquite's success in evicting mestizo settlers from San Sebastián's lands during the revolution, and by their geographical location far from San Juan Capistrano, which meant that their inhabitants felt less threatened by the hacienda's expansion than their Huichol neighbours to the north. However, in 1922 the municipal government of Bolaños took control of lands claimed by both Tuxpan and Camotlán, and began renting them to mestizo ranchers – an act that must have been seen by local Huichols as state-administered land-grabs.⁵²⁷ Furthermore, in this period mestizo ranchers from Villa Guerrero and Mezquitic again began grazing their cattle on the rich uplands 'por ahí cerca de la comunidad indígena de San Sebastián... ya que por allá hay mucho agostadero.'⁵²⁸ Weigand in fact asserts that of all the Huichol communities, it was San Sebastián's territory that in this period 'padeció la mayor presión,' as 'los ganaderos y los colonos vecinos, vencedores regionales de la Revolución, empezaron con un cuidadoso pero determinado regreso.'⁵²⁹

Why, then, did San Sebastián and Tuxpan, unlike other Huichol communities, not attempt to secure the aid of the revolutionary state in defending and reclaiming their lands in these years? Perhaps San Sebastián's long history of hostility towards outsiders (as Thord-Gray and the Josefino missionaries had experienced first hand),

⁵²⁶ B. Rojas, *Huicholes: Documentos...* p.236, pp.237-8

⁵²⁷ AGN-LC/C/611/E/524/60, Agronomist's report on Tuxpan, 25 Apr. 1935

⁵²⁸ J. García Landa, 'Ramón Muro,' in *Mi Pueblo*, June 1996, p.19

⁵²⁹ P. C. Weigand, 'El papel de los indios huicholes...' p.126

and its status as ‘la más grande, la más rica y la más conservadora’ of the Huichol communities,⁵³⁰ explains its resistance to appealing to the state. The ambiguous contacts between the community’s inhabitants and Carrancista forces – who had first empowered Mezquite and thus facilitated both his early victories and his later abuses, and then turned against him in dramatic fashion when his capricious violence threatened regional stability – presumably increased local distrust of outsiders. That the Carrancistas now largely dominated the state and Federal governments may also have reduced the community’s faith in the revolutionary state as a potential benefactor – especially as municipal governments also claiming to represent the new revolutionary regime were now directly promoting the invasion of both San Sebastián and Tuxpan’s lands. The resulting lack of patron-client ties between communal leaders and the Mexican state probably helped Cristero rebels to persuade many in the community to join their uprising against the government a few years later.

Land pressures old and new seem to have been the defining factor in the interactions between the different Huichol communities in this period, and helped shape their contacts with both the Federal and state governments, and the municipal authorities in Mezquitic, Huejuquilla, Villa Guerrero and Bolaños, who supported the invasion of Huichol lands in order to gain access to the resources of the Sierra – wood, water, pasture and minerals.⁵³¹ However, with the arrival of the SEP in the region in 1922, Huichol relations with the Federal government, as well as the Federal government’s relations with the municipal governments of northern Jalisco, expanded to encompass ‘culture,’ which was regarded by the Sonoran regime as key to its efforts to

⁵³⁰ *ibid.*

⁵³¹ R. D. Shadow, M. Rodríguez Shadow, ‘Religión, economía...’ pp.681-9; J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, pp.19-20; 33-4

incorporate local communities – both Indian and mestizo – into the new revolutionary nation-state.

Diego Hernández Topete was the first ‘Profesor Misionero’ to take charge of northern Jalisco. He arrived in the region in June 1922 (a few months after his colleague Antonio Navarrete began to visit Nayarit’s Cora communities), and understood his task as that of bringing about the ‘mejoramiento de nuestra raza.’⁵³² However, while he reported to his superiors that he found himself close to the region of ‘la tribu huichola, una de las que jamás se ha logrado encauzar a la corriente educativa, pues el estado en que viven es casi salvaje, al igual que sus costumbres,’ he claimed that heavy rains, the Huichols’ concern for their crops, and their dispersed settlement patterns, all meant that heading directly for the Sierra would be a waste of time and effort.⁵³³ Topete planned instead to found a library in the regional capital of Colotlán,⁵³⁴ but his boss informed him that such projects were the responsibility of the municipal or state authorities, and ordered him to travel immediately to ‘un pueblo indígena.’⁵³⁵

However, Topete avoided visiting any Huichol communities, and instead established himself in Temastlán, which had lost any distinctive Indian identity centuries before.⁵³⁶ Topete, however, described it as home to 250 ‘Tepehuano’ inhabitants who ‘emigraron del Estado de Durango, lugar en donde principalmente radica esta tribu,’ and further justified his decision to stay there by associating the town’s reputation for

⁵³² AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/5.33, Topete to DECI, 21 June 1922

⁵³³ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, Topete to DECI, 26 June 1922

⁵³⁴ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/5.33, Topete to DECI, 29 June 1922

⁵³⁵ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/5.33, DECI to Topete, 30 June 1922

⁵³⁶ R. D. Shadow, M. Rodríguez Shadow, ‘Religión, economía...’ p.681

Catholic piety (as a centre of pilgrimage to the miraculous ‘Señor de los Rayos’), with its spurious ‘Tepehuano’ character, which combined to make the people ‘reacios a todo progreso.’⁵³⁷ The criteria by which Indian or mestizo identity should be judged remain the subject of widespread debate across Latin America today,⁵³⁸ and in the 1920s SEP policy-makers struggled to define the difference between ‘el indígena y el indio campesino,’⁵³⁹ as did the ‘maestra honoraria’ in Colotlán, who described the town’s inhabitants as ‘huicholes de habla española.’⁵⁴⁰ However, Topete seems to have been deliberately blurring the lines between ‘Indians’ and ‘mestizos,’ given he had already described a ‘tribu semi salvaje’ as living within his zone, but – in the wake of his total failure to establish a school in Temastlán – he decided to target another mestizo community, this time well outside of the Colotlán region in the municipality of Etzatlán (near Guadalajara), which he nevertheless also claimed was a ‘comunidad indígena.’ There, Topete reported that he was already ‘perfectamente conocido’ and enjoyed ‘la confianza y simpatía’ of the locals,⁵⁴¹ indicating that, in contrast to the initial enthusiasm of Navarrete in Nayarit, Topete was for the moment more interested in the ease and comfort of working in mestizo towns, in contrast to the risks and privations of the Sierra Huichola.

A few months later, the inhabitants of Santa Catarina wrote to the Jalisco state government, claiming that although they were ‘indígenas mexicanas más puros,’ they lacked the protection of ‘las leyes humanitarias,’ and demanded – presumably with

⁵³⁷ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, Topete to DECI, 20 July 1922

⁵³⁸ cf. K. Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics...* pp.8-10; see also J. Friedlander, *Being Indian in Hueyapan...*; G. Bonfil Batalla, *México profundo...*; Jeffrey Gould, *To Die in This Way...*; P. Wade, *Race and Ethnicity...*

⁵³⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36339/E/13, ‘Primer Congreso de Misioneros: dictámenes y proposiciones aprobadas,’ 18 Sept. 1922

⁵⁴⁰ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/5.64, Maria Macías to DECI, 19 Oct. 1922

⁵⁴¹ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, Topete to DECI, 20 July 1922

reference to the ongoing invasion of their lands – that ‘se nos proteja civilmente.’⁵⁴² Topete was asked to undertake ‘la labor de desanalfabetización que es necesario en el lugar,’⁵⁴³ and he agreed to leave for Santa Catarina as soon as a teacher was appointed to take charge of the school he would establish there.⁵⁴⁴ However, the SEP failed to officially assign anyone to the prospective new post, and Topete declined to push the issue.⁵⁴⁵ Thus the SEP continued to ignore the Sierra Huichola until José Guadaupe Zuno was elected to the state governorship in December 1922.

Zuno had come to power with the support of peasants, teachers and workers. He was sympathetic to the agrarista cause,⁵⁴⁶ and shortly after his election sent an agronomist to Colotlán. The municipal president was noted as being ‘contrario a las ideas agraristas,’ and after forbidding local people to rent the agronomist any horses, ordered the police to disarm him and his entourage.⁵⁴⁷ However, the determined agronomist nonetheless managed to visit various local communities that were demanding agrarian reform, and while sympathetic to several other agrarista claims, he rejected those of San Andrés and Santa Catarina, on the grounds that they already possessed

‘grandes extensiones de terrenos, siendo estos de una clase superior a las demás tierras de aquellas regiones. Según mi criterio a estos pueblos les es indispensable adquirir conocimientos para el cultivo de las tierras, pues estos se limitan a depositar los cereales en la tierra, sin que después les hagan ningún otro beneficio, no obstante que cuentan con buenos elementos para la

⁵⁴² AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, Juan de la Cruz, Agustín Carrillo, et al., to Gob.Jal., 2 Nov. 1922

⁵⁴³ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, Gob.Jal. to DEFJ, 16 Nov. 1922; AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, DEFJ to Topete, 21 Nov. 1922

⁵⁴⁴ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, Topete to DEFJ, 27 Nov. 1922

⁵⁴⁵ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, PM.Colotlán to DEFJ, 4 Dec. 1922; Topete to DEFJ, 14 Dec. 1922

⁵⁴⁶ M M. Fernández Aceves, ‘José Guadalupe Zuno...’ p.98

⁵⁴⁷ AGA-D/23/1425/leg.2/CCA/Dotación/Sta Catarina, Ramírez to CNA, 25 July 1923

labranza, como son acémilas y bueyes en abundancia. Las cosechas que alualmente se recogen son enteramente pequeñas porque se limitan a sembrar lo indispensable para vivir con dificultades, y no se preocupan por la explotación de tan ricos terrenos.⁵⁴⁸

After Zuno's election, Topete also became more proactive. Although he had been dismissed from his post in San Juanito in late 1922, in the face of accusations from political opponents that he had conspired with the Church against them,⁵⁴⁹ he was rehabilitated and ordered back to the Colotlán zone in May 1923.⁵⁵⁰ Given his precarious position within the SEP and the increasing radicalism of Zuno's government, Topete was now anxious to prove his commitment to the cause of indigenous education, pressing for the establishment of schools for the Huichols in order to 'hacerlos hombres razonables.'⁵⁵¹ In northern Jalisco, Topete wrote, 'la acción del Gobierno del Estado es en muchas partes nula, la de los municipios completamente nula, [y] la ayuda que los particulares puedan prestar es casi insignificante dadas las condiciones económicas en que viven,' and so, he concluded, these schools would need to be funded by the Federal government.⁵⁵² Enrique Corona, head of the DECI, rejected this suggestion due to budgetary restrictions,⁵⁵³ and funding for other projects vaguely linked to Huichol education (such as bringing a choir of fifty supposed 'Huichols' to Mexico City to showcase traditional songs and dances),⁵⁵⁴ was also turned down. Instead Corona rebuked Topete for reportedly dedicating 'bastante tiempo a fiestas sociales como bailes, días de campo, etc... lo hacemos de su conocimiento para que, si es verdadera, procure dedicar sus

⁵⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁴⁹ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, Citizens of San Juanito to SEP., 6 Jan. 1923

⁵⁵⁰ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, DECI to Topete, 2 Feb. 1923

⁵⁵¹ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, Topete to DECI, 7 May 1923

⁵⁵² *ibid.*

⁵⁵³ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, DECI to Topete, 9 June 1923

⁵⁵⁴ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, Topete to DECI, 30 May 1923

actividades a los planteles educativos.⁵⁵⁵ It was only after the approval of a new SEP budget, which included 200,000 pesos for ‘centros culturales indígenas’ across the country, that the project of founding schools in the Sierra Huichola began in earnest.⁵⁵⁶

On 25 September 1923, Topete proposed transferring teachers based in the mestizo villages of Santa Rita and Santa María to San Sebastián and Santa Catarina, effective from 1 October, and also asked for new schools to be established in Tuxpan and Azqueltán (primarily inhabited not by Huichols, but rather by Tepecanos, closely related to the Tepehuanos of southern Durango).⁵⁵⁷ The timeframe proved impossibly optimistic, both because the teacher then employed in Santa María ‘no acepta trabajar entre indígenas,’⁵⁵⁸ and because Topete’s superiors demanded that he do more to justify his requests.⁵⁵⁹ This Topete duly did, writing that

‘como el Departamento tiende a establacer el mayor número de escuelas entre las tribus verdaderamente indígenas, por tal motivo pido dicho cambio y, pido a eso Departamento del digno cargo de usted acepte mi proposición ya que los indígenas huicholes tan reacios a todo lo que significa educación están interesados en tener escuelas.’⁵⁶⁰

By this time Santa Rita’s teacher had also threatened to resign if forced to transfer to Santa Catarina, and Topete demanded that both teachers be dismissed and replaced by individuals willing to work in Huichol communities.⁵⁶¹ The SEP happily released both teachers, but then refused to name replacements, citing a lack of funds caused by ‘la

⁵⁵⁵ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, DECI to Topete, 6 June 1923

⁵⁵⁶ AHSEP-45/C/36322/E.24, ‘SEP Budget 1923-24,’ 10 July 1923

⁵⁵⁷ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, Topete to DECI, 25 Sept. 1923

⁵⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁹ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, DECI to Topete, 5 Oct. 1923

⁵⁶⁰ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, Topete to DECI, 25 Oct. 1923

⁵⁶¹ *ibid.*

crisis económica,⁵⁶² which left the two schools in the mestizo communities closed, and the proposed schools in Santa Catarina and San Sebastián unable to open. However, schools in both Azqueltán and Tuxpan were approved and were operating by November. According to the statistical reports submitted by the teachers, forty-nine children and forty adults (including thirty mestizos) were enrolled in Tuxpan.⁵⁶³

While some of Tuxpan's territory was at this point in mestizo hands, no mestizos had settled in the communal cabecera itself,⁵⁶⁴ where the school would presumably have been located. The community's lone teacher, Jacinto Rodríguez, probably classified as 'mestizos' those Huichols who could speak Spanish (as many had probably learned to do during periods of exile caused by the revolution). Rodríguez also reported that the school was an extraordinary success; for example, in December not a single student dropped out and attendance averaged at only one below the maximum possible, while in January twenty-five *new* students enrolled, with average attendance now standing at ninety-five.⁵⁶⁵ The figures that he supplied were probably rather inflated, if they can be believed at all; although the school did at least exist, and Topete was thus now actively engaged in the project of 'incorporating' the Huichols into Mexican society. In November Topete reported that he had again travelled to the Sierra Huichola, 'donde las comunicaciones son en extremo difíciles de tal suerte que he tenido que hacer caminatas a pie por más de tres días como consta a los habitantes de esta región.' Despite the department cancelling his travel expenses – which meant

⁵⁶² AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, DECI to Topete, 9 Nov. 1923

⁵⁶³ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, J. Rodríguez, 'Informe,' Nov. 1923

⁵⁶⁴ Salvador Sánchez, et al...

⁵⁶⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36292/E/75, J. Rodríguez, 'Informe,' Dec. 1923; J. Rodríguez, 'Informe,' Jan. 1924

he was short of food and had to rent his own horse – he was determined that the SEP’s budgetary issues ‘no afectará en nada... el desempeño de mis labores.’⁵⁶⁶

Meanwhile, despite recent negative reports on Huichol land claims, the leaders of San Andrés retained their faith in the revolutionary state for a solution to their agrarian problems, complaining to the municipal president of Colotlán that San Juan Capistrano had invaded their most productive lands, while the community’s anexo, Guadalupe Ocotán, had been ‘despojado de una parte de terreno [por] los Señores Petronilo Muñoz y Juan Pacheco, vecinos del pueblo de Huajimic, del Estado de Nayarit.’ They alleged that these thefts and invasions were a product of the ‘ignorancia y la timidez que reina sobre nosotros,’ again using the trope of Huichol ‘timidity’ to encourage outside intervention on their behalf.⁵⁶⁷ Their complaint was received without sympathy, however, and was forwarded to the local Agrarian Commission with a note that ‘los quejosos [son] individuos de la raza huichol, carentes de toda cultura,’ and that – despite the agrarian resitution process already supposedly being underway – the community needed to make another official request regarding ‘las tierras que dicen les fueron usurpados,’ and themselves notify any landowner who might be affected by it.⁵⁶⁸

The Delahuertista rebellion broke out shortly afterwards, in which Enrique Estrada, Jalisco’s zone commander, played a key role, temporarily cutting off the state from the rest of the country. Zuno was overthrown, the Colotlán region was ‘invadida por

⁵⁶⁶ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, Topete to DECI, 20 Nov. 1923

⁵⁶⁷ AGA-D/23/242/leg.1/CCA/Dotación/San Andrés, Auts. Trads. to J. Martínez, 22 Oct. 1923

⁵⁶⁸ AGA-D/23/242/leg.1/CCA/Dotación/San Andrés, J. Martínez to CLA, 16 Nov. 1923

los rebeldes,’ and various important regional figures joined the rebellion, such as Pedro Quintanar,⁵⁶⁹ commander of the Huejuquilla Defensa, and Herminio Sánchez Sánchez, a Colotlán merchant and old associate of General de Santiago who raised a thousand-man force that came close to taking the city of Zacatecas in January.⁵⁷⁰ Although the rebellion was crushed in early 1924, Santa Catarina’s governor sent the future anti-Cristero community leader Agustín Carrillo – a signatory of the earlier petition demanding ‘civil protection’⁵⁷¹ – to meet with Governor Zuno in Guadalajara, asking, presumably with reference to the failed rebellion, that

‘nos haga favor de decirnos algo de la revolución, como vivimos en estas apartadas regiones, muy poco sabemos noticias, pues supimos que hace tiempo que la revolución estaba muy fuerte, y ya no emos sabido mas, y por este motivo no obedecimos de ir a traer el Ingeniero, como Ud. nos indicó. Le suplico muy ancarecidamente me haga favor de perdonarme esta falta aunque fue involuntaria, pues tuvimos que los contrarios nos fueran a encontrar. Ahora va Agustín para que Ud. le de sus dignas ordenes, va como representante del pueblo, es de mucha confianza puede Ud. darle las ordenes que guste.’⁵⁷²

Although making use of a discourse of ‘absolute loyalty’ rather than ‘timidity,’ the object of this commission seems to have been much the same as that of San Andrés’s letter – to legitimise their long-standing agrarian goals in the eyes of the Zuno government, and, in this case, to reschedule an agronomist’s visit disrupted by the violence of the Delahuertista rebellion. To this end the authorities in Santa Catarina wrote again to Zuno – perhaps after Agustín Carrillo had brought back news from Guadalajara – asking that he send someone to explain to them the process of agrarian reform. They also again pledged their total allegiance to the state government, and

⁵⁶⁹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.96/

⁵⁷⁰ R. Davila, ‘General Francisco de Santiago Villegas’

⁵⁷¹ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/27, Juan de la Cruz, Agustín Carrillo, et al., to Gob.Jal., 2 Nov. 1922

⁵⁷² AGA-D/23/1425/leg.2/CCA/Dotación/Sta. Catarina, de la Cruz to Gob.Jal., 8 Sept. 1924

tyed the two together by ending their petition with the explicit statement, designed to appeal to Zuno's sentiments, that 'somos agraristas.'⁵⁷³ Their apparent loyalty was rewarded, a month later, with the publication of the community's request (still for 'dotación' rather than 'restitución'), in the Periodico Oficial de Jalisco.⁵⁷⁴

Immediately after the defeat of the Delahuertistas and Zuno's reinstatement as governor, a school was also finally approved for San Sebastián, headed by Federico Antuna (originally put forward for the job by Topete the previous September),⁵⁷⁵ who was assigned a daily wage of three pesos – a third more than his colleagues in Nayarit earned. Forty-five students (twenty-one children and eighteen adults), all of them Huichol, and all of them male, were initially enrolled.⁵⁷⁶ It is interesting that Tuxpan and San Sebastián – which had still not demanded agrarian reform – were chosen as the first recipients of schools in the Sierra Huichola, rather than San Andrés and Santa Catarina, which had had much more contact with the revolutionary state in this period. Perhaps, precisely *because* of their lack of contact with the state, it was regarded as more important to bring the former communities, via the SEP, into the national fold. However, it is also possible that Inspector Topete, and perhaps the municipal authorities, influenced the decision of the SEP directorate to choose San Sebastián, Tuxpan and Azqueltán over the other Huichol communities, for reasons linked to the self-interest of the local mestizo elites with whom Topete was closely connected.

⁵⁷³ AGA-D/23/1425/leg.2/CCA/Dotación/Sta. Catarina, de la Cruz to Gob. Jal., 29 Dec. 1924

⁵⁷⁴ POEJ, 17 Jan. 1925

⁵⁷⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36292/E/37, Antuna, 'Informe,' Mar. 1924

⁵⁷⁶ *ibid.*

Topete clearly enjoyed a good relationship with the cacique (and then municipal president) of Villa Guerrero, Adolfo Valdés y Llanos,⁵⁷⁷ to whom Topete presented himself on the 5 October 1923 as a prelude to his first major expedition to the Sierra.⁵⁷⁸ Valdés y Llanos approved the seemingly unreliable statistical reports submitted by the teachers of these schools to the SEP (rather than the president of Mezquitic, which was technically the cabecera of the municipality to which San Sebastián belonged),⁵⁷⁹ and, in place of the local military officer stipulated by the SEP, officially certified Topete's loyalty to the Federal government during the investigation into his conduct during the Delahuertista rebellion⁵⁸⁰ (despite Topete's apparent, previous commercial links with rebel leader Herminio Sánchez).⁵⁸¹ The Valdés family, who together with the Sánchez controlled the economic and political life of Villa Guerrero, were united by close commercial, familial and political ties with the Guzmán family of Bolaños and the Muñoz family of Huajimic.⁵⁸² The first two communities had, during the nineteenth century, taken control of almost all of the communal lands of Azqueltán,⁵⁸³ and now, together with Huajimic, coveted the lands of Tuxpan and San Sebastián (located in the south-eastern part of the Sierra, unlike San Andrés and Santa Catarina to the north-west, whose territory was disputed with Huejuquilla, Tenzompa and San Juan Capistrano, even further to the north).

Topete (who clearly enjoyed the confidence of Valdés y Llanos), on his first visit to the newly established school in San Sebastián (whose lands were coveted by the

⁵⁷⁷ R. D. Shadow, M. Rodríguez Shadow, 'Religión, economía...' p.673

⁵⁷⁸ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, Topete to DECI, 30 Oct. 1923

⁵⁷⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36292/E/37, Topete to DECI, 15 June 1924

⁵⁸⁰ AHSEP-45/C/36342/E/1, Valdés y Llanos to DECI, 9 Apr. 1924

⁵⁸¹ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, PM.Sta María to DECI, 11 Oct. 1923

⁵⁸² J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.215

⁵⁸³ R. D. Shadow, *Tierra, trabajo...* pp.81-97; idem., 'Production, Social Identity...' pp.40-2; J. Alden Mason, 'The Ceremonialism...' pp.62-77

Valdés family and their allies), dedicated his time to what he called the ‘hacercamiento de los mestizos entre los indígenas.’ This involved bringing Luis Huerta, Leandro and J. Guadalupe Sánchez, and Petronilo Muñoz to meet the communal governor at the school.⁵⁸⁴ These visitors were not just any local mestizos, but important members of the main cacical clans of Villa Guerrero and Huajimic. Leandro Sánchez, for example, was a rich landowner with large herds of cattle, whose family had played a key role in the takeover of Azqueltán’s lands over the last fifty years;⁵⁸⁵ while Petronilo Muñoz (son of Nieves Muñoz, cacique of Huajimic) had only the year before been accused of invading the lands of Guadalupe Ocotán.

What was Topete’s purpose in bringing these men to San Sebastián to meet the communal authorities? The evidence is circumstantial, but when the meeting is seen in the light of Topete’s plans for the community’s school and for the community itself, and in the context of San Sebastián’s future agrarian conflicts with Topete’s associates, it is difficult to believe that territorial issues were not involved. Topete saw the Huichols as ‘pobres indígenas, monumentos vivientes de nuestra gloriosa raza,’⁵⁸⁶ who failed to understand that ‘el hombre tiene necesidad de trabajar y que aquel que más trabaja más comodamente pasa la existencia.’⁵⁸⁷ In his own words, the school in San Sebastián, under his charge, would ‘pretende hacer de los indígenas unos verdaderos industriales que sepan aprovechar las fuentes de riquezas naturales con que cuentan,’⁵⁸⁸ and to that end he was actively trying to establish *ixtle* production both there and in Azqueltán, just as in Tuxpan he had planted modern commercial

⁵⁸⁴ AHSEP-45/C/36292/E/37, Antuna, ‘Informe,’ Apr. 1924

⁵⁸⁵ R. D. Shadow, M. Rodríguez Shadow, ‘Religión, economía...’ p.689

⁵⁸⁶ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, Topete to DECI, 17 May 1923

⁵⁸⁷ AHSEP-45/C/36293/E/12, Topete to DECI, 14 Apr. 1924

⁵⁸⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36292/E/37, Topete to DECI, 4 June 1924

crops like ‘café, naranjas, aguacates y plátanos.’⁵⁸⁹ Topete had earlier written that the SEP should also teach ‘nuestros mestizos a ser más humanos, a que vean [los huicholes] con respeto y cariño... [por que] un huichol no puede tener contacto con los habitantes de los pueblos vecinos a su serranía donde vive por que encuentra un ambiente hostil.’⁵⁹⁰ However, by September 1925 at the latest (but probably earlier, given that his letter from this date states that he had made the suggestion ‘ya en otra ocasión’), he had concluded that education by itself was not enough. He now actively advocated ‘que las tierras de la Sierra donde el “Huichol” vive, sean pobladas por familias honradas y trabajadoras, que con su constancia, su honradez y su trabajo contagien, válgame la palabra, al ‘Huichol’ semisalvaje.’⁵⁹¹

Topete’s view of the commercial potential of Huichol communal lands – which he claimed possessed ‘riquezas en bruto que jamás ha explotado en beneficio de nadie; verdaderos yacimientos de producciones de maderas, ganados, minería y agricultura’⁵⁹² – was similar to that of the caciques and mid-level mestizo ranchers of the region, who, using similar arguments to Topete’s, had long been trying to take control of local Indian land.⁵⁹³ Topete, together with his patron, Valdés y Llanos, and the representatives of the local cacical clans who visited San Sebastián’s school, were thus natural allies. So it was perhaps because of their combined influence, motivated by both ideology and economic self-interest, that Azqueltán, Tuxpan and San Sebastián were chosen as the first indigenous communities in the region to receive

⁵⁸⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36292/E/75, Rodríguez, ‘Informe,’ May. 1924

⁵⁹⁰ AHSEP-42/C/36013/E/38.71, Topete to DECI., 17 May 1923

⁵⁹¹ AHSEP-45/C/36291/E/2, Topete to DECI, 8 Sept. 1925

⁵⁹² AHSEP-45/C/36291/E/2, Topete to DECI, 8 Sept. 1925

⁵⁹³ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* pp. 129-48

Federal schools, which were envisaged as springboards from which to launch the colonisation – or recolonisation – of indigenous lands by local mestizos.

What the available documents lack is a sense of the reaction of both the traditional authorities and the population at large of Tuxpan and San Sebastián to the connection between the Federal schools newly established in their midst, and local mestizo landowners. However, neither school was successful enough to warrant continued SEP support into 1925. The school in San Sebastián completely disappears from our records following Topete's last visit there in August 1924, while that of Tuxpan seems to have closed at some point between Topete's last recorded visit in October 1924,⁵⁹⁴ and January 1925, when Topete wrote asking his superiors to approve its re-establishment (which seems to have been declined).⁵⁹⁵

It is also tempting to connect the activities of Topete, San Sebastián's governor and the representatives of local mestizo cacical families in 1924 with accusations made by San Sebastián's authorities in 1931 – that 'desde hace tiempo y abusando de nuestra ignorancia [las] Autoridades Municipales e individuos particulares nos han despojado de las tierras de nuestra propiedad.'⁵⁹⁶ Deals made between Topete's mestizo allies and San Sebastián's authorities may have generated enough opposition on the part of the community as a whole to result in the replacement of a relatively 'cosmopolitan' traditional government (perhaps numbering some of those who had previously taken refuge in the Azqueltán canyon, who were reported as having maintained 'relaciones

⁵⁹⁴ AHSEP-45/C/36342/E/1, Rodríguez, 'Informe,' Oct. 1924

⁵⁹⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36291/E/2, Topete to DECI, 13 Jan. 1925

⁵⁹⁶ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.1/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Inocencio Ramos to Gob. Jal., 27 Dec.1931

amistosas... desde antes de la revolución⁵⁹⁷ with the head of the Defensa in Totatiche), with one made up of resolute conservatives. This would then go some way to explaining the closure of San Sebastián's school in late 1924 and the community's pro-Cristero stance a few years later, which, in contrast to San Andrés and Santa Catarina, placed it in direct and violent opposition to the state government, the Federal army, and the pro-government Valdés, Gúzman and Muñoz families (although the Sánchez clan were for the most part pro-Cristeros).

After the closure of the schools in San Sebastián and Tuxpan, Topete continued travelling the region and petitioning his superiors in Mexico City for schools in the Huichol communities,⁵⁹⁸ despite the economic problems of the DECI, whose claims that it was unable to support the establishment of any more rural schools were dismissed by Topete as lies.⁵⁹⁹ In January 1925, Topete asked that schools be founded not only in the communal cabeceras of San Sebastián, Santa Catarina and San Andrés, but also in the anexos of Techalotita, Jalisquillo, Tzacurrapa, Amotita and El Tule – demonstrating that his knowledge of the dispersed rancherías and tukipa districts of the Sierra Huichola had increased in the course of his local travels. Topete promised that the teachers he selected for these schools would be ‘perfectamente conocido de los indígenas y a quien ellos tienen confianza y estimación, para poder llevar a cabo... su educación,’ and added that

‘He hablado ya largamente a ese Dpto. sobre la inminente necesidad que hay de que en esta parte de la región, de una manera especial, quede atendida en el

⁵⁹⁷ AHAG-Totatiche/C/3/E/13, Magallanes to Arzobispo, 6 July 1920

⁵⁹⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36342/E/1, PM. Villa Guerrero to DECI, 9 Apr. 1925

⁵⁹⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36291/E/2, Topete to DECI, 24 Mar. 1925

sentido educativo y hoy a insistir sobre el particular a fin de que mi proyecto quede aprobado.’⁶⁰⁰

However, the involvement of Topete, and by extension the SEP, in the agrarian conflicts of the Huichol communities was soon brought into clearer relief. In the wake of Topete’s petitions, in April 1925 a Federal school was approved for San Andrés for the first time since 1912. The antecedents were far from positive, as the previous school had been boycotted by the inhabitants and left ‘completamente abandonada’ by the teacher, who dedicated himself to local politicking and the sale of ‘alcohol y manta.’⁶⁰¹ In naming Antonio Reza as the new school’s teacher,⁶⁰² Topete repeated the same mistakes as his predecessors, because, as it turned out, the community knew Reza only too well.

Reza had been one of several ‘huicholitos’ chosen by the Archbishop of Zacatecas to receive the ‘gran beneficio’ of a religious education in that city, at some point before the Revolution. Described by Josefino missionary Calixto Guerrero as having been ‘corrompidos con los vicios aprendidos en las grandes poblaciones donde estuvieron,’ these young men, on returning to their homes, had become ‘unos verdaderos monstruos en deshonestidades y vicios capitales, viéndose obligados los huicholes en vista de los males que estos instuidos les ocasionan a reunirse quitarles la vida o desterrarles de con ellos.’⁶⁰³ One of these men, known as Francisco Mijares to the Huichols but ‘Enrique Pérez Verdía’ to mestizos, was the subject of complaints by a

⁶⁰⁰ AHSEP-45/C/36291/E/2, Topete to DECI, 13 Jan. 1925

⁶⁰¹ B. Rojas, *Huicholes: Documentos...* pp.246-7

⁶⁰² AHSEP-45/C/36322/E/11, Topete to DERICI, 29 Apr. 1925

⁶⁰³ AGMJ/FUN-01-MJ, Calixto Guerrero, ‘Informe,’ 22 Oct. 1917

teacher posted to San Andrés in 1902,⁶⁰⁴ and was subsequently killed in San Andrés during the revolution. However, Guerrero later reported that

‘Hay todavía otros dos que milagrosamente han escapado de la muerte, llamados Antonio Reza y Coa y Manuel Velasco y Peña... Estos huicholes son tan instruidos como Verdía, muy finos en el trato con los señores Sacerdotes muy comedidos, manifestando en todo su alta cultura pero para con los huicholitos sus connaturales un continuo tormento.’⁶⁰⁵

Reza had previously been based in Jesús María,⁶⁰⁶ and probably in San Francisco, too, as Lumholtz mentions a ‘Huichol teacher’ whose ‘word could not be implicitly trusted’ as working there at the turn of the century, having been picked out by the Bishop of Zacatecas ‘to educate for the priesthood’ in 1879 and later exiled ‘from his own country.’⁶⁰⁷ Reza had returned to San Andrés by March 1925, when he reappears in the documentary record as having ‘patrocinado’ an agrarian claim on behalf of the community (despite the fact that, as noted above, ‘restitución’ proceedings had supposedly already been initiated in 1921).⁶⁰⁸ A month later, he was appointed by Topete to take charge of San Andrés’ new school, presumably by virtue of being an educated, Spanish-speaking Huichol capable of acting as an intermediary between local people and the SEP, thus facilitating the spread of ‘civilised values’ in the community. There is further mention of the school until September, when it was reported that ‘la escuela no funciona,’⁶⁰⁹ as Reza had been assassinated ‘por la tribu.’⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁴ B. Rojas, *Huicholes: Documentos...* p.232

⁶⁰⁵ AGMJ/FUN-01-MJ, Calixto Guerrero, ‘Informe,’ 22 Oct. 1917

⁶⁰⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁷ C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico...* i, p.509-10

⁶⁰⁸ AGA-D/276.1/103/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/San Andrés, Reza to CNA, 4 Mar. 1925

⁶⁰⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36321/E.1, DERICI, Jal. statistics, Sept. 1925

⁶¹⁰ AHSEP-45/C/36321/E.1, DERICI, Jal. statistics, Nov. 1925

A later document mentions an attempt by an un-named SEP official, in the same year, to recruit Huichol children for the recently established Casa del Estudiante Indígena in Mexico City ‘por medios anti-Constitucionales,’⁶¹¹ ‘es decir sacar[los] de sus madrigueras.’⁶¹² If Reza had participated in this forced recruitment of Huichol children, then local peoples’ fears that he would take their children away from them would have compounded his unpopularity as a reputedly exploitative representative of ‘outside forces’ who had meddled in his community’s agrarian conflicts. A further detail in this report – that the inhabitants of San Andrés were ‘tan opuestos a la civilización que el referido año de 1925 ahorcaron [a Reza] en el CALIBUEI’⁶¹³ – is also potentially revealing. If this report is correct, and Reza was lynched at the community’s ‘calihuey’ (a Spanish word for the Huichol *tuki* temple), then San Andrés’ temple officers (who were important, and typically conservative, members of the community’s traditional government) must have at least been approved – or perhaps even oversaw – his killing. This indicates that conservative resentment towards the work of the SEP in the community, and the participation in this work of ‘cosmopolitan’ figures like Reza, contributed to the latter’s murder.

To Topete, however, Reza’s death was a humiliating rebuff to the efforts of the state government, the SEP, and himself to ‘beneficiar a los pobres indígenas,’ and a ‘demostración evidente de la debilidad de nuestra fuerza, ante la magnitud de la obra.’ He claimed that the only way to overcome Huichol resistance would be to foment the ‘colonización de las tierras que pertenecen a este tribu’ by local mestizos.

⁶¹¹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/28, V. Poirett to R. Durand, 16 Jan. 1930

⁶¹² AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/28, G. Rodríguez to R. Durand, ND, quoted in R. Durand to DERICI, 22 Jan. 1930

⁶¹³ *ibid.*

He assured his superiors that such a policy would, ‘en muy poco tiempo,’ bring about ‘la transformación de los miserables, no ya análfabetos sino semisalvajes... efectuando el milagro de la civilización en éstas tierras abandonadas por la indiferencia y la egoísmo de los demás.’ Imploring his department to persuade President Calles to intervene in favour of his project in conjunction with Governor Zuno – rather an unrealistic idea, given that the two were by now engaged in a bitter struggle for control of the state legislature⁶¹⁴ – Topete concluded that while he awaited the results of his petition, he hoped to ‘ir preparando las familias que llenas de entusiasmo y fé abandonarán sus hogares pueblerinos e irán a la sierra a ayudarnos a ser el lazo en donde el “Huichol” se salve.’⁶¹⁵

There is no documentary evidence to suggest that Topete’s plan was ever taken seriously by the SEP, and no evidence on the ground that ‘colonisation,’ while it had long been encouraged by municipal authorities, became an official policy of either state or Federal government in this period (although it would in the 1940s). But the murder of Reza is a clear indication of the depth of Huichol resistance to the practical application of the revolutionary state- and nation-building project. This resistance was also increasingly matched by that of the region’s mestizos, who were affronted by the increasingly anti-clerical turn taken by both Calles’ Federal and Zuno’s state governments, which now competed to demonstrate their revolutionary credentials by clamping down on Catholic lay organisations, seminaries and trade unions.⁶¹⁶ This led Pedro Quintanar to rise against the government in 1926, which in turn forced ‘el

⁶¹⁴ M. Fernández Aceves, ‘José Guadalupe Zuno...’ p.101

⁶¹⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36291/E/2, Topete to DERICI, 8 Sept. 1925

⁶¹⁶ R. Curley, ‘Anticlericalism and Public Space...’ pp.527-32

Gobierno Bolshevique'⁶¹⁷ to suspend its efforts to impose itself on the Sierra Huichola.

Durango: the Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros

The Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros are, of all the peoples of the Gran Nayar, the least represented in the documentary record for this period. While there was a genuine – if notably unsuccessful – effort on the part of the state to expand its influence into the Sierras of Nayarit and Jalisco after the Sonorans took power in 1920, Durango's government ignored the state's Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities, as did the Federal military and the SEP. No schools had been established in the Sierra Tepehuana by the end of 1925, and so the SEP archives provide us with little information on the region. The agrarian archives are similarly silent for these years, despite the authorities in Xoconoxtle – including Gregorio Aguilar – petitioning for agrarian reform in December 1917, and those of Santa María Ocotán doing the same several months later,⁶¹⁸ with Xoconoxtle making a second claim for restitution of its lands in 1919,⁶¹⁹ again with the support of Gregorio Aguilar, who was by now also Santa María Ocotán's Jefe de Defensa.

We do know that, although the overthrow and assassination of Carranza in April 1920 provided the last Villista bands in Nayarit, Jalisco and Zacatecas with the opportunity to make peace with the victorious Sonoran generals, this event actually caused a new outbreak of fighting in the Sierra Tepehuana. While Pancho Villa himself – who only

⁶¹⁷ AHSEP-42/C/35980/E/5.28, Maestro in Purificación, Jal., to DECI, 12 Jan. 1922

⁶¹⁸ AGN-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, G. Vázquez, to Cárdenas, 26 Oct. 1936

⁶¹⁹ AGA-D/leg.1/Comunal/Restitución/Santa María Ocotán y Xoconoxtle, Reps. of Santa María to CNA, Mar. 1918

eight months before had been threatening the city of Durango – accepted the offer of Adolfo de la Huerta, the new interim president, to lay down his weapons and take up the life of a *hacendado* at Canutillo in the far north of the state,⁶²⁰ governor Domingo Arrieta remained loyal to Carranza. He fled the state capital for Canatlán in May 1920, leaving the governorship in the hands of Enrique R. Nájera,⁶²¹ and was joined soon after by his brother Mariano. Together they set about raising a rebel army in their home territory in the northern mountains of the state. Although ‘la bandera de esta nueva rebeldía arrietista no [tenía] más justificación ni plan que el de la oposición al gobierno de Adolfo De la Huerta y posteriormente al de Álvaro Obregón,’⁶²² the rebels, from being no more than a few ‘partidas muy pequeñas,’ gradually grew in numbers as more of the Arrietas’ former allies, including Dámaso Barraza, joined them.

While the Arrietas carried out attacks throughout the north of Durango,⁶²³ in February 1921 Barraza, at the head of the rebel Defensa forces of Yonora and Temoaya, attacked Mezquital, which was defended by its own, Obregónista Defensa.⁶²⁴ A month later, in relation to their claim for ‘restitución de tierras,’ the authorities in Xoconoxtle reported that ‘con motivo de estar invadido por rebeldes de Yonora, no se pueden mandar los padrones de Xoconoxtle, pues está incomunicado con la cabecera.’⁶²⁵ That the rebels invaded Xoconoxtle suggests the community’s cacique, Gregorio Aguilar, had pledged allegiance to the new regime, even as Barraza actively

⁶²⁰ F. Katz, *The Life and Times...* pp.719-23

⁶²¹ E. Gámiz Olivas, *La revolución...*, p.62

⁶²² A. Avitia Hernández, *Los Alacranes...* p.117

⁶²³ *ibid.*, p.118

⁶²⁴ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.85

⁶²⁵ AGA-D/leg.1/Comunal/Restitución/Sta. María Ocotán y Xoconoxtle, Gob.Dgo. to CLA, 30 Mar. 1921

pursued the Arrietas' anti-Sonoran cause. However, after General Martínez executed a group of rebels in Mezquital in April,⁶²⁶ it appears that support for the rebellion in the south evaporated, and there are no archival references to further local skirmishes that year; while Arrieta himself, 'sin lograr apoyo popular para su rebelión, sin vituallas [y] sin oportunidad de lograr nada en lo militar,' laid down his arms (albeit temporarily) in December, having agreed to terms with General Juan Andreu Almazán, then zone commander in the Laguna region.⁶²⁷

Ironically, while the rebel Barraza survived the rebellion and had indeed resumed his position as Jefe de Defensa in Yonora by 1923, the loyalist Gregorio Aguilar was killed at some point between 1921 and 1922, while his old enemy Primo Ortiz was done away with in Huazamota around the same time. In the latter case, Ortiz was killed in an ambush orchestrated by los Muñoz, in which a young Florencio Estrada also took part. Avitia Hernández credits this moment as the beginning of a new round of factional conflict in the community, however, as the Estrada family now faced off against their *cuñados*, los Muñoz, 'en una guerra que debe entenderse como la lucha por la entronización en el cacicazgo vacío.'⁶²⁸ This conflict would come to a head a few years later, as Florencio Estrada became a regional Cristero leader, while Tiburcio and Nabor Muñoz headed Huazamota's pro-government Defensa.

Another future Cristero leader was involved in the factional conflict that led to the death of Gregorio Aguilar. After rumours reached Aguilar that the traditional authorities of Santa María were plotting to kill him, he led his Defensa on a pre-

⁶²⁶ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.85

⁶²⁷ A. Avitia Hernández, *Los Alacranes...* p.121

⁶²⁸ A. Avitia Hernández, *Los Alacranes...* pp.121-2

emptive attack on these authorities, and assassinated Santa María's governor. A local informant claims that the rumour had been spread by a 'mujer envidiosa,' who 'echaba mentiras sobre el Gobernador.'⁶²⁹ Although a vague and typically 'macho' interpretation of events, this explanation may well be accurate, as communal gossip, perceptions of slighted honour, and fights between men over women – 'las cuestiones de faldas' – frequently blended with more explicitly 'political' violence, and continue to be central causes of violence in rural Mexico.⁶³⁰ At the same time, however, it is tempting to read more into this conflict between Aguilar (a native of a different community, who owed his local influence to weapons supplied by outside forces), and the traditional governor of Santa María (whose power was linked to his performance of communal costumbre, and who probably saw Aguilar as a 'foreign' usurper). After killing Santa María's governor, the mestizo municipal authorities turned decisively against Aguilar (whose interference in local politics during the later stages of the Revolution had already earned him their enmity), and transferred their backing to Juan Andrés Soto, a native of Santa María Ocotán's northern anexo of Platanitos who would later become an important ally of Estrada. Soto tracked down Aguilar (who had gone on the run with his son, Ascención), and eventually avenged the death of his community's governor by killing him and taking his place as Jefe de Defensa.⁶³¹

We have little information about events in the communities of the Sierra Tepehuana in 1922, but it seems probable that, in addition to the factional violence in Santa María Ocotán and Huazamota, the region was also affected by a second anti-Sonoran rebellion in the latter half of the year. Domingo Arrieta joined the movement (headed

⁶²⁹ Saturnino Solís Mendoza

⁶³⁰ J. Greenberg, *Blood ties...* pp.216-7; A. Knight, 'War, Violence and Homicide...' p.44-5

⁶³¹ AHED-FR/C/5/E/3, Gómez to Gob.Dgo., 31 May 1922; Saturnino Solís Mendoza

by Francisco Murguía, who issued his ‘Plan de Zaragoza’ against Obregón in August), and northern Durango saw pitched battles between Federal troops and the forces of both these rebel generals before Murguía’s capture and execution in November,⁶³² and Arrieta’s flight to safety in the US. Whether Dámaso Barraza seconded his old commander Arrieta and joined the rebellion is unknown; but General Juan Carrasco, who had been central to the Carrancista campaign in Sinaloa during the revolution, was active in the southern part of the Sierra Tepehuana in October 1922, as he headed from the Nayarit coast towards Durango (where he hoped to join Murguía). Carrasco and his men would certainly have encountered Tepehuanos during their march through the Sierra, upon whom they would presumably have depended, at least, for food supplies and guides. However, it is unknown whether local Tepehuano Defensa forces participated in Carrasco’s final battle on 8 November, when Federal troops commanded by Alfonso de la Huerta, brother of Adolfo, finally caught up with him at El Guamuchilito, an anexo of the Tepehuano community of San Andrés Milpillas on the Nayarit-Durango border. Carrasco was defeated and killed, and his body was taken back to Acaponeta to be put on public display before burial.⁶³³

Obregón’s rule was more seriously threatened by the Delahuertista rebellion a year later. In Durango this drew in ex-Villistas and some of the few Carrancista loyalists to have survived the 1922 revolt, including Domingo Arrieta, who returned from exile to join the rebellion. However, the uprising attracted less support in Durango than in the

⁶³² J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* pp.115-7

⁶³³ *ibid.*, p.117

centre and south of the country,⁶³⁴ in part because the state's most important potential rebel commander, Pancho Villa, had been assassinated in July – the result of a conspiracy apparently involving the Obregonista governor of Durango, General Jesús Agustín Castro, Durango state senator Jesús Salas Barraza, Secretary of Defense Joaquín Amaro, and Minister of Gobernación Plutarco Elías Calles, the murder being carried out with the almost certain approval President Obregón himself.⁶³⁵ By February 1924 Federal forces under generals Jesús Agustín Castro and Eulogio Ortiz had crushed the rebels in Durango, and the last mopping-up operations in the state were left to armed members of the local Sindicato de Campesinos.⁶³⁶

There is almost nothing in the documentary record relating to Tepehuano or Mexicanero participation in the rebellion, but it appears that Arrieta's participation was enough to persuade his old ally Dámaso Barraza to join the Delahuertista cause.⁶³⁷ Mezquital's municipal authorities stayed loyal to the government; in December 1923 they rigorously enforced Jesús Agustín Castro's draconian orders for 'la requisa de caballos, sillas de montar y armas que se encontraran en poder de particulares, á fin de dotar con toda premura á las fuerzas que se organizaban para combatir al movimiento revolucionario,'⁶³⁸ orders which suggest that there was sufficient local support for the rebellion (or at least for Barraza, the rebellion's local commander), for the authorities to fear that arms left in private hands would end up being used against them. However, on 7 May 1924 Arrieta and his last twenty-eight followers surrendered and were amnestied (although their military ranks were revoked

⁶³⁴ P. Navarro Valdez, *El cardenismo...* p.35

⁶³⁵ Katz, *The Life and Times...*, 775-8

⁶³⁶ P. Navarro Valdez, *El cardenismo...* p.36

⁶³⁷ AHSEP-68-69/C/37416/E/15, A. García, 'Informe,' 30 Apr. 1926

⁶³⁸ AHED-FR/C/4/E/7, Miguel Gavila to Gob.Dgo., 18 May 1925

and they were forced to retire to private life).⁶³⁹ Barraza laid down his arms shortly after and was also amnestied, seemingly on even more generous terms than Arrieta, since he continued to lead Temoaya and Yonora's Defensa until his final rebellion in December 1926.

Whether or not many Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros participated on either side in the rebellions of 1922-24, it seems clear that the existence of armed bands throughout Durango in this period obstructed the advance of the Federal government's state-building project in the more remote corners of the state. A plan to build a telegraph line between Durango and Yonora, passing through Mezquital and Temoaya, which would have been given over to the Federal military once finished,⁶⁴⁰ was abandoned due to regional political instability. Meanwhile, combatting the Arrietista and Delahuertista rebels, although they were relatively few in number, exhausted the state government's coffers, which had been strained by the cumulative effects of a decade of intense conflict. The constant fighting had caused 'la destrucción de la planta productiva y la ausencia de la mano de obra paralizó a la mayoría de las industrias, las minas, las haciendas y los obrajes,' and had had a demographic cost, 'considerando a los habitantes no nacidos, los emigrados y los muertos por el hambre, la peste y la guerra... [de] 48% de la población, con respecto a las cifras de 1910, es decir mucho mayor que en otras entidades de la República.'⁶⁴¹ Restoring industrial and agricultural production had been the state government's priority, and although Governor Castro 'expidió las principales leyes indispensables para la cristalización de los ideales

⁶³⁹ A. Avitia Hernández, *Los Alacranes...* p.129

⁶⁴⁰ AGN/O-C/243-D-1, Obregón to Sec. de Hacienda, 10 Aug. 1921

⁶⁴¹ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* pp.87-8: This includes even Morelos, which in comparison lost two-fifths of its population (A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, p.371, pp.420-2)

revolucionarios: la del Trabajo... las de Fracciamentos, Expropiación de Tierras ociosas y otras,' education was ignored entirely, to the extent that 'el general Castro suprimió la Dirección General de Enseñanza Primaria.'⁶⁴²

Save for a brief moment in November 1919, when a school which had last functioned in Porfirian times was reopened in Huazamota, and closed again shortly afterwards,⁶⁴³ it is not surprising that the Sierra Tepehuana did not figure in SEP plans until the end of 1923. The Durango state government provided no support for existing schools (and was still less inclined to allot its scarce resources towards establishing new ones); the DECI was similarly hamstrung by budgetary restrictions (as evidenced by its difficulties in Nayarit and Jalisco); and local factional violence, including Barraza's participation in the Arrietas' rebellions, was a constant throughout these years. After the SEP budget for 1923-24 specified that 200,000 pesos were to be spent on 'centros culturales indígenas' in various states including Durango,⁶⁴⁴ the DECI began, for the first time, to investigate the possibility of establishing schools in Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities. Everardo Gámiz Olivas, maestro misionero from late 1923 until mid-1924, was the first SEP official to be made responsible for Mezquital and Huazamota. He reported that these municipalities, which possessed only a few 'malísimos caminos de herradura,' were inhabited by 'aborígenes tepehuanes, huicholes y coras,' the majority of whom lived not in the communal cabeceras, but in 'hogares diseminados a distancias muy respetables unos de otros.' He noted that the region would be hugely difficult to supervise, 'si se toma en consideración la dificultad de la comunicación en el ex-Partido de Mezquital, así como la circunstancia

⁶⁴² E. Gámiz Olivas, *La revolución...* p.62

⁶⁴³ AHED-FR/C/5/E/21, Bermúdez to Gob.Dgo., 12 Nov. 1919

⁶⁴⁴ AHSEP-45/C/36322/E.24, 'SEP Budget 1923-24,' 10 July 1923

de ser en este ex-Partido donde hay más población aborígen.’ Supervision would also be rather dangerous, ‘debido al carácter de los indígenas.’⁶⁴⁵

However, while by January 1924 the SEP had established a school in Nayarit for the Tepehuanos of San Andrés Milpillás,⁶⁴⁶ in Durango the year passed without a single school being founded in the municipalities of Mezquital or Huazamota. The state government’s indifference to education, budgetary problems, and rebel activity all continued to obstruct SEP activity in Durango as a whole, while in the state’s southern mountains the inactivity and subsequent suspension of Gámiz (for failing to submit regular reports), compounded the problem. Although Gámiz appeared to be ‘una persona muy culta... no demostró mucha actividad en el cumplimiento de sus deberes.’ He finally left the SEP in June 1924 to pursue an academic career,⁶⁴⁷ but SEP activity in Mezquital and Huazamota would not pick up until six months later.

The accession of Calles to the presidency in December 1924 bought fresh impetus to both the revolutionary education programme and agrarian reform at national level. Furthermore, the new governor of Durango, Enrique R. Nájera (who had taken over from his close ally General Castro in September), set about accelerating ‘el reparto de tierras y la promoción de la dotación de ejidos, con el propósito de recompensar a las huestes agraristas que habían combatido la rebelión delahuertista y contribuido a su elección.’ In this he was aided by Durango’s Sindicato Agrario, whose chiefs, ‘en pleno disfrute de su alianza gubernamental, recibieron posiciones durante la elección

⁶⁴⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36281/E/39, E. Gámiz to DEFD, 27 Dec. 1923

⁶⁴⁶ AHSEP-42/C/36023/E/48.10, DECI, Nay. Statistics, 1923

⁶⁴⁷ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, DEFD to DERICI, 20 Mar. 1925; see this thesis, ‘Bibliography,’ for references to a number of Gámiz’s works.

para diputados federales.⁶⁴⁸ Among these men was Alberto Terrones Benítez, who was appointed to replace Nájera in the state senate. Before the revolution, Terrones Benítez had worked as a lawyer for various foreign mining companies with interests in Durango, and it was only in 1917, when he was elected Deputy for Cuencamé, that he was ‘reincarnated as an agrarian reformer.’⁶⁴⁹ As part of Durango’s commission to the Constitutional Congress in Querétaro, he helped Pastor Rouaix to draft article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which outlined the top-down basis for revolutionary land reform,⁶⁵⁰ and by 1925 had become Durango’s primary proponent of state-administered, ‘official’ agrarian reform.

In a report on the State Agrarian Congress of January 1925, which he had presided over, Terrones Benítez advised Nájera that

‘el Gob. Federal debe practicar una revisión de títulos y un deslinde, de todos los terrenos o fincas rústicas, y a esta obra debe contribuir el Gobierno de Estado, dado que se aprovecharía una magnífico oportunidad para la formación del Catastro, tan imperfecto hasta la fecha, cuya falta hace que los terratenientes defrauden anualmente al Fisco con algunos millones de pesos.’⁶⁵¹

Terrones Benítez also reported on the progress of agrarian reform in a number of different communities, including Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle. Neither community’s claims had progressed in the last few years, as Santa María had still not sent back the ‘acta de instalación del Comité Particular Ejecutivo’ necessary to take the ‘restitución’ process forward; while Xoconoxtle’s ‘expediente, a pesar de lo antiguo, [está] muy atrasado por las dificultades en la comunicación con los vecinos

⁶⁴⁸ P. Navarro Valdez, *El cardenismo...* p.37

⁶⁴⁹ D. W. Walker, ‘The Villista Legacy...’

⁶⁵⁰ E.V. Niemeyer Jr., *Revolution...* pp.138-145; A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, p.475

⁶⁵¹ AGN/O-C/818-D-14, Terrones Benítez, ‘Informe del 5/o Congreso Agrarista del Estado,’ 1 Jan. 1925

de este pueblo.’ The community had also failed to set up a ‘Comité Particular Ejecutivo,’⁶⁵² either because the importance of this step was not understood, or because local people were reluctant to establish another non-traditional source of authority within their community,⁶⁵³ given the disruptions and violence caused by the formation of the Defensas during the revolution.

Terrones Benítez also discussed the particularities of land reform in Durango’s northern and southern Sierras, where much of the land needed for the slash-and-burn agriculture that supported the local population had been expropriated by ‘las fatídicas Compañías Deslindadoras,’ a process made easier by the dispersed local settlement patterns, and

‘la ignorancia en que se encuentran esos indígenas, en su mayoría de las tribus Tarahumar y Tepehuana, ignorancia que han sabido explotar muy bien los terratenientes. La mayoría de esos indígenas apenas habla el idioma castellano y se encuentran en un estado tal de miseria y de ruina, que viven de maíz tostado, se alojan en chozas rudimentarias de madera o en cuevas, visten harapos aún en los inviernos que son demasiado rigurosos.’⁶⁵⁴

Terrones Bentítez concluded that the only solution to the agrarian problem in these regions thus depended on ‘una acción especial por parte del Gobierno ya que de hecho necesitamos incorporarlos a la civilización,’ which he saw as best accomplished through the establishment of schools in San Francisco de Lajas, Xoconoxtle, Taxicaringa, Temoaya, Huazamota, San Buenaventura and San Lucas de Jalpa.⁶⁵⁵ However, Terrones Bentítez’s advocacy did not help to speed up the agrarian claims of Santa María or Xoconoxtle, nor did it curb the growing tensions between Dámaso

⁶⁵² *ibid.*

⁶⁵³ *cf. Nugent, Spent Cartridges...*, p.87

⁶⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵⁵ *ibid.*

Barraza and Mezquital's politico-economic elite, who, like their counterparts in Jalisco, were increasingly encroaching upon Indian communal territories – in this case those of Temoaya and Yonora to their south, on whose uplands they wanted to pasture their cattle. Barraza, being both a rancher and the community's cacique, was thus threatened on two levels by these attempted land-grabs. Although Temoaya had by this point requested some sort of agrarian reform, the community's inhabitants failed to set up a 'Comité Particular Ejectivo,'⁶⁵⁶ and thus the reform process stalled.⁶⁵⁷ Barraza's lack of faith in the state's ability to resolve his community's agrarian problems would later play a key role in his decision to join the Cristeros.

After Gonzalo Mota took over the SEP's Durango division in January 1925, new plans were made for the establishment of schools in the region. Mota had formerly headed the Nayarit's Federal Education Department, and thus had experience of the difficulties of indigenous education.⁶⁵⁸ Probably spurred by the interest that the increasingly influential Terrones Benitez had shown in the Sierra Tepehuana, Mota immediately began to pressure Ignacio Ramírez, head of the recently created DERICI, for additional resources to establish schools in the 'regiones inexploradas' of the Sierra, where there existed a 'multitud de pueblos indígenas que han permanecido substraídos a la civilización por falta de escuelas, de vías de comunicación e indolencia y descuido de las autoridades políticas.'⁶⁵⁹ He also petitioned Ramírez to assign two more inspectores-instructores to Durango in order to spearhead the

⁶⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁵⁷ PON, 25 Jan. 1925, pp.11-12

⁶⁵⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36348 E/6/DEFD to DERICI, 15 July 1925

⁶⁵⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, DEFD to DERICI, 17 Feb. 1925

‘redención de nuestras masas ignorantes que en su mayoría las forman la raza indígena y acordar la creación de un número mayor de escuelas de las que actualmente funcionan, por ser urgente cuanto antes la acción educativa en dichos regiones que permanecen en un completo retraso.’⁶⁶⁰

Mota’s requests – which entailed considerable expenditure – were turned down by Ramírez, albeit with the assurance that ‘tan pronto como mejore el Presupuesto se tomarán en cuenta sus sugerencias.’⁶⁶¹ Mota replied by sending Ramírez a full report on the disastrous state of the SEP’s Durango office, which had paid so little attention to rural schools that there was no information regarding how many of them had been established and how many still functioned. Furthermore, just as in Jalisco and (as Mota had previously complained) in Nayarit, the low daily wage of two pesos paid to the maestros rurales only attracted individuals who ‘por sus escritos revelan su ineptitud para el trabajo... y otros se ven la escuela como una cosa secundaria o de ayuda, pues sus principales atenciones giran al rededor de sus negocios particulares.’ In Durango, he continued, this was a particular problem because

‘Este Estado ha sido uno de los que más han sufrido durante la Revolución, sus principales fuentes de riqueza: la minería, la agricultura y la ganadería, quedaron paralizados y como consecuencia inmediata de esta desorganización, sobrevieron la escasez o ninguna producción regional y la falta de trabajo, circunstancias que han hecho la vida sumamente cara en todo el territorio del Estado, el que apenas comienza a entrar en un período de reconstrucción.’

Mota asserted that, without raising the teachers’ wages, ‘las Escuelas Rurales seguirán en el estado de decadencia en que se encuentran, siendo imposible conseguir su mejoramiento de acuerdo con las nuevas tendencias educativas,’ and he concluded that, in the end, ‘mejor será que se reduzcan las escuelas hasta poder apreciar su

⁶⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶⁶¹ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, DERICI to DEFD, 23 Feb. 1925

calidad, si el Erario Nacional no puede satisfacer debidamente las necesidades de las que existen en esta Entidad.’⁶⁶²

On this last point, Ignacio Ramírez seems to have taken Mota at his word, and cut down the number of Federal rural schools funded by the SEP in Durango to only thirteen. In outraged tones, interim state governor Gutiérrez wrote to Education Secretary Puig Casauranc demanding for Durango as many of these schools as Jalisco, Nayarit and Guanajuato, ‘que tienen cien planteles en cada uno de ellos,’ given that Durango had ‘prestado a la Revolución los más valiosos contingentes de sangre y sacrificio y por haber agotado todas sus fuentes de riquezas en el holocausto de esa misma Revolución, no duranguense, sino eminentemente nacionalista.’⁶⁶³

Despite the interim governor’s protestations, and the petition of a local diputado for schools to be established in Mezquital’s communities, which he described as ‘pueblos muy pocos civilizados que necesitan de una manera indispensable la ayuda en este sentido,’⁶⁶⁴ the municipality’s single school (in mestizo, agrarista El Troncón) did not survive the Federal government cuts. By July 1925 Mota was again desperately asking his superiors for increased funds for the SEP in Durango, as ‘los Municipios... por los escasos ingresos no pueden sostener escuelas ni aún siquiera en centros importantes,’ leaving his office responsible for all of the state’s rural schools, none of which had yet been established ‘en los núcleos indígenas.’⁶⁶⁵ Little progress had been made on this front by September, however, when Governor Nájera complained to

⁶⁶² AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, DEFD to DERICI, 20 Mar. 1925

⁶⁶³ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, Gob.Dgo. to Puig Casauranc, 27 May 1925

⁶⁶⁴ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, Diputado Díaz Prendis to DERICI, 21 May 1925

⁶⁶⁵ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, DEFD to DERICI, 9 July 1925

Puig Casauranc that not a single maestro rural was working with Durango's Indians, and, rather oddly, requested that a 'Misión Cultural' recently established in Nuevo León, instead be transferred to the 'la parte sur' of the state, 'ocupada en su mayor parte por población de raza indígena.'⁶⁶⁶

That same day, Mota sent the head of his department a proposed budget for the 1925-6 academic year in Durango, totalling 105,740 pesos, of which the greatest cost by far was 43,800 pesos for sixty 'directores de escuelas rurales' on two pesos a day, followed by 7,300 pesos for two inspectores-instructores, on ten pesos a day, to supervise them. He justified the size of these sums – in terms that echoed those previously used by Gutiérrez – with the assertion that the Durango 'fué teatro del movimiento revolucionario durante un largo período de tiempo y es donde más necesidad hay de que la Secretaría de Educación Publica, multiplique sus centros de cultura.'⁶⁶⁷

However, only a week later Governor Nájera was again complaining that, of the thirty-four rural schools founded in the state earlier that year, fourteen had by now been closed,⁶⁶⁸ and to his greater chagrin, his request for the transfer of the 'Misión Cultural' to southern Durango was also turned down by Puig Casauranc, on the grounds that the 'Misión' had been no more than a temporary training centre for maestros rurales, rather than a school for Indians. However, the Secretary of Education did at least promise Nájera that, by the end of the year, he would send to southern Durango 'un grupo de maestros que se pongan en contacto con los

⁶⁶⁶ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, Gob.Dgo. to Puig Casauranc, 1 Sept. 1925

⁶⁶⁷ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, DEFD to DERICI, 1 Sept.1925

⁶⁶⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, Nájera to Puig Casauranc, 7 Sept. 1925

educadores y los indios de esa región para darles enseñanzas útiles.⁶⁶⁹ By March 1926, however, these teachers had still not arrived, and despite Mota's ambitious proposed education budget for the following year, only two schools had by then been founded, in mestizo communities located in the most accessible part of the region, north of the municipal seat and on the main road to Durango, far from the Sierra Tepehuana and the bulk of the indigenous population.⁶⁷⁰

Conclusions

By the end of 1925, the policies enacted by the Sonorans had done little to incorporate the peoples of the Gran Nayar into the revolutionary Mexican nation-state that they sought to build. The Federal army had largely ignored the region, and because of Arrieta and Barraza's constant rebellions and the Delahuertista uprising would probably have been unable to expand its presence there even if the local zone commanders had not been preoccupied with the richer pickings to be had in other parts of Durango, Jalisco and Nayarit.

In military terms, the Cora Baja and Alta regions thus remained under the control of the Defensas Sociales, which ultimately answered to Mejía or Domínguez. The influence of these caciques and their subordinates over everyday life in the Cora communities was, however, contested by each community's traditional authorities – leaving the Federal government, and the authorities in Tepic, with 'ninguna

⁶⁶⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, Puig Casauranc to Nájera, 23 Sept. 1925

⁶⁷⁰ AHSEP-68-69/C/37428/E/12, DEFD to DERICI, 3 Mar. 1926

ingerencia en sus asuntos.’⁶⁷¹ Meanwhile, in northern Jalisco, the cacique-dominated municipal governments – over which the revolutionary regimes in Mexico City or Guadalajara had little control – maintained minimal contact with the Huichols, beyond their attempts to expropriate communal lands. And in Mezquital, the municipal government was too poor even to support any ‘Fuerzas de Seguridad Pública Municipal’ in mid-1925 (with just six policemen, based in the municipal capital, officially charged with the security of the entire municipality),⁶⁷² again leaving the political and military autonomy of the region’s Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities unchallenged. This left the SEP and, in the case of the Sierra Huichola, the CNA, as the only vehicles for revolutionary state-building in the Gran Nayar.

In Nayarit, Mejía and Domínguez paid more than just lip-service to the proclaimed goals of the SEP and, motivated by practical considerations and genuine ideological sympathies, encouraged the establishment of schools, advocated for pay rises in order to secure honest and effective teachers and, where possible, tried to enforce attendance. They could not, however, prevail over the general resistance of the Coras to the SEP’s presence in their communities – even when they were able to command the help of traditional communal authorities. The record of the forty or so Cora students enrolled at an ‘Internado Indígena’ opened in 1926 in Jesús María attests to the ineffectiveness of the SEP’s previous work in the community: only two of them spoke Spanish, none could read or write, none had any knowledge of Mexican ‘heroes’ – including Juárez and Madero – nor did they understand what either Nayarit

⁶⁷¹ AHSEP-45/C/36326/E.6, DEFN to DERICI., 31 Aug. 1925

⁶⁷² AHED-FR/C/4/E/7, Gabino Pérez to Gob.Dgo., 13 June 1925

or Mexico were, or who the current president was. Not a single 'fiesta cívica' was celebrated in community itself, which also lacked a Mexican flag; and the exasperated new inspector-instructor complained that there was an urgent need to 'conferenciar con la autoridad local' to stop the Coras dumping their rubbish in the school grounds.⁶⁷³ Local resistance, Church interference, budgetary constraints, the unprofessionalism of teachers, confusion and infighting within the SEP's Nayarit department, and the political turmoil that characterised Nayarit in the post-revolutionary period, had all contributed to the striking failure of state-building in the Sierra.

While the armed phase of the Revolution had forced many Huichols into a permanent exile in Nayarit, those refugees who did return to their communities found that the hard-won victories of the revolutionary period, such as the eviction of mestizo colonists from their communities, were contested by the municipal authorities now in control of the region, and by their *ranchero* allies, who invaded Huichol territory from bases in the *mezitizo* belt that surrounded the Sierra Huichola to the north, east and south. In Santa Catarina and Guadalupe Ocotán, interaction with the revolutionary state in this period was therefore limited to community leaders attempting to secure the protection and assistance of the Federal or state governments in the context of territorial conflicts.

For San Sebastián and Tuxpan, on the other hand, contact with the state was mediated entirely by the SEP (as represented by Inspector Topete and the teachers whom he had appointed), while San Andrés both petitioned the government for agrarian reform and

⁶⁷³ AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/18, León Sánchez to DEFN, 19 Jan. 1926

briefly hosted a school. However, the SEP's efforts in the Sierra Huichola were even less effective than in the Cora communities of Nayarit. Both regions presented the same obstacles – difficult terrain, poor communications, dispersed local settlement patterns, strong traditions of communal autonomy and generalised Indian distrust of mestizos. However, the solidarity between the Cora communities – rooted in the organisation of the Tonatí's priest-kingdom, and consolidated under the rule of Manuel Lozada – had facilitated the emergence in the Sierra Nayar of caciques with influence over the entire region, who at least tried to support the SEP's local activities. However, there existed no such solidarity between the Huichol communities, and the death of Mezquite had deprived the Sierra Huichola of a single regional leader with whom the SEP could do business, complicating the work of the SEP's local representatives. Furthermore, due to the larger size of Jalisco, SEP officials based in Mexico City and Guadalajara (and occasionally in Zacatecas) found it difficult to communicate with, and effectively supervise, the inspectors and teachers sent to the Sierra Huichola. A lack of resources for rural schools in Jalisco (despite the allocations made in the 1923-4 budget), together with Topete's initial reluctance to work in the Huichol communities (which meant that what money was available at first went to schools in the more accessible mestizo communities of northern Jalisco), his connections to land-hungry regional caciques and poor choice of teachers, led to the utter failure of the SEP's attempts to forge a positive relationship with the Huichols. In fact, Topete's efforts probably did more to alienate those Huichol communities that did, however briefly, acquire Federal schools, than to bring them into the national fold.

Meanwhile, the agrarian reform, although it brought no solutions to the problem of mestizo encroachment on Huichol communal landholdings in this period, at least did nothing to exacerbate them. Thus agrarian petitioning, however ineffectual, does seem to have provided communities with some kind of hope that their claims were at least being taken seriously, which strengthened relations between the communal authorities responsible for making these claims, the state authorities who received them and promised to act on them, and those factions within the communities who chose to trust in the ‘agrarista’ rhetoric of first Vadillo and then Zuno’s governments and in the eventual success of the ‘reparto’ process. This phenomenon was strongest in Santa Catarina, which had engaged in extensive dialogue with the Jalisciense authorities regarding its agrarian demands, still did not have school, and had been approved for an eventual ‘dotación’ of lands, rather than ‘restitución,’ and thus depended on the goodwill of the government for the success of its claims, rather than on the strength of its colonial land titles (although how far the community understood the difference between the two processes is uncertain).⁶⁷⁴ San Sebastián, however, developed no patron-client ties with the state, as the community had not engaged in official negotiations with either the Federal or state governments regarding restitution of communal territory, and had furthermore housed a school that seems to have been used by outsiders as a vehicle for their attempts to take control of the community’s lands.

Meanwhile, neither teachers nor government agronomists were able to make any inroads into the Sierra Tepehuana in this period. While an uneasy peace returned to the Sierras of Jalisco and Nayarit after the revolution, Dámaso Barraza’s close

⁶⁷⁴ cf. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges...* p.87

relations with constantly rebellious Duranguense strongman Domingo Arrieta isolated the Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros from regional and national political developments. This helped to sustain the chronic political instability that the Revolution had engendered in their communities, as reflected in the immediate post-revolutionary period by Gregorio Aguilar's assassination of Santa María's traditional governor, and Aguilar's own death at the hands of Juan Andrés Soto. This instability, together with the economic devastation that the Revolution had already caused Durango, General Castro's attitude to education during his term as governor, and the budgetary and personnel problems of the SEP at state and Federal level, obstructed the SEP's attempts to expand state influence over the Sierra Tepehuana.

In fact, the SEP's ultimately abortive attempts to bring Mexican 'civilización' to the Coras and Huichols by establishing Federal rural schools in their communities, left few resources for a similar project in the Sierra Tepehuana. And, ironically, when in 1926 a local mestizo, Juan Sifuentes, was finally appointed as maestro rural in Santa María Ocotán – the first teacher posted to the Sierra Tepehuana since the creation of the SEP – 'se dedicó a actividades políticas y no abrió la Escuela,'⁶⁷⁵ and soon after became one of the community's chief Cristero leaders. The Mexican state thus remained an ephemeral presence in southern Durango between 1920-25, due to national and local political instability, a lack of governmental resources and general political will, and the marginal nature of the region itself (even if commercial interest in the Sierra Tepehuana's forests was slowly growing). In the absence of state influence over the region, and with Gregorio Aguilar and Primo Ortiz now dead, Dámaso Barraza emerged as the most powerful single figure in the Sierra Tepehuana.

⁶⁷⁵ AHSEP-68-69/C/37436/E/35, DEFD to DERICI, 2 July 1926

He managed to survive the consequences of his own rebellious tendencies, and his conflicts with the authorities in Mezquital, to amass, according to Everardo Gámiz, ‘un capital de más de 100,000 pesos, pues en Yonora poseía más de 1,000 cabezas de ganado.’⁶⁷⁶

Ultimately, however, Barraza’s influence remained strongest in his home community of Temoaya, and its anexo of Yonora. In the region’s other Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities, the traditional authorities, as well as the Defensas Sociales, still possessed a remarkable autonomy in relation to outside forces. However, relations between these communities were often antagonistic (to the extent that San Lucas de Jalpa had begun to petition Mariano Mejía to annex their community to Nayarit, so as to escape from the ‘esclavitud’ forced upon them by neighbouring Huazamota),⁶⁷⁷ while many communities were also wracked by internal conflict (generated by the challenge posed to the traditional order by new communal power structures, and by competition over the exercise of power itself). These internal conflicts, in particular, would define much of the content and outcomes of the Cristero rebellion in the Sierra Tepehuana.

Meanwhile, in the Sierra Cora the state-building promoted by Mejía and Domínguez had not transformed Coras into ‘Mexicans,’ but rather turned important factions in each community against the presence of mestizos – whether settlers or teachers – and, by extension, against the revolutionary state itself. Prefiguring the Mayo rebellion of

⁶⁷⁶ E. Gámiz Fernández, in A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.155

⁶⁷⁷ AHSEP-45/C/36301/E/29, San Lucas de Jalpa to Pres., 12 Mar. 1925

1935,⁶⁷⁸ Cora opposition to mestizo immigration, home-grown caciquismo and state policies had by 1927 grown strong enough to push many individuals or factions into taking up arms against the state. Similarly, in the Sierra Huichola, each community's different experiences and contacts with the revolutionary state would, in the context of the mounting conflict between the revolutionary state and the Catholic Church, lead each community (or factions within each) to form alliances with the rival forces then active in the region. This resulted in groups of Huichols fighting on both sides during the Cristiada, as did many Coras, Tepehuanos, and Mexicaneros, in spite of their continued independence from the influence of both orthodox Catholicism and revolutionary nationalism.

⁶⁷⁸ A. Bantjes, *As If Jesus...* pp.33-5

Chapter Three: The Cristero Rebellion in the Gran Nayar (1926-1929)

The outbreak of the Cristero rebellion in 1926 saw the mass uprising of many thousands of Mexicans – primarily mestizo peasants from the western-central states of Jalisco, Durango, Zacatecas, Nayarit, Colima, Michoacán, Guanajuato and Querétaro – in opposition to the enforcement of the revolutionary Constitution’s anti-clerical Article 130. In order to suppress the rebellion, the revolutionary state chose to arm the nation’s landless peasants – whose demands for agrarian reform had been neglected in many parts of Mexico during the first five years of Sonoran rule – and for three years a civil war raged, as the Federal army and ‘agrarista’ militias battled the rebels, who had been united under the politico-military leadership of the Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa (LNDR).

The support of many Mexicans for the Cristeros challenges the historical narrative of the Revolution as an overwhelmingly popular process that the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) – founded by Calles in the wake of Obregón’s assassination by a lone Catholic militant in 1928 – depended on for its legitimacy. For many years the conflict was therefore little discussed in Mexican academia and in society in general, and it was not until the early 1970s that serious academic studies of the rebellion began to appear.⁶⁷⁹ Jean Meyer’s three-volume *La cristiada*, published in 1974, remains the most wide-ranging study of the Cristiada yet produced. While Quirk and Bailey focused mainly on the elite actors in the Church-State conflict, Meyer saw the

⁶⁷⁹ eg. D. C. Bailey, *Viva Cristo Rey...*; R. E. Quirk, *The Mexican Revolution...*

rebellion as a popular, peasant-driven and religiously motivated uprising.⁶⁸⁰ Jrade, however, has critiqued some of Meyer's methodology and interpretations,⁶⁸¹ and a number of more recently published regional analyses have laid new stress on the complexities of the local causes and consequences of the Cristiada.⁶⁸² These recent studies have prompted Meyer to undertake a critical revision of his own work. In a laudatory review of Butler's book, Meyer notes that in trying to 'derrotar a las falacias anteriores, empezando por la de la inexistencia, o de la nula importancia de la Cristiada, cai en las mias,' which included neglecting the participation of other sectors of society in favour of a vision of the rebellion as 'exclusivamente campesino,' and exaggerating 'el espontaneismo de las masas... la autonomia del movimiento armado... [y] haber insistido tanto sobre el factor religioso que muchos lectores pensaron que para mi era LA causa, única o casi única del levantamiento.'⁶⁸³

In line with the post-revisionist tendency to see the Revolution as made up of 'many revolutions,' each of which occurred in different parts of the country in response to particular local conditions, Meyer now agrees with Butler, Purnell and others that there existed 'muchas cristiadas y muchas explicaciones variables de ellas; distintas combinaciones dispersas en un territorio inmenso que acaban por engendrar un conjunto que se llama la Cristiada.'⁶⁸⁴ Scholars such as Shadow and Rubio, who have analysed the rebellion as it unfolded in the mestizo-inhabited zones bordering the Gran Nayar, stress that here, support for the Cristeros was determined by the strength and socio-political consequences of popular religious faith – such as the leading role

⁶⁸⁰ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, pp.386-91

⁶⁸¹ Jrade, 'Inquiries,' pp.61-2

⁶⁸² J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* pp.149-58, pp.124-33; M. Butler, 'The "Liberal" Cristero...' pp.670-1

⁶⁸³ J. Meyer, 'Review of Matthew Butler...' p.1248

⁶⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p.1249

of priests in village life, local support for political Catholicism, and the strength of lay organisations like the ACJM – as well as by loyalty to the *ranchero caciques* who controlled much of the land and commerce of the region.⁶⁸⁵ Popular and cacical support for the rebels was further generated by their opposition to the local activities of both state and Federal governments – for example, the establishment of secular schools, and the (limited) encouragement of agrarian reform, which was often seen as a threat to the small- to medium-scale private landholdings that had dominated these regions since at least the late nineteenth century.⁶⁸⁶

Shadow and Rubio agree with Meyer that in northern Jalisco and southern Zacatecas, mestizo support for the Callista state was similarly tied to the personal loyalties and economic considerations of local *caciques*, to government promises of support for landless ‘*agrarista*’ peasants (whose leaders in the *Liga Agraria* officially pledged their allegiance to the government in January 1927),⁶⁸⁷ to identification with the government’s revolutionary ideology (with ‘defence of the revolution’ replacing ‘defense of the faith’),⁶⁸⁸ and to the existence of an anti-clerical sentiment amongst an influential section of the Mexican population since even before the ‘Reforma’ of Juárez.⁶⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the prospect of power, booty and adventure (and often revenge, given the local feuds engendered by the violence of the revolution), served to attract

⁶⁸⁵ Hernansaez, *Zacatecas Bronco*; R. D. Shadow, M. Rodríguez Shadow, ‘Religión, economía...’ p.679, pp.692-3

⁶⁸⁶ R. D. Shadow, *Tierra, trabajo...* p.98; cf. A. Bantjes, *As if Jesus...* pp.46-53; M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.62-3, pp.122-4

⁶⁸⁷ AAAR/C/13/E/56Doc/6761, Gran Partido Socialista de Occidente to members, 10 Jan. 1927

⁶⁸⁸ L. Rubio Hernansaez, *Zacatecas Bronco...*; R. D. Shadow, M. Rodríguez Shadow, ‘Religión, economía...’ pp.698-9; J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, pp.35-44, pp.88-91, pp.172-3

⁶⁸⁹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, ii, p.10-110; cf. A. Knight, ‘The Mentality...’ pp.22-6

individuals to the idea of arming themselves and participating in the conflict regardless of ideology.⁶⁹⁰

Very few scholars, however, have addressed the participation of the Indian peoples of the Gran Nayar in the Cristiada. The most significant and influential analysis is contained in Meyer's initial study, which occupies only a few paragraphs from a total of more than nine hundred pages. His conclusions about the nature of, and motives for, the participation of Coras, Huichols and Tepehuanos in the Cristiada (the Mexicaneros are not mentioned), are inherently limited, and do not profess to account for the cultural, political and religious idiosyncrasies of each group, and the differences between the communities into which each group is divided. Instead, Meyer's brief analysis of the Gran Nayar reflects his national-level narrative of the rebellion.

However, Meyer's summary analysis has informed – or even defined – the handful of references in the work of others to the participation of the Gran Nayar's Indians in the Cristiada.⁶⁹¹ The general tendency of these historians – and of many others who have mentioned Mexico's Indians in the context of the Cristiada – is to identify both Cristeros and Indians as underdogs, and therefore natural allies, with the same narrative of heroic and historic resistance easily applied to both.⁶⁹² However, ethnological studies of the Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros tend to argue that the Cristiada was in fact a deeply divisive conflict that split individual

⁶⁹⁰ R. D. Shadow, M. Rodríguez Shadow, 'Religión, economía...' p.689-94

⁶⁹¹ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...*; J. G. Sánchez Olmedo, *Etnografía...*; E. Bautista González, *La guerra olvidada...*

⁶⁹² cf. J. Rulfo, J. Meyer, 'Juan Rulfo habla...'; M. Puente Lutteroth, *Movimiento Cristero...*; C. Montemayor, *Chiapas...* p.90

communities into pro-Cristero and pro-government factions, each of which were equally violent and oppressive in relation to the vast majority of the region's inhabitants, who desperately struggled to remain neutral in the face of a conflict they saw as imposed on them by outside forces.⁶⁹³

This interpretation fits with oral histories of the Cristiada that I have gathered in the Gran Nayar, which stress the way the violence of the period created or exacerbated many of the feuds between communities, factions and families that continue to influence life in the region today. These oral accounts often have radically different perspectives, influenced by the factional and familial ties of the source, and cannot be uncritically relied upon. However, by using oral histories in careful combination with contemporary documents and secondary accounts from publications like *David* (a monthly journal published by ex-Cristeros between 1952-68), this chapter presents a narrative of the Cristero rebellion as it unfolded in the Gran Nayar. This narrative sets the stage for an analysis of the factors that helped to decide local Indian loyalties to either of the culturally and politically alien forces that in this period fought for control of the region, and for a detailed critique of the existing historiographical interpretations of Indian participation in the conflict. This will bring into clear relief the important roles of caciques and factionalism (both products of participation in the Revolution of the previous decade), communal rivalries (often related to territorial conflicts), and the desire for booty (weapons, cattle, women and objects of spiritual significance such as the icons and images of saints).⁶⁹⁴ It will also demonstrate how

⁶⁹³ E. Rangel Guzmán, *Imágenes e imaginarios...* p.456; E. Rangel Guzmán, J. L. Marín García, 'Desplazamientos territoriales...' p.12; C. Cramaussel, 'Historia del poblamiento...' pp.20-1; N. P. Alvarado Solís, *Atar la vida...* p.140; P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.183-6; P. C. Weigand, 'Role of the Huichol...' p.169

⁶⁹⁴ P. A. Dennis, *Intervillage Conflict...* pp.99-100

this participation was subsequently shaped by the changing ‘facts on the ground’: for as Clausewitz points out, in any conflict ‘the original political objects can greatly alter during the course of the war and may finally change entirely since they are influenced by events and their probable consequences.’⁶⁹⁵ The way in which the Cristiada unfolded in the Gran Nayar also highlights the ways in which James C. Scott’s ‘multifarious “weapons of the weak,” such as noncompliance, insolence, [and] evasiveness,’ were used to preserve communal autonomy and also how, ‘when the control of a dominant group temporarily slips, these weapons were sometimes discarded in favor of more violent resistance.’⁶⁹⁶

The Cristiada in the Gran Nayar

The mestizo borderlands of northern Jalisco and southern Zacatecas – on the eastern edge of the Sierra Huichola – saw one of the earliest and most important of the Catholic uprisings that would merge in the centre-west of Mexico as the Cristiada: that of Pedro Quintanar. Local tensions between Church and State had been escalating for several years before the outbreak of violence, as both state and Federal governments sought to demonstrate their revolutionary credentials by adopting increasingly anti-clerical discourses and official policies.⁶⁹⁷ Quintanar’s rebellion, however, was directly precipitated by the detention, on 14 August 1926, of Luis Bátiz, the parish priest of Chalchihuites, and three young members of the ACJM

⁶⁹⁵ C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, p.92

⁶⁹⁶ James C. Scott, in K. Brewster, ‘Caciquismo in Post-Revolutionary Mexico...’ p.256

⁶⁹⁷ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, ii, p.43-8; M. Butler, *Popular Piety...* p.89; R. Curley, ‘Anticlericalism and Public Space...’ pp.527-32

(Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana, a Catholic male youth organisation), by General Eulogio Ortiz, then zone commander in Zacatecas.⁶⁹⁸

Pedro Quintanar, ‘tratante en ganado, personaje influyente en toda la región y famoso hombre de armas,’ had had been ‘jefe de las “defensas” de toda la región contra las bandas villistas, de 1914 a 1920,’ and later joined the Delahuertista rebellion, before retiring to private life in the wake of the rebellion’s defeat.⁶⁹⁹ Quintanar arrived in Chalchihuites by coincidence the day after Ortíz detained Batíz, and while drinking in a cantina with friends he heard about the arrest. Deciding to mount a rescue attempt, with a few armed followers he attacked the soldiers and their prisoners at the outskirts of town, and during the ensuing melee ‘el cobarde jefe que iba con los detenidos, mata al Sr. Cura y acejotaemeros... Al fin logran que huyan los soldados, pero se encuentran con los cadáveres de los mártires.’⁷⁰⁰

In the wake of this skirmish, Quintanar tried to make peace with the government, but ‘éste no se lo permitió, y de hecho se encontró en estado de rebelión. No le quedaba más que tocar a llamada a sus gentes y a sus amigos, que eran numerosos.’⁷⁰¹ With an armed force recruited in the region’s mestizo pueblos, he occupied Huejuquilla on 29 August. After his victorious entrance he called on the population to join him,⁷⁰² and many local men, including the Defensa,⁷⁰³ entered into what would become a large-scale regional rebellion. For the next few months, Quintanar’s operations, and Federal responses to it, primarily took place in the area around Chalchihuites and Valparaíso,

⁶⁹⁸ B. Fallaw, ‘Eulogio Ortiz...’ p.139

⁶⁹⁹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.107-8

⁷⁰⁰ José Arroyo, ‘Memorias...’ in *David*, 4 Feb. 1954, p.378

⁷⁰¹ E. de la Torre, in M. Caldera and L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.84

⁷⁰² *ibid.*

⁷⁰³ AAAR/C/13/E/54/Doc/6237, E. Madera to Quintanar, ND

although a rebel priest commanding an armed group near Mezquitic was reported as fleeing to the Sierra Huichola in October 1926.⁷⁰⁴ By January 1927 many of the mestizos of Villa Guerrero, Bolaños and Colotlán had joined the rebellion, and together with their neighbours in southern Zacatecas,⁷⁰⁵ would soon begin carrying out raids on the fringes of the Sierra Huichola.

In Durango, meanwhile, a similar anti-government rebellion – initially unconnected to Quintanar’s – broke out in late 1926 in Santiago Bayacora, a small pueblo in the foothills of the Sierra Madre, just to the south of the city of Durango. Although Meyer asserts that Bayacora’s inhabitants were ‘tepehuanos aculturados,’ and Campos quotes a Federal soldier referring to ‘esos indios de Santiago,’⁷⁰⁶ it seems clear that by the 1920s Bayacora was linguistically, culturally and socio-politically a mestizo pueblo,⁷⁰⁷ with an apparent reputation for rebelliousness.⁷⁰⁸ Carrancista forces had harassed Bayacora during the later stages of the revolution, and subsequent local mistrust of the state is indicated by their refusal to donate a plot of communal land to the SEP for the building of a school in 1925, in contrast to most other mestizo communities in the region.⁷⁰⁹

However, Bayacora’s inhabitants became violent only in response to the state’s perceived attacks on their faith. On 29 September 1926, government officials sent to make an inventory of the church were beaten and expelled by local people, many

⁷⁰⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38281/E/17, González to DEFJ, 27 Oct. 1926

⁷⁰⁵ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.126

⁷⁰⁶ F. Campos, ‘Santiago...’ in *David*, 22 Nov. 1955, p.257

⁷⁰⁷ C. Cramausel, ‘El fracaso de la evangelización...’; I. Ávalos-Huerta, D. Libertad Sánchez-López, C. López-González, ‘Nomenclatura vernácula...’ p.375

⁷⁰⁸ P. Rouaix, *Diccionario geográfico...* p.252

⁷⁰⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36277/E/14, DEFJ to DERICI, 22 July 1925

apparently still drunk after celebrating a fiesta. The next day, Federal troops arrived in the pueblo to restore order, and were driven out by a group of villagers who had elected the village sacristan, Trinidad Mora, as their leader.⁷¹⁰ The Federals soon returned with reinforcements under General Páez, and although the defenders had seized weapons and ammunition after their first battle, it seems unlikely they would have held out had the nearby river not broken its banks, drowning various Federal troops and again forcing their retreat. This was seen by local people as a ‘miracle’ demonstrating divine support for their cause, and gave Mora’s men, and the population as a whole, a chance to escape into the mountains before Federal reinforcements arrived to take the pueblo.⁷¹¹

While many of the refugees subsequently went into hiding in outlying ranches or in the nearby city of Durango, Mora and eighty-eight armed men headed south into the Sierras of Mezquital and Pueblo Nuevo.⁷¹² On 26 October, near Mezquital, Mora’s men ambushed and killed General Ismael Lares (Dámaso Barraza’s commander during the Revolution,⁷¹³ who had apparently asked Calles for permission to put down the nascent rebellion personally). This attack, which also left thirteen of Lares’ men dead and gained Mora horses, rifles and ammunition,⁷¹⁴ was his most dramatic victory yet. As news spread of Lares’ death, and of Quintanar’s victories in nearby Zacatecas and Jalisco, new recruits began to join Mora’s group, including Porfirio Mayorquín (often referred to as ‘El Pillaco’), a former Federal colonel from Acaponeta who, accused of murder, had been living in Durango under the protection

⁷¹⁰ F. Campos, ‘Santiago ...’ in *David*, 22 Apr. 1955

⁷¹¹ *ibid.*

⁷¹² F. Campos, ‘Santiago...’ in *David*, 22 June 1955

⁷¹³ AHED-FR/C/5/E/206, Unsigned Military Report, Oct. 1919

⁷¹⁴ AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5774, Trinidad Mora, ‘Informe,’ 11 Aug. 1927

of governor Nájera, but who fled to the Sierra after the authorities in Nayarit sent Nájera a warrant for his arrest.⁷¹⁵ Thanks to his military experience, ruthlessness and charisma, he quickly became one of the Gran Nayar region's most important Cristero commanders (although Mora initially mistook him for a spy and almost had him shot).⁷¹⁶

Mora also sent out commissions to try and persuade the local Jefes de Defensa to join his cause, successfully recruiting Valente Acevedo of Llano Grande (near the Tepehuano community of San Bernadino), who arrived at Mora's camp at the head of the hundred armed and mounted fighters who had formed Llano Grande's Defensa.⁷¹⁷ Francisco Campos and Federico Vázquez (both natives of Bayacora, *contra* Avitia Hernández, who asserts that Vázquez was from Temoaya),⁷¹⁸ meanwhile travelled to Yonora, disguised as itinerant traders bringing 'platanos, chirimollas y otras cosas' from Taxicaringa. They found Dámaso Barraza eager for news of Mora's uprising, and easily convinced him to join them;⁷¹⁹ according to Felipe de De Jesús, writing years later in *David*, 'Barraza ya estaba preparado de antemano y en su compañía estuvo un enviado de Durango por varias semanas mientras que Barraza levantaba sus cosechas.'⁷²⁰ 'El Indio' Barraza and most of his men were Tepehuano speakers – although some were no longer very active practitioners of Tepehuano costumbre⁷²¹ – and were probably the first Tepehuano recruits to the Cristero cause.⁷²²

⁷¹⁵ N. Chávez Gradilla, in E. Rangel Guzmán, *Imágenes e imaginarios...* p.452

⁷¹⁶ F. Campos, 'Santiago...' in *David*, 22 Jan. 1956

⁷¹⁷ F. Campos, 'Santiago...' in *David*, 22 Jan. 1956

⁷¹⁸ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.184

⁷¹⁹ F. Campos, 'Santiago...' in *David*, 22 Jan. 1956

⁷²⁰ Felipe de Jesús, 'A proposito de las bajas callistas en Durango,' in *David*, 22 Feb. 1956

⁷²¹ Felipe Venegas

⁷²² E. Rangel Guzmán, *Imágenes e imaginarios...* p. 461

Despite these successes, by the end of 1926 the Cristeros had still not penetrated far enough into the Sierras of Jalisco and Durango to threaten the Cora communities. And while the establishment of schools and mestizo immigration had generated conflicts within the Cora communities between conservative factions and ‘cosmopolitan’ groups allied to the Jefes de Defensa, the enduring autonomy of each individual community, and Mariano Mejía and Eutimio Domínguez’s politico-military dominance of the Sierra as a whole, isolated the region from the elite political struggles that were then consuming the rest of the state.⁷²³ Thus the Sierra Cora remained peaceful throughout the year.

Tensions between Church and State, however, had been rising in Nayarit for several years, and previous reports of the clerical propaganda issued against state education in the Sierra – even if sometimes no more than an excuse for the inevitable failure of poorly funded, poorly staffed and inherently racist and unpopular schools – indicate that the Church was perceived by local SEP officials as enough of a threat to the construction of a new revolutionary order to have been used as a scapegoat for structural failings. The passing of the ‘ley Calles’ further exacerbated local tensions, and in May 1926 the Presidente de la Legislatura de Tepic was beaten to death ‘por todas las mujeres del poblado’ after he attacked ‘uno de los principales templos de la ciudad con pistola en mano, con el sombrero puesto y con una reata a lazar las imágenes y sacarlas arrastrando por las calles.’⁷²⁴ By January 1927, Nayarit had become fertile ground for the outbreak of home-grown Cristero rebellions, while the rebels who increasingly dominated the neighbouring areas of Jalisco, Zacatecas and

⁷²³ J. Meyer, *De cantón...*, p.192-3

⁷²⁴ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/21, DEFN to Sec. Gob., 18 May 1926

Durango began to make incursions across the state borders, dragging the communities of the Cora Alta into the conflict.

By early 1927, Quintanar's forces controlled much of the countryside – if not the municipal seats – of Mezquitic, Chalchihuites, Huejuquilla, Valparaíso and Fresnillo.⁷²⁵ This led Quintanar's lieutenant Aurelio Acevedo to set up an alternative Cristero administration in the region,⁷²⁶ which was seen as vital to formalising and legitimising the movement's actions and political programme.⁷²⁷ Meanwhile, in southern Durango, Barraza met with Mora, Acevedo and Mayorquín near Mezquital on 1 January 1927, accompanied by 400 men (at least according to Campos, who has a tendency to greatly exaggerate numbers, sometimes by a factor of ten).⁷²⁸ While Mora remained overall leader of the rebellion in Durango, Barraza was appointed its military chief and led an attack on Mezquital, which fell to the combined rebel forces the same day.⁷²⁹ In the wake of this victory he called a meeting of the local population and then, revelling in the opportunity to settle accounts with his local enemies in the municipal seat – and contrary to Meyer's assertions that the Cristeros were an 'ejército de voluntarios'⁷³⁰ – he proceeded to conscript all the town's males above the age of twelve, telling them that:

‘nosotros venimos defendiendo la Religión, el que sea gustoso ayudarnos está bien y el que no, que dé un paso al frente y ya sabe que, al que no quiera ayudarnos, se considera como enemigo, y quién sabe qué le pasara.’⁷³¹

⁷²⁵ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.187

⁷²⁶ *ibid.*

⁷²⁷ cf. T.P. Wickham-Crowley, *Exploring Revolution...* p.30-61

⁷²⁸ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.186

⁷²⁹ F. Campos, 'Santiago...' in *David*, 22 Jan. 1956

⁷³⁰ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.100, pp.215-17

⁷³¹ F. Campos, 'Santiago...' in *David*, 22 Mar. 1956

Strengthened with weapons taken after this victory, the augmented Cristero forces ambushed Federal troops under Generals Enrique León and Eliseo Páez at the Hacienda del Refugio on 6 January 1927. The hacienda had served as the headquarters of Barraza's forces in 1918, and with knowledge of the terrain on their side, the rebels 'hicieron numerosas bajas al enemigo,' General Paéz himself among them.⁷³²

However, the Cristeros suffered a serious set-back on 17 January, when Barraza himself, at the head of three hundred rebels, was killed during a pitched battle with a Federal force of two hundred and fifty men under General Anacleto López.⁷³³ Government troops then took back the plaza of Mezquital, after which many of the rebels dispersed, either demoralised by Barraza's death, or sensing an opportune moment to escape their conscript status.⁷³⁴ A few days later they began to surrender, 'entregando los pertrechos que se la habían recogido al enemigo,'⁷³⁵ and only seventy-five men from Temoaya, Yonora and Mezquital remained loyal to Barraza's cause.⁷³⁶ These men joined Mayorquín and Acevedo, who retreated west towards the latter's home territory in Pueblo Nuevo.⁷³⁷ Mora and the remaining Bayacora rebels meanwhile headed north. Near Durango they derailed and ambushed a train, forcing the surrender of the small Federal detachment onboard, whose commander they executed and the rest of whom they forcibly recruited into their ranks. They also seized arms, ammunition, and cash, and reminded the public – and the government – that the rebellion had not yet been broken, despite the stories in the press and

⁷³² AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5774, Trinidad Mora, 'Informe,' 11 Aug. 1927

⁷³³ *ibid.*

⁷³⁴ M. Deras Rodríguez, in A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.185

⁷³⁵ AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5774, Trinidad Mora, 'Informe,' 11 Aug. 1927

⁷³⁶ *ibid.*

⁷³⁷ F. Campos, 'Santiago...' in *David*, 22 Mar. 1956

Anacleto López's triumphant reports to the president.⁷³⁸ Mora's men then returned south and, in a canyon in the Sierra somewhere between Durango and El Salto, set up a provisional headquarters, where they were later joined by Mayorquín and Acevedo's troops and many of their families.⁷³⁹

In response to the growing power of the Cristeros in southern Durango, southern Zacatecas and northern Jalisco, Federal forces under Generals Anacleto López and Eulogio Ortíz expanded their campaigns in the region. They relied on a 'three-pronged counter-insurgency strategy' that involved negotiating the surrender of rebel leaders, 'reconcentrating' civilian populations, and arming local auxiliaries.⁷⁴⁰ Federal troops destroyed homes and crops, and forced dispersed rural populations to gather together in more easily defended towns, in order to deny the Cristeros potential bases of support.⁷⁴¹ The government also began 'arming peasants in the states where rebellious elements are active, following up on the offer of the Agrarian communities to support the government.'⁷⁴² For example, Calles' close ally Luis L. León, then Minister of Agriculture, 'distributed 1000 rifles among the Agrarians' at an agricultural exhibition in Guanajuato, while the president's erstwhile enemy, ex-Governor of Jalisco Zuno, gave out 'two thousand rifles... during a mass meeting of Agrarians at Guadalajara.'⁷⁴³

In the Gran Nayar, and the mestizo regions that surrounded it, Federal arms were given to all those local caciques who (for reasons to be explored in the second half of

⁷³⁸ A. Taracena, in A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.192

⁷³⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ B. Fallaw, 'Eulogio Ortiz...' p.140

⁷⁴¹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p. 220

⁷⁴² Binghampton Press, 'Rebels beaten says Mexico', 17 Jan. 1927

⁷⁴³ *ibid.*

this chapter) had resisted joining the Cristero rebels. This increased the coercive power of these leaders and thus facilitated their conscription of local people into pro-government Defensa forces, and also boosted their ability to offer protection to local people from Cristero raids, which led others to join them voluntarily. In the Sierra Tepehuana, pro-government militias were formed as early as March 1927, when General Ortíz headed to the mountains of Pueblo Nuevo, in pursuit of ‘las fuerzas rebeldes comandadas por el jefe rebelde [Valente] Acevedo.’⁷⁴⁴ Meanwhile, in northern Jalisco, Luz Robles, a wealthy merchant and rancher, together with local notables Natividad Robles and Griseldo Salazar, formed a pro-government Defensa of ‘sesenta hombres armados y veinte sin armas’ in Mezquitic.⁷⁴⁵ Manuel Muñoz, the previously pro-Cristero leader of Tenzompa and La Soledad, on the edge of the Sierra Huichola, joined with them soon after.⁷⁴⁶ The influence of these pro-government forces probably reached as far as the Huichol communities themselves.

Meanwhile in Nayarit, although people assured SEP Inspector Florencio Orozco that the Coras ‘estaban levantados en armas, por asuntos religiosos,’⁷⁴⁷ the Sierra in reality remained under the control of the pro-government forces that had originally emerged during the Revolution, under Mariano Mejía and Eutimio Domínguez. Orozco reported that Mejía, ‘que viene siendo como Gobernador de la Sierra, y Jefe de Armas en la misma,’ was still enthusiastic about the SEP’s programme ‘en la región donde él tiene tanta influencia.’⁷⁴⁸ And Eutimio Domínguez also ‘manifestó sus buenos deseos en ayudar ampliamente a la cruzada educacional... pues tiene entusiasmo y grandes

⁷⁴⁴ AGN-DGIPS/C/212/E/3, Unisigned military report, N.D. [mid-1927]

⁷⁴⁵ S. Martínez, in M. Caldera and L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.122-123

⁷⁴⁶ J. Arroyo, ‘Memorias...’ in *David*, 22 Jan. 1961

⁷⁴⁷ AHSEP-84-85/C/38876/E/17, Florencio Orozco to DEFN, 15 June 1927

⁷⁴⁸ *ibid.*

deseos por que la educación se difunda, en los lugares a su mando y cuidado.’⁷⁴⁹

However, Orozco also warned that

‘La Sierra constituye un verdadero nido de indios y ese nido carente de luz, donde por lo mismo, las tinieblas del obscurantismo imperan, tiene como murallas una capilla o templo, como verdaderos fuentes del fanatismo que en ellos han cultivado, aquellos que dicen amarlos mucho y que no son más de sus eternos explotadores. Por lo expuesto, para combatir tan grave mal, se impone poner frente de cada foco de fanatismo, una antorcha de luz o lo que es lo mismo, una Escuela al frente de esta, una verdadera sacerdotisa de la ciencia, para que con su palabra, haga replegarse esas tinieblas, haciéndose la luz, que es precursora de civilización y de progreso y, consiguiendo esto, el indio quedará redimido; pero, para lograrlo, insisto en que los Inspectores y maestros hagan verdadera labor de aposteles.’⁷⁵⁰

Given the lack of Catholic influence on the Coras in this period, Orozco’s emphasis on the need for churches to be replaced by schools is probably less evidence of Cora ‘Catholicism,’ and more an illustration of the Manichaeian nature of official discourse on the ‘religious question’ within the SEP at this time. This meant that Indian ritual activity tended to be seen by SEP officials as an example of Church influence,⁷⁵¹ even though the Indians themselves distrusted the few mestizo priests in the region with whom they anyway had little contact. But while it reflects the anti-clericalism that dominated contemporary SEP thinking, Orozco’s report also suggests that the conflict was edging ever closer to the Cora communities of Nayarit.

Despite Federal efforts to arm local Defensas, which allowed the government to establish ‘guarniciones desde Durango hasta Mezquital, unidos entre si por 110 km de líneas telefónicas,’⁷⁵² the number of active Cristeros in southern Durango continued to

⁷⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁷⁵¹ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.61-2

⁷⁵² J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.185

grow throughout spring 1927. Florencio Estrada had returned to his native Huazamota to launch an uprising in January,⁷⁵³ hoping to unseat his rivals and *cuñados*, the pro-government Muñoz clan, and establish his own cacicazgo in the region.⁷⁵⁴ Initially backed by few outside his immediate family (his brothers, Frumencio and Jesús, were his most loyal followers), on 20 February 1927 he met with Quintanar in Huejuquilla – historically linked to Huazamota by ties of marriage, trade, and the cult of Huejuquilla’s miraculous image of the Divino Preso⁷⁵⁵ – and was officially incorporated into the regional Cristero forces as ‘Jefe del Esquadrón’ for the Huazamota region, with the rank of major.⁷⁵⁶ A month or so later, at nearby San Juan Capistrano, Sebastián Arroyo ‘se levantaba con 24 hombres... todos bien montados, aunque no municionados,’⁷⁵⁷ further strengthening the Cristero movement in the far south of Durango, and facilitating increased contact between the local Cristeros and those of Zacatecas, Jalisco and Nayarit.

Meanwhile Acevedo, Mayorquín and Vázquez were actively recruiting in the Sierra Tepehuana. Despite a defeat at the hands of Ortíz in March,⁷⁵⁸ and a general shortage of arms and ammunition, Acevedo was described by mid-1927 as controlling ‘la región comprendida desde Llano Grande hasta los límites con el Estado de Sinaloa’⁷⁵⁹ – which would have included San Bernadino. According to oral testimony from Teneraca and Taxicaringa, Federico Vázquez was also using a mixture of persuasion, force and the promise of booty – mainly in the form of cattle – to recruit local leaders

⁷⁵³ ‘El Mayor Florencio...’ in *David*, 22 June 1955

⁷⁵⁴ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.86

⁷⁵⁵ Santiago Ortega

⁷⁵⁶ ‘El Mayor Florencio...’ in *David*, 22 June 1955, p.166

⁷⁵⁷ J. Arroyo, ‘Memorias...’ in *David*, 22 Oct. 1960, p.45

⁷⁵⁸ AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5774, Trinidad Mora, ‘Informe,’ 11 Aug. 1927

⁷⁵⁹ AGN-DGIPS/C/212/E/3, Unsigned military report, N.D. [mid-1927]

and their allies from those communities into his forces at what must have been around the same time (although oral accounts lack explicit information in terms of dates).⁷⁶⁰ By this point Juan Andrés Soto, cacique of Santa María Ocotán, had also declared for the Cristeros, together with his relatives Felipe,⁷⁶¹ Gerardo and José Soto Aguilar.

Meanwhile, Porfirio Mayorquín, who had set up his base in Teneraca's anexo of Jacalitos, had also been recruiting in that community since the beginning of the year, with the help of Estaban Lamas, the parish priest of Huajicori, Nayarit, who had joined his forces.⁷⁶² Mayorquín also pressured José María Gutiérrez – one of San Francisco Ocotán's most important leaders – to join his Cristero band,⁷⁶³ along with many Tepehuanos from San Andrés Milpillas,⁷⁶⁴ and a number of Cora 'conservatives' from Dolores and Santa Teresa, just across the state line in Nayarit.⁷⁶⁵ In July 1927, Mayorquín launched a major offensive against his hometown of Acaponeta, Nayarit. Rangel Gúzman's study of the region's Marian cult contains a detailed account of events in the Acaponeta region during the Cristiada.⁷⁶⁶ Most pertinent here are statements of witnesses to Mayorquín's successful taking of Huajicori and Acaponeta on 27 July, which describe his three-hundred-man force as formed entirely of 'gente de Durango, pura indiada... Llegaron aquí a Huajicori y pos nos cayó de mucho extraño porque pues venían muchos sombrero-dudos,'⁷⁶⁷ hinting at the scale and success of Mayorquín's recruitment drive amongst the Coras and Tepehuanos. In the aftermath of the attack, 'todos los presos que había liberado,

⁷⁶⁰ Magdalena Arrellano Soto; Genaro Santillán Carrillo

⁷⁶¹ E. Rangel Guzmán, *Imágenes e imaginarios...* p. 461

⁷⁶² *ibid.*, p.456

⁷⁶³ Basilio de la Cruz Gutiérrez; Pedro de la Cruz Ramírez

⁷⁶⁴ E. Rangel Guzmán, *Imágenes e imaginarios...* p. 461

⁷⁶⁵ Basilio de la Cruz Gutiérrez; Pedro de la Cruz Ramírez; Nabor Castañeda Lemús

⁷⁶⁶ P. Guzmán Juárez, in E. Rangel Guzmán, *Imágenes e imaginarios...* pp.449-84

⁷⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.456, p.456

policías y [el] comandante' were forced to join Mayorquín's forces,⁷⁶⁸ which supports the assertions of informants in the Gran Nayar today, that Mayorquín's recruitment strategy depended less on inspiring local Indians to 'defend' a faith that in their own communities had never been threatened, and more on the time-honoured Mexican tradition of *la leva*.

Increasing rebel incursions into Nayarit also point to the growing coordination of the rebel bands operating in Durango, Jalisco and Zacatecas. In summer 1927, a Cristero comission set off from San Juan Capistrano to 'conquistar para nuestra Causa al cacique Mejía del pueblo de Jesús María, Nayarit,'⁷⁶⁹ while in October, southern Zacatecan Cristero leader Felipe Sánchez travelled to the Sierra Huichola, where he organised 'gente en el Río de Bolaños y Asqueltán y San Sebastián pueblo de Huicholes, haciendo un contingente como de 500 hombres muy mal parquiados.'⁷⁷⁰ This force, under Juan Bautista, San Sebastián's cacique, would play a key role in the taking of Mezquitic a few months later, which dramatically inverted the normal power relations between San Sebastián and the municipal seat (home to many of the ranchers who had encroached on San Sebastián's communal lands).⁷⁷¹ Bautista's decision to join the Cristeros, as had Barraza's, coincided with the completion of the annual harvest, which marked the beginning of the local 'campaigning season.' It is thus unsurprising that it was also around this time that Santa Catarina's cacique, Agustín Carrillo, was named a Federal colonel by Anacleto López.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.458

⁷⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁷⁰ F. Sánchez, 'La Brigada...' in *David*, 22 Apr. 1958, p.331-332

⁷⁷¹ J. García Landa, 'Ramón...' in *Mi Pueblo*, June 1996, p.19

⁷⁷² J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.30

Throughout 1927, the Sierra Tepehuana had been the site of more intense fighting than the Sierra Huichola, and the Federal counter-insurgency strategy and the flight of many Tepehuanos from their homes had ruined much of that year's harvest. The local Cristeros thus became increasingly dependent on cattle-rustling for sustenance, while cattle-rustling also became a key part of the Federal counter-insurgency campaign in the region.⁷⁷³ Constant raids on Tepehuano rancherías to obtain corn and cattle exacerbated a general shortage of food, and further encouraged local people to take up arms as either rebels or Federal auxiliaries, in order to protect the few supplies they had left, or gain more through raids of their own.

In the Sierra Cora, too, fighting grew more intense towards the end of 1927. In September, Mayorquín had raided El Motaje (an anexo of the Cora communities of Saycota and San Blasito), where 'La maestra... optó por irse con el Jefe rebelde y abandonando la escuela se incorporó al ejercito revolucionario,'⁷⁷⁴ and more local Coras were likely conscripted into Mayorquín's forces.⁷⁷⁵ Further south, in the Cora Baja, individuals opposed to Eutimio Domínguez's rule, and eager to take advantage of the opportunity for plunder presented by the Cristiada, left San Pedro Ixcatán and San Juan Corapan and set up a base in a nearby canyon, from which they raided the surrounding area.⁷⁷⁶ These Cora rebels probably cooperated with another band of Cristeros active around 'Rosa Morada y las rurales de sus contornos... capitaneados por un negro, que hicieron que las maestras de Teponahuastla, Paramita y San Juan Bautista se replegaran al pueblo de Rosa Morada.'⁷⁷⁷ The increasing violence also

⁷⁷³ AAAR/C13/E56/Doc/6782, Sebastián Arroyo to Aurelio Acevedo, 23 Dec. 1927

⁷⁷⁴ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/76, DEFN to DERICI, 31 Dec.1927

⁷⁷⁵ Nabor Castañeda Lemús; Basilio de la Cruz Gutiérrez; Pedro de la Cruz Ramírez

⁷⁷⁶ Agustín Lamas; Erasmo González; Filiberto Sánchez Lovato

⁷⁷⁷ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/76, DEFN to DERICI, 31 Dec.1927

impacted the local economy, and the region was by now suffering a ‘carestía absoluta de todo lo que pudiera decirse elemento de primera necesidad.’⁷⁷⁸

At this stage of the conflict in the Gran Nayar, however, the majority of those Coras who were actively involved in the fighting (themselves a minority compared to the ‘pacíficos’ who made up the bulk of the Cora population), were members of the local pro-government Defensas controlled by Domínguez or Mejía. Domínguez and his loyalist Defensa quickly crushed most of the Cora rebels operating in the Cora Baja, and in October 1927, in a newspaper article entitled ‘Indios Coras Baten a los Rebeldes: En Nayarit los nativos luchan por que vuelva la paz,’ the two caciques of the Sierra Cora were described as commanding a total force of ‘más de 600 naturales perfectamente armados y municionados,’ which had ‘contribuido eficazmente al exterminio de las partidas de rebeldes que estaban siendo un amago para la tranquilidad de la región Norte de esta Entidad.’⁷⁷⁹

But by mid-November rebels were again reported as ‘asaltando pueblos y fusilando a todos los elementos agraristas u obregonistas,’ while as ‘los batallones y regimientos son de muy reciente formación, los reclutas se pasan con armas y parque al lado de los rebeldes, entorpeciendo la labor de pacificación.’⁷⁸⁰ Federal failures were blamed on the leadership of zone commander Teodoro Escalona – a veteran Carrancista General from Veracruz who ‘desconocía por completo el terreno del Estado [y] no pudo perseguir a esos grupos rebeldes’ – and by the end of the month he had been replaced as zone commander by Juventino Espinosa, ‘un General Nayarita que conoce

⁷⁷⁸ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/36, Navarro to DEFN, 26 Oct. 1927

⁷⁷⁹ ‘En Nayarit Los Nativos Luchan Por Que Vuelva La Paz,’ 14 Octubre 1927

⁷⁸⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38896/E/29, DEFN to Dir. Misiones Culturales, 11 Nov.1927

perfectamente al Estado y que podrá perseguir y quizá destruir por completo a esos grupos rebeldes que no dejan trabajar a los habitantes de los pequeños poblados.⁷⁸¹

But top-level personnel changes could not solve the problem of lower-level defections to the Cristeros, especially in the Sierra Cora, where Mejía and Domínguez increasingly struggled to maintain control of

‘los indios, porque les llegan comisionados de varios Estados como Durango, Zacatecas y Jalisco, que desean se levante toda la indiada cora y huichol en contra del Gobierno Federal... Don Mariano Mejía y Don Eutimio [Domínguez], gobernadores de ambas Sierras, han hecho todo lo que han podido por convencer a toda aquella gente que no es oportuno molestar al Gobierno Federal y han estado aplazando ese levantamiento. No sé que conducta observe el nuevo Jefe de las armas en el Estado, pues sería un verdadero problema militar en razón de ser más de 10,000 indios los que pueblan esas comarcas.’⁷⁸²

As in many other regions of Mexico,⁷⁸³ the violence and geographical reach of the Cristiada reached its apogee in the Gran Nayar in 1928. In January, a Cristero force of mestizos from northern Jalisco and southern Zacatecas,⁷⁸⁴ and Juan Bautista’s San Sebastián Huichols,⁷⁸⁵ took Mezquitic, whose pro-government Defensa was seen as a threat to Quintanar’s Cristero ‘capital’ at Huejuquilla.⁷⁸⁶ The Cristeros routed Mezquitic’s Defensa and burned much of the town,⁷⁸⁷ before defeating the surviving Defensa members who had regrouped at the nearby Hacienda de Totuate (where Luz

⁷⁸¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/31, DEFN, ‘Informe,’ 30 Nov. 1927

⁷⁸² *ibid.*

⁷⁸³ cf. J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.211-55; J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* p.85-7, p.176

⁷⁸⁴ Among them José ‘Pepe’ Sánchez, who had initially formed part of a local pro-government Defensa but had defected to Quintanar’s forces soon after (S. Martínez, in M. Caldera and L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.122-123)

⁷⁸⁵ J. Arroyo, ‘Memorias...’ in *David*, 22 Apr. 1963, p.132

⁷⁸⁶ AAAR/C/13/E/54/Doc/6381, Quintanar to A. Acevedo, Jan. 1928

⁷⁸⁷ A. Carlos de la Torre, in *ibid.*, pp.126-128

and Natividad Robles were killed).⁷⁸⁸ A Cristero government was then established in the ruins of the pueblo.⁷⁸⁹

In the Cora Alta, under pressure from the local population and Cristero commissions, as well as Mayorquín's raids, Mariano Mejía had switched his allegiance to the Cristeros by early 1928.⁷⁹⁰ The Cora Defensas under his command – the same men once described as 'los únicos que se han preocupado por defender sus lugares' – chose, or were compelled, to follow Mejía in his defection, forcing the few teachers left in the region to flee to Tepic, 'espantadas y huyendo de las hordas fanáticas que entraron a esos pueblos.'⁷⁹¹ The Cora conservatives who already sympathised with the Cristeros were thus temporarily reunited with Mejía's 'cosmopolitan' allies under the banner of their joint rebellion against the Callista state, while many of the 'pacíficos' who had so far avoided involvement in the conflict on either side – often the inhabitants of more isolated rancherías who had not been drawn into the factional conflicts of the immediate post-revolutionary years – were incorporated into the ranks of the Cora rebels on the strength of promises of arms and booty, and the threat of the violence towards those who refused to join what must have then appeared to be the winning side.⁷⁹²

From being a pro-government bulwark against the incursions of Cristeros from neighbouring areas, the Cora Alta was thus transformed into a centre of rebel activity within a few days' march of the state capital, which Mejía attempted to take in

⁷⁸⁸ M. Mercado Bermúdez, 'Me Casé...' in *Mi Pueblo*, Jan. 1996, p.3

⁷⁸⁹ P. Bañuelos Martínez, in M. Caldera, L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.166

⁷⁹⁰ Aurelio Cánare etc...

⁷⁹¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38897/E/9, Calderon, 'Informe,' 31 Jan. 1928

⁷⁹² Fernando Muñiz Rafael; Aurelio Cánare; Enendino Escobeda Mejía

January 1928. Where the Sierra gives way to Nayarit's central altiplano at Pochotitán, only a short distance from Tepic, Mejía's army met the loyalist local Defensa and a small detachment of Federal troops under Major Reyes Orozco.⁷⁹³ Mejía's forces established themselves on the hills surrounding Pochotitán, and shelled the town with his government-supplied mortars, destroying a school that the troops had been using as their barracks.⁷⁹⁴ However, Mejía's repeated attempts to take Pochotitán were repulsed by the loyalist forces, which forced him to make a defensive retreat back into the Sierra, during which his Cora troops, experts at guerrilla fighting, rolled boulders down the mountain slopes and caused heavy casualties amongst the Federal troops pursuing them.⁷⁹⁵

Eutimio Domínguez had meanwhile remained loyal to the government. This split the Sierra Cora in two. Since Calles feared that 'el movimiento subversivo desarrollado en Nayarit tenía alguna importancia,' he ordered General Antonio Ríos Zertuche, Sonora's zone commander, to march south 'con suficientes fuerzas... para combatir la sedición que amenazaba desarrollarse.'⁷⁹⁶ Although not as devastating as the internecine conflicts in the Huichol region,⁷⁹⁷ a rare burst of inter-communal conflict in the Sierra Cora followed, as Domínguez and his allies – including a group of Coras from La Mesa who, under the leadership of former bandit Mariano Solís, switched their allegiance from Mejía to Domínguez as the latter marched through their

⁷⁹³ R. Meza Aguirre, *Nayarit Memoria Oral...* p.52-3

⁷⁹⁴ Francisco Gómez Rosales and Alberto Casas Barrada

⁷⁹⁵ *ibid.*; Aurelio Cánare; Fernando Muñiz Rafael

⁷⁹⁶ AGN-DGIPS/C/220/E/1, clipping from 'Excelsior de México,' 2 Mar. 1928

⁷⁹⁷ P. C. Weigand, 'Role of the Huichol...' p.169

community – attacked and burned rancherías and ‘confiscated’ cattle throughout the Cora Alta.⁷⁹⁸

Worried by the stalling of Mejía’s rebellion, Jesús Degollado, commander of the ‘División del Sur’ operating in Colima, western Jalisco and southern Nayarit,⁷⁹⁹ sent José Gutiérrez Gutiérrez to the Sierra in late January, to put an end to ‘la anarquía e imponer la disciplina a ciertos elementos que parecían confundir la defensa de “la causa” con sus intereses personales.’⁸⁰⁰ Gutiérrez met with Mejía and his allies in Huaynamota,⁸⁰¹ Mejía’s birthplace and one of his last strongholds in the Sierra. In his memoirs, Gutiérrez leaves an interesting description of the Cristero bands of the Sierra Cora, whose numerous chiefs by this point commanded only

‘grupos pequeños que en conjunto apenas si llegaban a formar escasamente un regimiento, pintoresco y simpático por cierto, pues quedaría constituido por soldados de muy variados tipos; desde el blanco de buena apariencia física, bien vestido y con alguna instrucción, hasta el ignorante y humilde indio huichol que vestía miserablemente y estaba armado de un arco y un manojo de flechas. Esto del armamento era en aquel puñado de indomables cristeros otro capítulo de singular atractivo.’⁸⁰²

Most of Mejía’s rifles were old and rusty, and many of his Indian troops, although ‘ya duchos en el manejo de la 30-30,’ had only bows and arrows to fight with. Furthermore, the rebels were desperately short of ammunition and strategic know-

⁷⁹⁸ AHSEP-84-85/C/38876/E/17, Orozco to DEFN, 9 Feb. 1928; Aurelio Cánare; Fernando Muñiz Rafael

⁷⁹⁹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.105

⁸⁰⁰ *ibid.*, i, p.227

⁸⁰¹ On the advice of Governor Ramírez Romano, Mejía had rejected an earlier Federal attempt to win his surrender (AGN-DGIPS/C/232/E/22, D. Galicia Ortega to Francisco M. Delgado). Despite his anti-clerical rhetoric, Ramírez Romano had in fact ‘privately maintained close relationships with Catholic leaders, including the head of Nayarit’s Knights of Columbus,’ and was deposed in spring 1928 after ‘his tailor found a scapular in his suit and denounced him’ (B. Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation...* p.3)

⁸⁰² J. Gutiérrez, *Mis recuerdos...* ii, p.30

how, as Mejía's failed attack on Pochotitán had demonstrated. Mejía and his lieutenants claimed that

‘Los suscritos, con grupos de gente armada que operamos por la región de Huainamota, no tenemos ambiciones de mando; queremos que venga a organizarnos un Jefe que sea cristero y capaz; queremos parque y solamente parque; queremos trabajar unidos para que la campaña sea verdaderamente eficaz; que nuestros enemigos la sientan.’⁸⁰³

Gutiérrez assured Mejía and his men that such help would shortly be forthcoming, and hurried back to Guadalajara. However, ‘al no ver cumplidas las promesas que el Control Militar de Occidente nos había autorizado a hacerles,’⁸⁰⁴ Mejía signed a peace deal with Nayarit's military authorities in Pochotitán, where his rebel forces, ‘pasando entre dos filas de soldados con las cobijas en el hombro y las armas con las boquillas hacia el suelo,’ heaped their weapons together in the town square, ‘rociándolas con petróleo [y] prendiéndoles fuego en un acto simbólico como terminación de la lucha social.’⁸⁰⁵ The pro-government press reported that in Nayarit, ‘la pacificación actualmente es completa, debido a la enérgica batida que han llevado a cabo las tropas federales en dicha comarca,’⁸⁰⁶ and Mejía himself was sent to the Islas Marías prison colony.⁸⁰⁷ His men, however, were amnestied and reincorporated as Federal auxiliaries under Mariano Solís and León Contreras, Mejía's Cora compadre and former lieutenant.

At this point, southern Durango's Tepehuano population faced increasing pressure from both pro-government and pro-Cristero forces. In March Federal forces defeated

⁸⁰³ *ibid.*, p.33

⁸⁰⁴ *ibid.*, pp.39-40

⁸⁰⁵ R. Meza Aguirre, *Nayarit Memoria Oral...* p.52-3

⁸⁰⁶ AGN-DGIPS/C/220/E/1, clipping from ‘El Eco de Nayarit,’ N.D. [early 1928]

⁸⁰⁷ ⁸⁰⁷ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.104

Valente Acevedo and burned Llano Grande, before heading on towards the San Bernadino (where they presumably tried to recruit, or already had, local allies).⁸⁰⁸ Mora and Mayorquín arrived with reinforcements too late to help Acevedo defend his village and, with the population scattered and food supplies destroyed, all they could find to eat was honey (as the soldiers had forgotten to burn a couple of bee hives).⁸⁰⁹ The second aspect of Federal counter-insurgency strategy came into play soon after, as the Federals, now backed by a large number of ‘agraristas’ – presumably local, as the Cristeros at first mistook them for ‘gente que quedó a venir a juntarse con nosotros’⁸¹⁰ – attacked Mora, Acevedo and Mayorquín. The rebels were again forced to retreat and headed deeper into the Sierra, where the local Tepehuanos vanished at the first sign of their approach. Campos writes that:

‘llegamos a un rancho de indios, pero no había gente, vimos que en un lugar estaba saliendo vapor y buscamos a ver que era y era un horno que habían puesto maguey a cocer y seguramente sintieron los inditos algo malo y se fueron dejando solo aquel rancho; ya nos pusimos a sacar aquella tatemá para comer, pero estaba completamente crudo todo el mezcal. No pudimos comer nada...’⁸¹¹

As the violence caused increasing local economic hardship, increasing numbers of men – and in many cases children – were forced to take up arms themselves.⁸¹² Many of these local people now joined pro-government groups, led by caciques such as Santa María’s Cosme Solís, and Ascensión ‘Chon’ Aguilar, son of Gregorio, who is first mentioned in written sources in April 1928 as leader of the pro-government forces of Xoconoxtle.⁸¹³ In the same month, another group of Tepehuano

⁸⁰⁸ F. Campos, ‘Santiago...’ in *David*, 22 Mar. 1956, p.320

⁸⁰⁹ *ibid.*

⁸¹⁰ F. Campos, ‘Santiago...’ in *David*, 22 Apr. 1956, p.336

⁸¹¹ *ibid.*

⁸¹² Arturo Soto Reyes; Saturnino Solís Mendoza

⁸¹³ *ibid.*

‘Gobiernistas o enemigos de la causa’ from Santa María, led by Manuel, Saturnino and Hilario Flores, and Gregorio, Sixto and Hilario Mendía (cousins of Cosme Solís), established a base in the Mexicanero community of San Pedro Jícoras, and began to recruit local people to their cause. Juan Andrés Soto and his men raided San Pedro, defeated the pro-government forces, and seized sixty cows, thirteen horses and a rifle. However, a month later Soto reported that in Santa María Ocotán, ‘otros nuevos Gobiernistas... se unieron con los dichos callistas Mendías y los Flores para hacerse de más número grande de enemigos.’⁸¹⁴

In northern Jalisco, the Huichols of San Andrés found themselves similarly caught between the Cristero forces in control of Huejuquilla and San Sebastián to their north and east, and the Federals and newly pro-government Cora Defensas now active to their south and west. This dual pressure probably helps to explain the community’s continuing efforts to remain neutral, as expressed in a letter sent by the governor of San Andrés to Quintanar in February 1928, which claimed that ‘emos estado guardando la palabra que Ud. nos dijo que ni nos metieramos ha ningun partido y biviamos en paz libres y pacíficos como siempre.’⁸¹⁵ However, Juan Bautista’s men put increasing pressure on their neighbours to join the Cristero cause – claiming that the Huichols of San Andrés ‘Ila son de nuestro gente’ in March 1928,⁸¹⁶ for example – and at the same time launched punitive raids against pro-government Huichols. They carried out cattle thefts on a grand scale, stole sacred images and objects, and kidnapped women to work for them as cooks and porters. And they also symbolically destroyed the tukis and xirikite of rancherías that refused to join their cause, or that

⁸¹⁴ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/7029, Juan Andrés Soto et al., to Quintanar, 23 June 1928

⁸¹⁵ J. Antonio de la Cruz to Quintanar, N.D., in J. Meyer, *La Cristiada*, iii, p.30

⁸¹⁶ Juan Bautista to Quintanar, 17 Mar. 1928, in *ibid.*

were associated with Santa Catarina – San Sebastián’s main political and territorial rival – or with Tuxpan, San Sebastián’s semi-independent anexo, which had resisted Bautista’s influence and remained loyal to the government.⁸¹⁷ Many of Tuxpan’s inhabitants were forced to ‘refugiarse en los poblados circunvecinos, como Real de Bolaños y Villa e Guerrero, con objeto de salvaguardar su vida y la de los suyos.’⁸¹⁸ In San Sebastián itself, those who ‘disagreed with the preaching of the Holy War... were [also] forced to flee, first the [communal cabecera], and then the comunidad in general.’⁸¹⁹

San Sebastián had by now become a refuge for priests and civilian Cristero sympathisers, as well as a base for mestizo Cristero guerrillas.⁸²⁰ The community also formed an important bulwark against the advance of the pro-government forces that once again dominated the Sierras of Nayarit. However, San Sebastián was increasingly pressured by the Defensa of Huajimic,⁸²¹ ‘feudo de los Muñoz, caciques hostiles a los cristeros y aliados de los Guzmanes de Bolaños.’⁸²² The enmity between the two communities was connected to the long-running territorial conflict between them. The Federal government’s regional military goals in the context of the Cristiada gave Huajimic’s Defensa leaders a convenient excuse to continue their invasion of San Sebastián’s communal territory, and Petronilo Munoz alone seized around 2,000 hectares of land claimed by San Sebastián during 1928.⁸²³

⁸¹⁷ Jesús Mercado González; Julio Robles Robles; Antonio Candelario; Emelia (Xuturima) Hernández García; Salvador Sánchez

⁸¹⁸ AGA-D/276.1/79/leg.1/CCA/RTBC/Tuxpan, Eleuterio Torres to Dept. Agrario, 8 May 1949

⁸¹⁹ P. C. Weigand, ‘Co-operative Labour Groups...’ p.20

⁸²⁰ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/6951, H. Cabral to A. Acevedo, 1 June 1928

⁸²¹ AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6864, Ramón Acevedo to Quintanar, 26 Apr. 1928

⁸²² ⁸²² J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.215

⁸²³ AGA-D/276.1/79/leg.4/CCA/RTBC/San Sebastián, Dept. Agrario Report, 5 June 1939

Quintanar recognised the threat that pro-government forces in the Sierras of Nayarit posed to his Huichol allies, and in May 1928 ordered simultaneous attacks on Huajimíc, Jesús María, San Juan Peyotán and Huazamota, hoping to gain control of the Jesús María canyon and the entire eastern edge of the Cora Alta.⁸²⁴ A force of 210 men, under Quintanar's lieutenant Aureliano Ramírez and Florencio Estrada, were sent to take Huazamota,⁸²⁵ which had become an increasingly isolated pro-government enclave, cut off from contact with Mezquital by the 'bolas de revolucionarios' that surrounded it.⁸²⁶ Estrada and Ramírez arriving on the morning of 6 May. After several hours of 'reñido combate,' los Muñoz and fifteen Defensa members were forced back from their original stronghold to 'la fortín de la torre,' losing three dead and seven prisoners in their retreat; an hour later, the surviving twenty-five defenders surrendered, four of whom were promptly shot.⁸²⁷ The violence did not stop there, however, as while Florencio celebrated his victory,

'los incontenibles cristeros comenzaron a pasar a cuchillo a quienes les habían presentado resistencia. Sólo las súplicas de las mujeres al jefe Florencio, por la vida de los Muñoz, detuvo la masacre de los huazamotecos pacíficos y gobiernistas y prolongó el aliento vengador a los Muñoz.'⁸²⁸

However, Federal forces arrived in Jesús María in time to help repel a Cristero attack on that community,⁸²⁹ while the arrival of pro-government reinforcements from Huaynamota forced Bautista's men,⁸³⁰ backed by mestizo rebels from Zacatecas,⁸³¹ to

⁸²⁴ AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6877, A. Acevedo to LNDR Valparaíso, 9 May 1928

⁸²⁵ J. Arroyo, 'Memorias...' in *David*, Mar. 1965, p.130

⁸²⁶ AHED-M/C/5/E/137, Antonio Gutiérrez to Gob. Dgo., 1 Apr. 1928

⁸²⁷ *ibid.*

⁸²⁸ A. Estrada in A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.159

⁸²⁹ AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6904, A. Ramírez to Col. R.R. Cárdenas, 23 May 1928; AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6877, A. Acevedo to LNDR Valparaíso, 9 May 1928

⁸³⁰ AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6925, F. Romero to Quintanar, 29 May 1928

draw back from an attack on Huajimic.⁸³² On 20 May these combined Cristero forces managed to briefly take San Juan Peyotán (the members of whose Federal garrison and Defensa ‘se encontraban... huyendo por los montes cercanos’), but the rebels were again forced to retreat at the approach of Federal reinforcements from Jesús María.⁸³³

Their failure to take and hold the region was a set-back for the rebels. A second campaign was therefore planned in July, during a meeting between Aurelio Acevedo (representing Quintanar), Florencio Estrada, Valente Acevedo, Federico Vázquez and Porfirio Mayorquín, at the latter’s base in Jacalitos, Durango.⁸³⁴ The rebel leaders agreed to collaborate more closely in the future, and a new attack was launched on Huajimic in August, by a combined force made up of Quintanar-aligned Cristeros from northern Jalisco (including the Huichols of San Sebastián),⁸³⁵ together with autonomous rebel bands then operating in southern Nayarit under Luis Anaya, and the remaining Cristeros of the Bolaños canyon.⁸³⁶ Their overall strategy seems to have been similar to that used in May, but adapted to take advantage of the heavy seasonal rains:

‘Una columna de defensores recoriera por el cañon de Jesus María, hasta atacar Guajimí a la vez otra ataca por la cordillera de San Sebastián... con el objeto de que no tengan aviso; por que si ya no tienen la ayuda de los de San Juan [Peyotán] o Jesús María, mas que la que en Guajimí estén, de Tepic ya no la tienen, por que ya no es tiempo por que con una tormenta se quedan cortados por el rio Grande o de Santiago.’⁸³⁷

⁸³¹ A. Acevedo, ‘Los Renovadores (Escobaristas),’ in *David*, Feb. 1965, p.107

⁸³² *ibid.*

⁸³³ AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6904, A. Ramírez to Col. R.R. Cárdenas, 23 May 1928

⁸³⁴ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/7025, Montellano to A. Ramírez, 20 June 1928

⁸³⁵ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/7161, Federico Romero to Quintanar, 30 July 1928; AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7178, Montellano to B. Miranda, 2 Aug. 1928

⁸³⁶ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/7161, Federico Romero to Quintanar, 30 July 1928

⁸³⁷ AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6925, Federico Romero to Quintanar, 29 May 1928

At the same time, the forces of Florencio and Frumencio Estrada, Porfirio Mayorquín, Juan Andrés Soto's close relative Pedro, and Quintanar's right-hand man Aureliano Ramírez,⁸³⁸ assembled near Huazamota for a joint advance on San Juan Peyotán.⁸³⁹ While this attack failed, due primarily to a shortage of ammunition,⁸⁴⁰ it nonetheless provided enough of a distraction to local Federal and Defensa forces to enable Anaya, Bautista and their allies to attack and successfully destroy part of Huajimic,⁸⁴¹ including its abandoned government school.⁸⁴²

Around the same time, in the Sierra Tepehuana, Juan Andrés Soto proved that he and his men were more than just cattle-rustlers by ambushing Colonel José Ruíz and a Federal column at Cerro de las Papas (on the boundary between Santa María and Teneraca). In the Sierra Tepehuana this attack remains the best-known event of 'la revolución' today. Ruíz had by now been battling Cristero forces in the Sierra for more than a year, patrolling 'las quebradas de Taxicaringa, de Teneraca y otros pueblos de indígenas pero lo más la pierde siempre regresa a Durango, faltándole algunos soldados.'⁸⁴³ His own death came in June at Cerro de las Papas. Trinidad Mora and a small group of men had set off from Cerro Gordo for 'la sierra de la Candelaria,' within the territory of Santa María Ocotán, where they decided to rest for the night at a ranchería called Comales. There the pro-Cristero Tepehuano inhabitants

⁸³⁸ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7249, Quintanar to A. Ramírez, 14 Aug. 1928

⁸³⁹ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7232, A. Ramírez to Quintanar, 11 Aug. 1928

⁸⁴⁰ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7232, Ramírez to Quintanar, 11 Aug. 1928

⁸⁴¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38858/E/16, M. Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 13 Oct. 1930

⁸⁴² *ibid.*

⁸⁴³ A. Campos, 'Santiago...' in *David*, 22 June 1961, p.181

were ‘celebrando un mitote según su costumbre.’⁸⁴⁴ Mora and some twenty-five others left for Huejuquilla the next day to meet with Quintanar, while the rest of his group stayed at Comales. That afternoon, while they enjoyed an impromptu post-*xiotalh* fiesta,

‘llegaron dos poblanos [tepehuanos] como sorprendidos nos hablaban en tepehuán, nos hacían señas por un lado y otro, pero no les comprendimos ni ellos nos entendieron y no llegamos a ningún entendimiento, por fin se fueron y nosotros nos quedamos pensando que algún peligro había... Suspendimos la fiesta y nos quedamos pensando sobre la embajada indígena, y como a las cinco de la tarde llegaron otros dos poblanos más castellanos y nos dijeron que subían dos columnas de federales, una que subía por la Candelaria y la otra por otro lado tratando de sitiarnos; los poblanos se fueron.’⁸⁴⁵

The Federals had been marching to Xoconoxtle – where Ruíz planned to meet with Chon Aguilar and his pro-government Defensa – when they learned that Mora’s men were nearby.⁸⁴⁶ Night fell before they could engage the rebels, however, and Ruíz and his men ‘se fueron a un rancho donde radicaba un poblano que al paracer era del gobierno pero fingido, lo hacía nada más porque no le quitaron sus intereses.’ This man – named in the ‘Corrido de Juan Soto’ as ‘Lucio Carrillo’⁸⁴⁷ (perhaps in reality the Cristero commander Luciano Carrillo) – assured Ruíz that he would lead them to the Cristeros the next day. Instead, he and the rest of the local men led the Federals straight into an ambush, after first rolling up their white cotton trousers so as to be recognised by Juan Andrés Soto’s Tepehuano Cristero force, who lay in wait above

⁸⁴⁴ A. Campos, ‘El Combate del Cerro de las Papas,’ 22 July 1964, p.391: Despite the violence, descent-group rituals were therefore still being performed in the Sierra at this point, even if members of the descent group who had taken a different side in the conflict had by now established separate *xiotalh* patios, in effect splitting family groups along political lines (cf. N. P. Alvarado Solís, *Atar la vida...* p.140)

⁸⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁴⁶ Saturnino Solís Mendoza

⁸⁴⁷ *Corrido de Juan Andrés Soto*

the narrow path taken by the soldiers, bounded on one side by a sheer rock wall and on the other by a precipice:

‘Llegados al lugar elegido, los indios hicieron señas al Ejército de que avanzara como si no hubiera peligro y abrieron fuego. Los soldados venían muy sin cuidado, porque ni en las manos traían los rifles... y empezaron a caer como ratones en la ratonera.’⁸⁴⁸

It is unclear how many soldiers died in the ambush – Antonio Estrada claims the rather outlandish figure of three hundred,⁸⁴⁹ and some of the stories told in the Sierra today feature even greater Federal losses.⁸⁵⁰ What is clear is that the ambush left few survivors, and until the 1970s empty cartridges could be found in the forest near Cerro de las Papas, whose pines were still pockmarked by Cristero bullets.⁸⁵¹ The story highlights the dangers inherent in the Federal reliance on civilian auxiliaries, and shows the difficulties that mestizo outsiders – whether Federals or Cristeros – faced in trying to communicate with the inhabitants of the Gran Nayar in this period, which increased the dependence of these outsiders on local, Spanish-speaking leaders.

This dependence further increased the influence of local caciques, who used the violence of the Cristiada to pursue their own goals. For example, after his victory at Cerro de las Papas, Juan Andrés Soto attempted to consolidate his control of the region. In Santa María Ocotán, seventy of his men, under Gerardo Aguilar, tracked down ‘la autoridad... nombrado por el Gobierno, él que agarraron lla muerto para haver corrido tan luego que vió nuestros compañeros.’⁸⁵² Luciano Carrillo also attacked a pro-government Defensa then being formed in the neighbouring

⁸⁴⁸ A. Campos, ‘El Combate...’ in *David*, 22 July 1964, p.39

⁸⁴⁹ A. Estrada, *Rescoldo...* p.128

⁸⁵⁰ eg. Arturo Soto Reyes

⁸⁵¹ Saturnino Solís Mendoza

⁸⁵² AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/7029, Juan Andrés Soto et al., to Quintanar, 23 June 1928

community of San Francisco Ocotán, ‘donde logró de capturarlo al Callista cabecilla que pretendía hacer el movimiento [quién] inmediatamente fue exterminado.’⁸⁵³

Soto was also aware that he needed to cement his political control over Santa María by curbing the excesses of his own forces. He wrote to Quintanar in late June that the Tepehuanos of one of Santa María’s rancherías had complained to him that the local pro-Cristeros

‘siempre tratan de estar haciendo gustos como bailes y borracheras, escandalos todo eso; por lo cual me ha cido pocible participarle a Ud. para que se sirva remediar tales dificultades havidos y por su horden sean impididos dichos avusos, por que los que andamos en defenza de nuestra causa no conviene de ninguna manera de que hagan reuniones en esos ranchos como dicen los dichos quejosos.’⁸⁵⁴

Quintanar’s lieutenant in Huejuquilla, Luis Montellano, warned Soto to act with ‘prudencia, mucha prudencia, no sea que por una mala voluntad o un acto que en si mismo sea sencillo se le dé una mala interpretación y se cometa alguna injusticia.’⁸⁵⁵

He also sent Soto a copy of the ‘Ordamamiento General’ recently drafted at a meeting of the Cristero civil authorities in Mezquitic, and stressed the need for Soto to organise his own administration in the Sierra, which meant establishing a postal service, sending weekly reports to Huejuquilla, formng his men into squadrons ‘organizados segun las bases que para ello dió la Liga,’ and fighting ‘sin descanso... todos aquellos que no quieran sujetarse al órden.’⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵³ *ibid.*

⁸⁵⁴ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/7059, Juan Andrés Soto, Gerardo Aguilar, to Quintanar, 22 June 1928

⁸⁵⁵ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7189, Montellano to Juan Andrés Soto, 28 June 1928

⁸⁵⁶ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/7056, Montellano to Juan Andrés Soto, 3 July 1928

In response to Quintanar's advice, Soto and his men elected the mestizo Juan Sifuentes as their new commander-in-chief, 'por ser más capas para el desempeño de dicho cargo.'⁸⁵⁷ A literate Spanish-speaker who had completed four years of primary school,⁸⁵⁸ and had married a local woman and settled in the community before the outbreak of the rebellion,⁸⁵⁹ Sifuentes was an ideal choice to bridge the cultural and ideological distance between Quintanar's mestizo Catholic rebel administration and the faction in Santa María aligned with the Aguilar and Soto clans. His appointment was quickly approved by Quintanar's rebel command, who hoped that in addition to organising 'la jente voluntaria' and 'recoj[iendo] armas, caballos, monturas y toda clase de elementos de guerra,'⁸⁶⁰ he might also be able to 'unificar en lo posible el mando de los contingentes diseminados por la sierra de Santa María de Ocotán y Pueblos vecinos.'⁸⁶¹ However, Sifuentes depended on Soto for the support of the local Tepehuano population, and Soto himself thus remained pre-eminent in Santa María,⁸⁶² where he was able to secure Quintanar's recognition of his ally Fernando Cumplido as the community's gobernador, 'en atención a su simpatia por nuestra Santa Causa.'⁸⁶³

On the government side, Durango's zone commander General Urbalejo also began to name new Jefes de Defensa in many Tepehuano (and probably Mexicanero) communities. Although supposedly acting 'de común acuerdo con los vecinos y autoridades de cada lugar,' and with their role restricted to guaranteeing the civil

⁸⁵⁷ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/7036, Juan Andrés Soto et al., to Quintanar, 30 June 1928

⁸⁵⁸ AHSEP-68-69/C/37441/E/10, DEFD to DERICI, 13 Nov.1933:

⁸⁵⁹ Saturnino Mendoza Solís

⁸⁶⁰ AAAR/C/12/E/47/Doc/5747, Montellano to J. Sifuentes, 28 July 1928

⁸⁶¹ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7191, Montellano to Estrada, 4 Aug. 1928

⁸⁶² Eulogio Ciriano Flores; Trinidad Morales Rodríguez

⁸⁶³ AAAR/C/12/E/47/Doc/5754, Quintanar to F. Cumplido, 15 Oct. 1928; AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5764, Quintanar to J. Jesús García, 26 Nov. 1928

authorities the security they needed to act with ‘absoluta libertad,’⁸⁶⁴ Urbalejo obviously empowered those local caciques whom he believed he could rely on,⁸⁶⁵ or who already led pro-government factions. The request of the pro-government Defensa commanders in Santa María for a new official seal – an important symbol of authority⁸⁶⁶ – for ‘nuestro Gobernador... porque los rebeldes nos an recojido,’⁸⁶⁷ indicates that the pro-government faction had also named a new traditional gobernador; a situation that would have utterly undermined everything that the traditional authorities were meant to stand for. Thus the feuds that had riven the community, the flight of much of the civilian population (including many of the elders and traditional government officials upon whom the selection and legitimisation of traditional offices normally depended), and the availability of arms and powerful outside allies, allowed young military leaders to take control of the gerontocratic power structures that traditionally oversaw both the political and religious life of each community.

Quintanar’s Cristeros also became increasingly involved in the internal life of the Huichol communities around this time, which Huichol caciques similarly attempted to use to their own advantage. A faction in San Andrés sought an alliance with Quintanar, and asked him to send ‘unos hombres de la gente católica’ to arrest a local ‘huichol gobiernista’ who had taken refuge in pro-Government Santa Catarina. They alleged that this individual, who ‘sabe bien el terreno,’ had offered to guide Federal troops to San Andrés, threatening both the neutrality and safety of the community.

⁸⁶⁴ AGN/O-C/428-J-6, Gral. Francisco Urbalejo to Pres., 16 Aug. 1928

⁸⁶⁵ AHED-FR/C/4/E/280, Urbalejo to Heredia, 30 Nov. 1928

⁸⁶⁶ A. Reyes Valdez, *Formas de gobierno...* p.35

⁸⁶⁷ AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7395, Saturnino Flores to Residents of Sta María de Ocotán, 19 Sept. 1928,

Personal reasons were also involved, however, as the ‘gobiernista le quitó la mujer’ from one of the petitioners, as punishment for not helping his pro-government force, and ‘por eso se hinteresa en que Ud. les preste garantías para arreglar sus negocios.’⁸⁶⁸

It is also likely that this faction was encouraged by the Cristero victories in the Sierra Tepehuana and Sierra Cora over the last months (which would have been perceived particularly keenly in San Andrés, the only Huichol community to border both of these areas), to try to back the ‘winning’ side by declaring themselves ‘muy adictos al partido [cristero].’⁸⁶⁹ The assassination of Obregón in August, and the publication of Cristero commander-in-chief General Enrique Gorostieta’s *Plan de Los Altos* in October,⁸⁷⁰ bolstered local perceptions of the the Cristeros as ‘winning,’ despite a shortage of food and ammunition. While the San Andrés pro-Cristeros were still not sufficiently convinced of the certainty of a rebel victory to commit to active participation in the rebellion, their having ‘manifestado su deseo de no ser considerados como adictos al tirano Calles y socios’ was enough for Quintanar to grant them ‘plenas garantías para vivir en páz y dedicarse a sus labores abituales.’⁸⁷¹ This probably also reflects Quintanar’s recognition of the importance of the Sierra Huichola to his campaigns in both Nayarit and northern Jalisco, and the advantages that keeping the Huichol communities on his side conferred on the Cristero cause.

⁸⁶⁸ AAAR/C/13/E/55/Doc/6599, ‘Residents’ of San Andrés to Quintanar, N.D., 1928

⁸⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁷⁰ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7227, A. Acevedo to Estrada, 10 Aug. 1928

⁸⁷¹ AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7429, Montellano to ‘Residents’ of San Andrés, 30 Sept. 1928

This is also reflected in his response to a request to curb Cristero attacks on the ‘huicholes pacíficos’ of Santa Catarina. Community leader Juan García, who had been involved in Santa Catarina’s earlier agrarian claims,⁸⁷² alleged that:

‘por causa de Antonio Agustín Carrillo, Antonio Avila y otros que tomaron las armas en contra del partido que Ud. defiende, estamos sufriendo y émos sufrido crueles molestias y como estos todos los armados an retirandose a fuera de estos ranchos, y solo quedamos los pacíficos que en nada nos emos mesclado, trabajando para mantener nuestras familias, temiendo la día ser molestados por las escoltas de ese partido así como por los huicholes del Pueblo de San Sebastián, emos creido conveniente dirigirnos a Ud. suplicándole con todo en [caso de que] nos haga la gracia de acordar lo conveniente a fin de que sean respetado nuestras familias, nuestras personas e intereses, ofreciendo a Ud. [que] siempre seremos pacíficos como asta hoy.’⁸⁷³

Quintanar agreed to order a halt to attacks on Santa Catarina’s neutral comuneros by ‘los soldados catolicos que pasan por esos pueblos, así como de los nativos del pueblo de San Sebastián,’ on the condition that

‘nos den aviso inmediato de cualquier movimiento que nuestros enemigos hagan por esos rumbos y que en caso de que se presente algun huichol o vecino de los que se levantaron en armas en contra de nuestra religión, lo hagan preso y lo entreguen en la Comandancia de Tenzompa o en esta Jefatura. Esto porque si Uds. permiten a los enemigos que sin rendirse, vivan con Uds. nosotros no podemos estar conformes con eso y nuestros soldados seguirán teniendo desconfianza de Uds. y en ese no poderemos reprenderlos.’⁸⁷⁴

Shortly after this exchange the Cristeros of Tenzompa marched on Santa Catarina’s anexos of Taimarita and Pedernales at the request of Juan Bautista. Juan García met with them and managed to obtain from these outsiders arms for himself and various followers.⁸⁷⁵ The Tenzompa rebels and García’s pro-Cristero faction shortly afterwards secured ‘la rendicion de 34 indigenas gobernistas diseminados por la sierra

⁸⁷² AGA-D/23/8465/leg.1/SRA/Dotación, Juan García et al, to Gob. Jal., 7 May 1921

⁸⁷³ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7215, Juan García to Montellano, 4 Aug.1928

⁸⁷⁴ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7243, Montellano to Juan Garcia, 13 Aug. 1928

⁸⁷⁵ AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7381, Pilar Herrera to Quintanar, 17 Sept. 1928

de Mezquitic.⁸⁷⁶ In the same month a separate Cristero expedition surprised and defeated another group of pro-government Huichols, ‘estando a punto de hacer prisionero al huichol Agustín Carrillo que exhibía nombramiento de coronel, firmado por Anacleto López.’⁸⁷⁷ However, the majority of the Huichol population continued to try to avoid involvement on either side. To some, this was best accomplished by fleeing to the most remote canyons and forests of their communal territories, while others sought refuge in nearby mestizo pueblos, or in the Cora communities of Nayarit.⁸⁷⁸

By late 1928, local Cristero victories and the growing momentum of the macro-regional Cristero movement prompted pro-government forces to step up their campaigns in the Gran Nayar.⁸⁷⁹ In the Sierra Tepehuana, Quintanar’s Cristero command became concerned that the pro-government Tepehuanos, ‘que casi creíamos extinguido por completo,’⁸⁸⁰ were now ‘entrando en actividad y que más tarde podría constituir un verdadero peligro para la seguridad de la sierra.’⁸⁸¹ To that end he ordered Florencio Estrada to send as many men as he could to Santa María Ocotán, and

‘dando aliento con su ejemplo a los poblanitos, les obligue a no retardar mas tiempo la batida de esos enemigos que no dejan de ser, si no un peligro para el Movimiento en general, si un grave estorbo para las comunicaciones y una amenaza constante para nuestros compañeros de la sierra.’⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁶ J. Arroyo, ‘Memorias...’ in *David*, Aug. 1965, p.210

⁸⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁷⁸ V. M. Téllez Lozano, ‘Lozadistas, revolucionarios y cristeros...’ p.238

⁸⁷⁹ AAAR/C/12/E/50/Doc/5931, Juan Andrés Soto to Quintanar, 22 July

⁸⁸⁰ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7191, Montellano to Estrada, 4 Aug. 1928

⁸⁸¹ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7189, Montellano to Juan Andrés Soto, 4 Aug. 1928

⁸⁸² AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7191, Montellano to Estrada, 4 Aug. 1928

A serious shortage of ammunition also increasingly handicapped local Cristero forces, and Estrada reported that his Tepehuanos allies ‘no trae nada de parque y es la cauza de que no pueden acer nada.’⁸⁸³ This contrasts notably with the situation of the pro-government Defensa forces in Santa María and Xoconoxtle, who possessed such a surfeit of ammunition that in just two combats with Soto and Estrada they used up well over one thousand cartridges.⁸⁸⁴ There is also evidence that the Cristeros were suffering a shortage of men. An agreement between Estrada, Vázquez, Mayorquín, Sifuenetes, Soto and ‘los demás poblanos,’ to stage a joint attack on Mezquital on 1 October,⁸⁸⁵ was followed by a request to Quintanar to send two hundred men to help them, as ‘ésto sería para nosotros mucho gente.’⁸⁸⁶ Mayorquín hoped that a victory at Mezquital would also provide him with a chance to incorporate ‘los que en el mismo lugar se quieren levantar a aumentar nuestras filas,’ but the attack was subsequently postponed until February.

In September a two-pronged Federal offensive was launched against the rebels of southern Durango and northern Nayarit. While Eulogio Ortíz massed his troops to the north of the Sierra Tepehuana,⁸⁸⁷ Juventino Espinosa was reported to have set off for the Sierra Cora at the head of six hundred cavalry to ‘operar contra los restos de vándalos que andan por allá asalto de mata y que se espera muy pronto recibirán el más duro escarmiento.’⁸⁸⁸ A second Federal flying column, under General Desiderio

⁸⁸³ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7208, Florencio Estrada to A. Acevedo, 7 Aug. 1928

⁸⁸⁴ AAAR/C/14/E/59/Doc/7258, Saturnino Flores to Urbajelo, 18 Aug. 1928

⁸⁸⁵ AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7374, Quintanar to A. Ramírez, 16 Sept. 1928; AAAR/C/14/E/60/D/7399, Esteban Lamas to Quintanar, 20 Sept. 1928

⁸⁸⁶ AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7403, Juan Sifuentes, Juan Andrés Soto and Antonio García, to Quintanar, 22 Sept. 1928

⁸⁸⁷ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.211

⁸⁸⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36351/E/2, clipping from ‘El Eco de Nayarit,’ 13 Sept. 1928

García,⁸⁸⁹ arrived in San Juan Peyotán to meet with Eutimio Domínguez's Cora Baja troops,⁸⁹⁰ the pro-government Defensas of the Cora Alta under Leon Contreras and Mariano Solís, and the pro-government Defensa of Huzamota under Tiburcio Muñoz.⁸⁹¹ General García ordered the men of Santa María's Defensa to join his forces,⁸⁹² and Tiburcio Muñoz followed up the invitation, asking them to 'cooperar al lado del gobierno a recuperar nuestros banderas perdidas.'⁸⁹³

In the ensuing campaign, Federal forces and their local pro-government auxiliaries took decisive control of the area around Jesús María, which had recently been attacked by rebels under Frumencio Estrada.⁸⁹⁴ At the same time, 1000 well armed and supplied government troops, including a large contingent of cavalry, descended on the Bolaños canyon, meeting little resistance from the local Cristeros, many of whom were killed as they tried to flee down-river.⁸⁹⁵ The Guzmán family took back control of Bolaños,⁸⁹⁶ while on 16 December, Generals Vargas and López sacked and burned all of the ranches between Mezquitic and Huejuquilla.⁸⁹⁷

While pro-government forces now surrounded the Sierra Huichola, the Cristeros still maintained control of San Sebastián and much of the Sierra itself. Pro-government Defensas also controlled the communities of the Cora Alta, but the 'carencia absoluta

⁸⁸⁹ AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7359, Tiburcio Muñoz to Saturnino Flores, 12 Sept. 1928

⁸⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁸⁹¹ AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7387, Tiburcio Muñoz to Saturnino Flores, 18 Sept. 1928

⁸⁹² AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7386, Desiderio García to Saturnino Flores, 18 Sept. 1928

⁸⁹³ AAAR/C/14/E/60/Doc/7359, Tiburcio Muñoz to Saturnino Flores, 12 Sept. 1928

⁸⁹⁴ J. Arroyo, 'Memorias...' in *David*, Aug. 1965, p.210

⁸⁹⁵ P. Delgadillo Galindo, in L. de la Torre, 1926: *Ecos de la cristiada*, pp.158

⁸⁹⁶ J. Meyer, *La cristiada...* i, p.264

⁸⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.262

de garantías por la revolución religiosa que se ha desarrollado en la región'⁸⁹⁸ blocked the return of most SEP officials to the region, and only San Pedro Ixcatán and San Juan Corapan – directly under the control of Eutimio Domínguez – and Jesús María – where Federal troops and Leon Contreras' Defensa were now stationed – were at this point deemed secure enough to receive Federal teachers.⁸⁹⁹ The Sierra Tepehuana remained heavily contested between the rival Cristero and pro-Government Tepehuano caciques and their allies. Across the region, civilians were 'reconcentrated' so as to 'privar de comestibles a los rebeldes y terminar pronto la campaña,'⁹⁰⁰ including 'todos los habitantes de la ex-Municipalidad de Huazamota,' who were forced to take refuge in Jesús María in late December.⁹⁰¹ The continued fighting and Federal 'reconcentración' also ruined another harvest, and 'el hambre comenzó a invadir a las familias que habían decidido no abandonar las montañas por proteger sus bienes o por alguna otra razón,' forcing some to subsist on 'los cueros de res pa'comerselos porque se estaban muriendo de hambre,'⁹⁰² prompting yet more of the population to either flee, or take up arms themselves.

By early 1929 the Cristero rebellion had thus reached a critical stage in the Gran Nayar (as it had nationwide).⁹⁰³ General Urbalejo, overseeing Federal operations in the Durango-Zacateas-Jalisco border area, worked closely with the Tepehuano Defensas and a fifty-man militia formed in exile by pro-government Huazamotecans

⁸⁹⁸ AHSEP-45/C/36353/E/2, DEFN to DERICI, 25 Sept. 1928; AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/15, DEFN, 'Informe: San Francisco,' 1 Jan. 1929; AHSEP-84-85/C/38857/E/25, DEFN, 'Informe: La Mesa,' 1 Jan. 1929

⁸⁹⁹ AHSEP-45/C/36353/E/2, DEFN to DERICI, 25 Sept. 1928

⁹⁰⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/21, I. Rivera to DEFN, 16 Feb. 1929

⁹⁰¹ AHED-FR/C/4/E/2, Antonio Gutiérrez to Gral. Juan G. Amaya, 11 Jan. 1929

⁹⁰² E. Rangel Guzmán, J. L. Marín García, 'Desplazamientos territoriales...' p.165

⁹⁰³ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.214, p.251

under Antonio Gutiérrez,⁹⁰⁴ and kept them well supplied with ammunition.⁹⁰⁵ Santa María Ocotán's Defensa took part a Federal offensive against local Cristeros in early February,⁹⁰⁶ as Cosme and Francisco Solís 'dieron alcance al enemigo a quien derrotaron e hicieron cinco prisioneros, los, que según estos mismos, colgaron.'⁹⁰⁷ However, the rebel forces in Durango, Jalisco and Zacatecas were also increasingly well organised.⁹⁰⁸ In late February, the Cristero chiefs of southern Durango launched their delayed joint attack on Mezquital, which resulted in the resounding defeat of Urbalejo's forces, and probably helped to precipitate Urbalejo and Durango state governor Juan Gualberto Amaya joining Coahuila's zone commander General José Gonzalo Escobar,⁹⁰⁹ and around a third of the Mexican army,⁹¹⁰ in their rebellion against Calles in March 1929.⁹¹¹

The Escobarista rebellion boosted the nation-wide momentum of the Cristero movement. After the Escobaristas signed a pact with Cristero political leaders,⁹¹² Trinidad Mora and Valente Acevedo joined with Governor Amaya's forces and occupied the city of Durango, while in Nayarit the withdrawal of Federal troops to halt the advance of General Manzo's rebels in Sinaloa left Mayorquín's forces in control of the much of the Sierra around Nayarit's border with Durango.⁹¹³ Loyalist

⁹⁰⁴ AHED-FR/C/4/E/2, Vicente R. Lemus to Urbalejo, 11 Jan. 1929

⁹⁰⁵ AHED-FR/C/4E/Armas y parque, PM.Suchil, to Gob. Dgo, 12 Feb.1929; AHED-FR/C/4/E/Armas y parque, Urbalejo to Gob.Dgo., 12 Feb.1929

⁹⁰⁶ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo*... p.215

⁹⁰⁷ AHED-FR/C/4/E/Armas y parque, PM.Suchil, to Gob.Dgo., 12 Feb. 1929

⁹⁰⁸ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo*... p.213

⁹⁰⁹ J. Tuck, *The Holy War in Los Altos*, p.148; J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.260

⁹¹⁰ J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*... pp.441-3; T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*... p.24

⁹¹¹ 'El Mayor Florencio...' in *David*, 22 June 1955, pp.166-167

⁹¹² AAAR/C/12/E/46/Doc/5640, Santiago Guerra to all Cristero forces, 5 Mar. 1929

⁹¹³ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/21, DEFN to DERICI, 12 Apr. 1929

troops were also taken from their garrisons in Jalisco and Zacatecas to fight the Escobaristas in Coahuila, Sonora and Chihuahua, and

‘todas las plazas que quedaron desguarnecidas fueron ocupadas por los rebeldes fanáticos que se entregaron a toda clase de excesos y depredaciones, sembrando el consiguiente pánico y obligando una reconcentración general de todos los elementos sociales.’⁹¹⁴

The Escobarista uprising, however, quickly imploded. Urbalejo was defeated in central Zacatecas on 9 March, and Amaya fled Durango soon afterwards.⁹¹⁵ Meanwhile a planned revolt in Oaxaca stalled, and in Veracruz the army remained loyal to Calles and defeated rebellious naval units. A planned two-pronged rebel advance on Mexico City was therefore abandoned, freeing up Federal troops who, under General Juan Andreu Almazán, defeated Escobar at Torreón on 17 March. A week later Manzo was defeated at Mazatlán, and General Lázaro Cárdenas, backed by aeroplanes and gunboats, travelled up the Pacific Coast from Tepic to crush Sonora’s remaining rebels.⁹¹⁶ Gorostieta was disillusioned by the Cristero alliance with the disintegrating Escobarista forces, writing at the end of the month that

‘nuestra situación en vez de haber mejorado, ha empeorado con los pronunciamientos militares... Si estos movimientos llegan a fracasar, se revolvería el turco [Calles] contra nosotros. Su venida la haría con mucha gente, moralizada y orgullosa de sus victorias contra la revuelta militar y se encontraría con los nuestros, desprovistos de parque, como siempre, pero con el agravante de ya no contar con el apoyo de los “pacíficos,” y no dudo que entonces sí, pudieran dar el traste con nuestro movimiento.’⁹¹⁷

⁹¹⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38284/E/8, Durand, ‘Informe,’ 1 Apr. 1929

⁹¹⁵ J. Tuck, *The Holy War in Los Altos*, p.148

⁹¹⁶ J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* pp.441-55

⁹¹⁷ AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6902, Gorostieta to A. Acevedo, 31 Mar. 1929,

On 3 May, just as he had feared, the Escobarista revolt was declared officially defeated, and Calles turned his fully mobilised forces on the Cristeros.⁹¹⁸

In Jalisco, General Saturnino Cedillo used his well-trained 12,000-man militia to ‘drive a wedge between the Brigada de Los Altos and the Quintanar troops’ in northern Jalisco and southern Zacatecas.⁹¹⁹ A new round of reconcentration, enforced by a few Federal troops and a large force of armed agraristas from the centre and north of Durango,⁹²⁰ was ordered in the south of the state, which ‘provocó una baja de 50% de la producción agrícola,’ and caused ‘la destrucción de la riqueza ganadera y el saqueo organizado por los federales.’⁹²¹ On 2 June 1929, Gorostieta himself was killed in an ambush near the Jalisco-Michoacán border,⁹²² which further dampened Cristero morale.⁹²³ On 29 June, after several months of secret negotiations, the Church hierarchy and the Calles government signed a peace treaty – ‘los arreglos’ – which was accepted by the Cristero political leaders of the LNDR and brought to an abrupt end the conflict between Church and State.

Fighting between the pro-government Defensas and rebel bands in the Gran Nayar did not come to an immediate end with ‘los arreglos.’ No documents relating to the situation in the Sierras of Nayarit or Jalisco exist for the months directly following the signing of the deal, but in the south of Durango General Jaime Carrillo and his Yaqui batallions,⁹²⁴ together with Tepehauno auxiliaries from Xoconoxtle under Ascención

⁹¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp.304-7

⁹¹⁹ J. Tuck, *The Holy War in Los Altos*, p.162

⁹²⁰ J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* p.447

⁹²¹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.147

⁹²² J. Tuck, *The Holy War in Los Altos*, p.174

⁹²³ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, pp.304-7

⁹²⁴ *ibid.*, p.151; J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* p.447

Aguilar, worked to track down the region's remaining Cristeros throughout July. They managed to kill Casimiro Soto and five of his men,⁹²⁵ but were unable to stop continued attacks on trains near El Salto, or the train station itself at Acaponeta.⁹²⁶ However, without the support of the LNDR or the blessing of the Church hierarchy to legitimise their struggle, Quintanar's forces began to disband (although Quintanar himself went into hiding and did not accept amnesty until almost a year later).⁹²⁷ With the region's remaining rebels under continued Federal military pressure on the one hand, and subject to constant offers of amnesty on the other, in August 1929 the Gran Nayar's Cristeros began to demobilise and peace slowly returned to the Gran Nayar.

Explaining Cora Participation in the Cristiada

While the Cristiada in Durango, Zacatecas and Jalisco has been the subject of some historical research, the Cristiada in Nayarit has been largely ignored, in part because of the more dramatic nature of the rebellion in other states, and in part because of a myth, widely propagated by the Nayarit state government, that 'no existieron cristeros' in the state.⁹²⁸ It is not surprising, then, that Cora participation in the Cristiada has been almost entirely neglected by academics. Even Avitia Hernández, whose work on the Cristero rebellion in southern Durango frequently touches on events in the north of Nayarit, writes that 'Hasta donde se sabe, los coras se mantuvieron al margen del conflicto cristero.'⁹²⁹

⁹²⁵ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.245

⁹²⁶ *ibid.*, p.224

⁹²⁷ B. Fallaw, 'Eulogio Ortiz...' pp.142-3

⁹²⁸ C. Durán, 'Presentarán investigación...'

⁹²⁹ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.160

As demonstrated above, however, the Cora population was deeply affected by the Cristero rebellion. Meyer, who briefly mentions the Coras as having taken part ‘de manera individual y no colectiva en la Guerra,’⁹³⁰ is right in that there was no ‘mass’ Cora Cristero movement. Some individuals fought as pro-Cristero rebels, while others took part as auxiliaries of Federal forces. In many cases the same Cora individuals fought on both sides of the conflict, first as members of pro-government Defensas, and then as rebels after Mariano Mejía defected to the Cristeros, before switching their allegiance back to the Callista regime after Mejía’s surrender. Still more Cora individuals abandoned their homes in order to avoid the violence, leaving rancherías and communal cabeceras uninhabited, and the agricultural cycle and the costumbre that went with it neglected, surviving on roots, seeds and other wild foods gathered in the most remote canyons and forests of the Sierra. But what factors determined the nature of Cora participation in, or escape from, the rebellion?

In line with his emphasis on religious beliefs as key to deciding popular loyalties in the context of the conflict between Church and State, Meyer asserts that the Coras did not join the Cristeros *en masse* in part because they were ‘los menos católicos’ of the Indian groups of the Gran Nayar, unlike the Huichols and Tepehuanos, whom he claims were ‘more Catholic’ and thus overwhelmingly supported the rebels.⁹³¹ However, Meyer overstates the depth of support for the Cristeros among these latter groups, and tends to exaggerate the extent to which they were influenced by Catholicism, while often overlooking the heterogeneous nature of the religious beliefs and practices of all three groups in this period. His suggestion that a general lack of

⁹³⁰ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.30

⁹³¹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.30

Catholic influence was partly responsible for the absence of any overwhelming Cora support for the Cristeros seems broadly correct, but is also applicable to the situation amongst the Huichols and Tepehuanos as well.

A syncretic belief in the power of Catholic ‘santitos’ was an important aspect of communal Cora *costumbre*, and by the early twentieth century Jesús María had also become the centre of a new parish, where Preuss reported that the local Cora population ‘se acostumbra el bautizo.’ However, Preuss also reported that the Coras, like many other Indian peoples of Mexico,⁹³² ‘de ninguna manera han comprendido las doctrinas de la religión cristiana.’⁹³³ It seems unlikely that this would have changed much by the 1920s. Despite some individuals’ long sojourns outside their communities and contact with mestizos during the revolution, many of these latter would have been Villistas or Carrancistas, not known for their piety and thus unlikely to have increased the influence of orthodox Catholicism on Cora society in the post-revolutionary period. And while during the Cristiada particular saints or images provided a convenient banner for armed Coras to rally around, this was not a phenomenon limited to pro-Cristeros.

In fact, it is clear from SEP reports and oral accounts that in this period the vast majority of the Cora population, even those with ties to ‘cosmopolitan’ communal political factions, continued to practice *costumbre*,⁹³⁴ and had little contact with priests, who primarily served their fellow mestizos, sided ‘with regional Vecino cattle

⁹³² cf. T. Rugeley, *Of wonders...* pp.113-5, p.247; F. Starr, *Notes...* i, pp.17-23, pp.55-63

⁹³³ J. Jáuregui, J. Neurath (eds.), *Fiesta, literatura y magia...* pp.223-4

⁹³⁴ Nabor Castañeda Lemús; Nemesio Rodríguez Rodríguez; Filiberto Sánchez Lovato

merchants and politicians' against the traditional Cora authorities,⁹³⁵ and encouraged mestizo settlement in the Sierra – which was unpopular with many Coras. Much of the Cora population was thus hostile to 'official' Catholicism as represented by the Church hierarchy, an antipathy that persisted into the 1940s when they were described as reluctant to 'concurrir a los ritos de la iglesia,'⁹³⁶ and distrustful of priests, 'y más al que viste con el traje talar, porque dicen que éste pide mucho dinero y que en la sotana trae la enfermedad.'⁹³⁷ The fact that only a single priest, padre Rafael Correa, was responsible for the entire Sierra Cora in the immediate post-revolutionary period,⁹³⁸ and fled Jesús María shortly after the passing of the Ley Calles in July 1926,⁹³⁹ would have further reduced direct Catholic influence over the local Cora population.

Meyer is therefore right to rule out 'Catholicism' as a factor that *directly* influenced Cora participation in the Cristiada. However, popular religious feeling, the influence of priests, and the suspension of Catholic services would have helped to generate sympathy for the Cristeros on the part of many of the Sierra's mestizos, and thus probably had an *indirect* effect on the actions of some Coras. By early 1927, it was reported that in Rosamorada and El Venado, which bordered the Cora Baja, and in San Juan Peyotán itself, members of the clergy were preaching against the government, and 'por medio de papelitos, hojas sueltas y aun de viva voz exhortan a las madres de familia a que no manden a sus hijos a la Escuela Rural Federal por ser atea, protestante o hereje y la maestra sufre insultos y vejaciones de los vecinos más

⁹³⁵ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.181-2

⁹³⁶ R. de la Cerda Silva 'Los coras,' p.112

⁹³⁷ *ibid.*

⁹³⁸ J. Jáuregui, J. Neurath (eds.), *Fiesta, literatura y magia...* p.223

⁹³⁹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.42

fanáticos.⁹⁴⁰ In mestizo San Juan Peyotán, the priest additionally ‘excomulgó a todos los padres de familia que mandaran a sus hijos a la Escuela... [y] la Maestra Rural Josefina Hernández tuvo la pena de ver ir disminuyéndose poco a poco su asistencia hasta que a fines del año se quedó sola en la Escuela.’⁹⁴¹ Some of the mestizos thus pressured into turning against the government probably helped to persuade or dragoon Cora friends or neighbours into pro-Cristero groups, while other Coras would have reacted against the Cristero sympathies of their rivals – whether Cora or mestizo – by seeking an alliance of convenience with the state.

Mejía’s defection to the Cristeros in late 1927, precipitated by the arrival in Jesús María of a Cristero commission headed by Padre José Cabral and Luis Anaya, is the most important example of Catholic pressure indirectly influencing Cora participation in the Cristiada. Almost all of the members of the communal Defensas under Mejía’s control followed (or were forced to follow) him,⁹⁴² turning the Cora Alta from a pro-government stronghold that protected the rest of Nayarit from Cristero raids, to a hotbed of rebel activity that suddenly threatened Tepic. A mestizo from Huaynamota who had been partly raised and educated by a priest, Mejía had married in church,⁹⁴³ and was described by the Cristero José Gutiérrez as an ‘hombre cristiano.’⁹⁴⁴ It seems likely, therefore, that Mejía’s decision to join the rebels was at least partly influenced by an ideological sympathy towards the Church. Furthermore, his defection was probably legitimised in his own eyes, and in those of many others, by Padre José Cabral’s pro-Cristero preaching, which would have helped to convince many of the

⁹⁴⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/31, DEFN, ‘Informe Annual, 1926,’ 6 Jan. 1927

⁹⁴¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/10, DEFN to DERICI, 14 Jan. 1927

⁹⁴² Fernando Muñiz Rafael

⁹⁴³ AGN-Censo/1930/Nayarit/Arroyo de Santiago

⁹⁴⁴ J. Gutiérrez, *Mis recuerdos...* pp.39-40

community's other mestizo inhabitants, and perhaps a few Coras, of the justice of the Cristero cause. This probably prompted Nayarit SEP Director Calderón's complaint – which dates to around the time that Cabral arrived in Jesús María – that 'con [los coras] viven los sacerdotes que oficiaban en el Estado, estos los instigan y como las fuerzas federales jamás han podido llegar a esos apartados lugares, casi gozan de impunidad los instigadores.'⁹⁴⁵ However, most Coras, especially those living outside of Jesús María, were probably not *directly* led to support the Cristeros either by belief in Catholic doctrine, the influence of mestizo priests who preached against the government, or by outrage at the suspension of services that they never attended anyway. But in helping to persuade Mariano Mejía to defect to the Cristero side, such religious considerations did *indirectly* influence the loyalties of many of the Cora inhabitants of his cacicazgo.

Enrique Bautista González, in his work on the Cristiada in Nayarit, tends to agree with Meyer that popular Catholicism had little direct effect on Cora participation in the Cristiada. In his own cursory analysis of Cora participation in the conflict, he instead asserts, somewhat counter-intuitively, that 'grupos coras hicieron suyas las demandas agrarias' by joining the Cristeros.⁹⁴⁶ However, while the agrarian problems of various Tepehuano and Huichol communities did influence the decisions of their inhabitants to either join the Cristeros or fight as Federal auxiliaries, this cannot have been the case in the Cora Alta. The upheaval of the Lozadista period blocked the initial application of Liberal 'reform laws' in the area, and even after 1873 various

⁹⁴⁵ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/31, DEFN. 'Informe Mensual,' 30 Nov.1927

⁹⁴⁶ E. Bautista González, *La guerra olvidada...* p.130

local uprisings,⁹⁴⁷ together with the difficulties of transport and communications in the region, had further obstructed the surveying and dividing of Cora communal lands during the Porfiriato. The Cora Alta had subsequently been unified under the military leadership of Mejía during the Revolution (which limited the potential for the kind of inter-communal raiding that might otherwise have led to conflicts over communal territorial boundaries), and by 1922 Jesús María, San Francisco, La Mesa, Dolores and Santa Teresa still apparently possessed ‘ilimitado terreno.’⁹⁴⁸ In fact, in the total absence of agrarian tensions between these communities, not a single agrarian petition was launched from the Cora Alta before the early 1940s.

In Eutimio Domínguez’s strongholds in the Cora Baja, however, agrarian tensions had already emerged during the Porfiriato,⁹⁴⁹ and increased in the immediate post-revolutionary era, thanks to the region’s geographical proximity to the mestizo-inhabited altiplano and coast of Nayarit, and the location of its communities not within the ‘Subprefectura de la Sierra,’ but the municipalities of Acaponeta, Rosamorada and Santiago Ixcuintla, which were dominated by land-hungry mestizo elites. In response to the threat that neighbouring mestizo pueblos posed to San Pedro Ixcatán’s traditional landholdings, the community’s authorities had in 1922 asked for copies of its colonial-era land titles, which were apparently found in an archive in Guadalajara but never sent to the community, as its inhabitants couldn’t afford the administrative costs associated with retrieving their title.⁹⁵⁰ In 1924 Aurelio Guerrero, a maestro misionero posted to Saycota, began a controversial attempt to form an ejido

⁹⁴⁷ J. Meyer, *De cantón...* pp.139-49

⁹⁴⁸ AHSEP-42/C/35987/E/12.2, Navarrete to DECI, 25 Jan. 1922

⁹⁴⁹ J. Jáuregui, ‘Del reino de Lozada...’ pp.182-3

⁹⁵⁰ AGA-D/276.1/14/leg.1/Comunal/RTBC/San Pedro Ixcatan, Reps. to CNA, 9 July 1922

in that community – against the wishes of the majority of the local Cora inhabitants, who later characterised the endeavour as an ‘agitación provocada entre ellos por elementos políticos que trataron de desorganizarlos.’⁹⁵¹ This agrarian agitation also worried Nayarit’s agrarian office, ‘a fin de que con pretexto de resguardar todas las tierras... vaya[n] a cometer atropellos con los demás poblados que existen dentro de la misma propiedad y a originar al Gobierno conflictos que a toda costa deseamos evitar.’⁹⁵² Many in Rosarito would have shared such concerns, given their border with Saycota. And, perhaps most importantly, San Juan Corapan began to petition for the recognition of its communal land titles in 1927.⁹⁵³

This early agrarista activity in the Cora Baja involved only a few individuals directly, but probably reflected nascent inter-communal tensions that involved much more of the Cora population. That Eutimio Domínguez at the very least tacitly supported Corapan and Ixcatán’s agrarian petitions perhaps shows a personal ideological commitment to agrarismo born of his participation in the Revolution in Nayarit, as well as his status as a proud member of his community who needed secure access to communal landholdings in order to farm and raise cattle. Participation in – and even patronage of – local agrarian claims no doubt reinforced Domínguez’s ties to the Revolutionary state (which had, after all, provided him with the arms and political support necessary to establish and legitimise his cacicazgo in the Cora Baja), and may have been a factor in his decision to remain loyal to Calles throughout the Cristero rebellion, even in the face of Mejía’s defection. Bautista González’s assertion that agrarian conflicts helped to determine Cora participation in the Cristero rebellion is

⁹⁵¹ AGA-D/23/120/leg.1/CAM/Dotación/Saycota, Reps. to Ing. Flores Vega, 27 June 1945

⁹⁵² AGA-D/23/147/leg.1/CCA/Dotación/Saycota, CLA to Aurelio Guerrero, 24 Dec. 1924

⁹⁵³ AGA-D/276.1/485/leg.1/CCA/RTBC/San Juan Corapan, Reps. to DAI, 16 May 1936

therefore untenable for the Cora Alta region; but in the Cora Baja, even if agrarian tensions had little direct effect on the loyalties of the majority, such agrarian concerns may well have influenced Domínguez's pro-government stance, and thus indirectly influenced the loyalties of the inhabitants of the communities under his control.

Thus even if Catholic fervour (or lack of it), and agrarian commitments (or lack of them), swayed only a few Cora individuals towards identification with Church or state, these factors had a more important, direct, and immediate effect on Mejía and Domínguez. In turn, the power of these two caciques was probably the most important single factor influencing the loyalties of the Cora majority.⁹⁵⁴ However, while Meyer hints that this was the case – asserting that after Mejía's detention and exile, the Coras were left without leaders to 'incorporarlos a una u otra causa'⁹⁵⁵ – his assumption that Mejía's role had been an exclusively unifying one, and that Mejía was the only leader in the Sierra Cora during the Cristero rebellion, oversimplifies the complex effects of caciquismo on the Cora population.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the armed power of the region's *two* caciques, and of their subordinate Jefes de Defensa, posed a serious challenge to the power of the traditional Cora authorities, and was increasingly perceived by many Coras as a coercive tool at the service of unpopular state policies and mestizo settlers. This generated the opposition of conservative communal factions, usually led by the heads of influential descent-groups (who often doubled as members of communal 'Consejos de Ancianos'), and bound together by kinship relationships defined by *costumbre*.

⁹⁵⁴ Fernando Muñiz Rafael

⁹⁵⁵ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.30

The threat they posed to the power of the Jefes de Defensa had in turn pushed many of these latter and their allies towards a closer identification with Mejía, Domínguez, and local SEP officials and mestizos, in order to fortify their positions, further exacerbating factional tensions.

When Cristero rebels began to arrive in the Sierra in early 1927, many Cora conservatives saw them as potentially useful allies in their conflicts with the pro-government caciques, especially as both Cora conservatives and Cristeros opposed the government school programme.⁹⁵⁶ This led some Coras in both the Cora Alta and Baja regions to join the rebel movement, despite it being led by Catholic mestizos who probably also regarded Cora *costumbre* as heretical. Meanwhile Mejía and Domínguez called upon the more ‘cosmopolitan’ Coras, led by the local Jefes de Defensa (who were less independent than their equivalents amongst the Huichols or Tepehuanos), to help defend the Callista order.

More practical considerations also helped to determine popular Cora loyalties in the Cristiada. Many factionally neutral Coras who did not manage to escape contested areas at the outbreak of the conflict, were swayed toward the pro-government side by the charisma and coercive power of Mejía and Domínguez. These caciques had taken advantage of their wealth, and the precedent of centralised military leadership set by Manuel Lozada, to assemble cliques of political and economic clients and ritual kinsmen upon whom they could rely for relatively unconditional support, and the Defensas they commanded were better armed and organised than the small bands of conservatives who sided with the Cristeros. The idea that security was the deciding

⁹⁵⁶ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/31, DEFN to DERICI, 6 Jan. 1927

factor in the allegiances of many Coras⁹⁵⁷ is further substantiated by the fact that the Cora Defensas and their allies became Cristeros almost overnight after Mejía's defection. Thus loyalty to Mejía and to the factions associated with him, or fear of the consequences of not being perceived as loyal to these, were more important for most Coras than sympathy for or identification with an abstract conception of the 'state' or the 'government.'

Many Cora individuals also became rebels only after being forcibly conscripted during Cristero raids, especially those led by Porfirio Mayorquín, who frequently raided the Cora communities that bordered his strongholds in southern Durango. Even those who voluntarily joined the Cristeros in order to combat what they saw as the threat posed by Federal schools and Defensa power to their own positions and to costumbre, were also likely swayed, as were many on the opposite side, by the opportunity to attack descent-group rivals and steal (or 'confiscar') cattle and other goods for personal and political gain.⁹⁵⁸

Finally, geographical circumstances helped to decide the positions of Mejía and Domínguez, and of the Cora population as a whole, in relation to Federal or Cristero forces. Mejía's base in the Cora Alta was far closer to the main areas of rebel influence in Zacatecas, Jalisco and Durango, than were the communities that Domínguez controlled in the Cora Baja. The Cristero commission that visited Mejía in late 1927 probably threatened him with an attack at the same time as trying to persuade him of the 'justness' of the Cristero cause – at a time when the rebels

⁹⁵⁷ cf. K. Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics...* p.65

⁹⁵⁸ Erasmo González; Agustín Lamas; Nabor Castañeda; Aurelio Cánare

appeared increasingly ascendent at macro-regional level, Mayorquín's forces were actively raiding throughout the region, and the position of Mejía's ally, Ramírez Romano, as governor of Nayarit looked increasingly unsteady. Mejía was thus forced to hedge his bets, ultimately leading him to defect to the rebel side. In contrast, Domínguez's strongholds were located far closer to government-dominated central Nayarit (and to the Guadalajara-Tepic-Mazatlán railway, an important Federal military thoroughfare which passed through nearby Ruíz),⁹⁵⁹ than to the areas controlled by the Cristeros. He would therefore have faced less rebel pressure than Mejía, and far more serious sanctions from the government if suspected of disloyalty.

Cora civilians, meanwhile, were vulnerable to forced recruitment as well as severe sanctions from both rebels and pro-government forces if seen to be 'supporting' the other side by attempting to remain neutral.⁹⁶⁰ The allegiances of the bulk of the Cora population were therefore determined not only by kinship-based links to, or ideological sympathy with, rival communal factions, but also by the interplay between these loyalties and the same military pressures – in part determined by geographical circumstance – that helped to sway their leaders towards either the Callista state or the Cristeros. The violence of the conflict, and the forced displacements and disruption of agricultural production that came with it, compelled many of those who had originally avoided involvement in the conflict to throw themselves into the fighting, in order to gain arms to defend their families and livestock, or to obtain food. Thus security was again a primary consideration for many Coras when it came to taking up arms. Meanwhile the temporary disintegration of *costumbre*, as the *Cristiada* interrupted

⁹⁵⁹ J. Meyer, *de cantón...* p.217

⁹⁶⁰ cf. D. Stoll, *Between Two Fires...*

ritual and pilgrimage and the sowing and harvest of crops, undermined traditional mechanisms for resolving conflicts and maintaining solidarity both within, and between, the Cora communities. This allowed feuds between factions, families and individuals to become entrenched, and resulted in the outbreak of yet more violence in the years that followed the Cristiada.

Explaining Huichol Participation in the Cristiada

The participation of the Huichols in the Cristiada has been the subject of more academic analysis than that of their Cora neighbours. However, the difficulties of conducting historical research in the Sierra Huichola, and the shortage of documents relating to the Huichols in this period, mean that many assertions as to the dynamics of Huichol participation as rebels or government loyalists in this period have actually been based on sources relating to the ‘Segunda’ Cristiada (1934-40).⁹⁶¹ The same tendency to confuse dates, events and the motivations of participants in the first Cristiada with those of the Segunda is also displayed by many Huichol informants themselves. In the case of Tuxpan, Fikes, Weigand and García de Weigand point out that while much of the community’s

‘understanding of history is... a reflective history embodied in ritual and myth rather than a recitation of events or a chronicle in the strict sense of the word... The Cristero Rebellion is the best example of an event described in a chronicle rather than a ceremonial format.’⁹⁶²

However, in Tuxpan, as in all of the communities of the Gran Nayar and the surrounding regions, this ‘chronicle,’ especially as recounted by the children or

⁹⁶¹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*; A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...*

⁹⁶² J. C. Fikes, P. C. Weigand, A. García de Weigand, ‘Introduction,’ xxviii

grandchildren of witnesses to these events, often compresses together events from the Cristiada, ‘la Segunda,’ the Revolution, and even the Lozadista period.

Thus even the relative sympathies of each Huichol community, in relation to the warring parties of the first Cristero rebellion, are a matter of debate between different historians, anthropologists and members of these communities themselves. Negrín, in a short article on Huichol history, writes that ‘Most Huichol were anti-cristeros,’ but mentions ‘internecine battles between communities, notably San Sebastian pro-cristeros against Santa Catarina anti-cristeros.’⁹⁶³ Weigand notes that there were important factional divisions in each community, but that San Andrés was largely ‘pro-government,’ Santa Catarina for the most part ‘neutral,’ and San Sebastián split between ‘neutrals’ and pro-Cristero ‘revolutionaries.’⁹⁶⁴ Meyer, meanwhile, asserts that

‘los Huicholes optaron en sus dos terceras partes por los cristeros... los de San Sebastián, dirigidos por Juan Bautista, se pusieron a los órdenes de Quintanar; los de San Andrés Cohamiata le pidieron que protegiera su neutralidad simpatizadamente, y después, bajo la presión del gobierno, decidieron unirse a los cristeros; los de Santa Catarina, obligados a seguir su jefe, Agustín Carrillo, nombrado coronel por el general Anacleto López, decidieron abandonarlo para observar una neutralidad absoluta.’⁹⁶⁵

However, in a later article Meyer is less sweeping about ‘communal’ loyalties and, while maintaining that ‘la comunidad de San Sebastián, en su mayoría, siguió a su líder Juan Bautista y se lanzó a la Cristiada,’ he changes his assessment of the respective positions of San Andrés – which, he now states, ‘se alió con el gobierno’ – and of Santa Catarina – which ‘trató de mantenerse neutral (cosa imposible).’

⁹⁶³ Juan Negrin, ‘Recent History,’ p.1

⁹⁶⁴ P. C. Weigand, ‘Role of the Huichol...’ p.171

⁹⁶⁵ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, pp.28-31

Perhaps influenced by Weigand's critique of his earlier analysis,⁹⁶⁶ Meyer also highlights the importance of factionalism in deciding communal participation in the Cristiada, writing that

‘Los pro-cristeros de Santa Catarina y San Andrés fueron expulsados de sus comunidades, y los de San Sebastián que se habían resistido a entrar a la Cristiada también tuvieron que salir. Así que las tres comunidades se dividieron y las tres tomaron un camino diferente...’⁹⁶⁷

On the whole, however, the earlier summaries of both Meyer and Negrin as to the basic position of the majority in each community – Santa Catarina pro-government, San Sebastián pro-Cristero, and San Andrés vaguely neutral – fit better with the evidence presented in this chapter, as do the assertions of Meyer and Weigand that factions in each community also dissented from the majority opinion, leading to many Huichols fleeing to outlying ranches within their communal territories, or farther afield to new settlements in Nayarit and Durango.

A second debate surrounds the issue of *why* the dominant factions within each of these communities (or their anexos, in the case of Guadalupe Ocotán and Tuxpan), chose to take such differing paths, and ‘unir su lucha con gente aparentemente tan diferente a ellos.’⁹⁶⁸ Government edicts restricting the number of priests per state, or the closure of the churches and banning of religious services, would have barely touched the Huichol communities, which in the 1920s lacked any kind of permanent Church presence, and whose churches and chapels remained firmly in the hands of

⁹⁶⁶ P.C. Weigand, ‘Review of Meyer...’ pp. 432-3

⁹⁶⁷ J. Meyer, ‘La revolución en occidente...’ p.262

⁹⁶⁸ B. Rojas, *Los huicholes...* p.170

members of the local traditional authorities.⁹⁶⁹ However, Meyer maintains that Huichol religious feeling, and the personal connection that many Huichols had with Cristóbal Magallanes – the mestizo parish priest of Totatiche murdered by the Mexican military in May 1927 – is key to explaining Huichol support for the Cristeros.⁹⁷⁰ These two assertions are closely connected, as Meyer holds Magallanes partly responsible for what he qualifies as the success of the Church's 'reanudación de las misiones jesuitas del Gran Nayar' between 1860-1925,⁹⁷¹ and thus of the successful conversion of many Huichols to a form of Catholicism that subsequently made them sympathetic to the Cristero cause. However, the idea that by 1926 there existed a 'Huichol Catholicism' similar enough to the kind of rural Mexican folk Catholicism professed by the Cristeros (admittedly very diverse in itself), to convince many Huichols to side with the rebels, is hard to believe, as is the idea that Magallanes had played an important enough role in the development of such beliefs as to make his death an important factor in Huichol recruitment to the rebel cause.

Meyer's idea of the Huichols as a people 'religiosamente marcado por las misiones jesuitas' who 'sin dejar de conservar elementos anteriores, en una gran parte dice ser cristiano,' seems based less on a reading of the anthropological literature and more on a visit that he made to Santa Catarina in 1968.⁹⁷² Here he observed what he describes as 'huicholes cristianos' living 'sin problemas con los otros' and still taking part in 'ciertas prácticas religiosas, como la fiesta de la cosecha.'⁹⁷³ Many of these so-called 'huicholes cristianos,' however, were probably not actually 'Catholics' at all, but

⁹⁶⁹ cf. T. Rugeley, *Of Wonders...* pp.113-4

⁹⁷⁰ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.28

⁹⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.306

⁹⁷² *ibid.*, p.30

⁹⁷³ *ibid.*

recently converted evangelical protestants who would soon be expelled from Santa Catarina precisely because they were ‘practicando otra religión... y que divergen de los ritos y ceremonias de el costumbre.’⁹⁷⁴

Meyer’s vision of a ‘universal’ Huichol *costumbre*, based on observations from a single community, overlooks the differences in religious practices between the different Huichol communities, the *tuki* districts into which these communal territories were divided, and even between individual families. Fikes, Weigand and García de Weigand observe that in 1934, within the territory of San Sebastián alone, ‘Tuxpan was... less Catholic than San Sebastián [itself] and less native than [the nearby anexo of] Ratontita.’⁹⁷⁵ Furthermore, while in the eighteenth century ‘Catholic beliefs and colonial influences were simply added to [the] annual ceremonial cycle’ as celebrated by each Huichol group,⁹⁷⁶ this did not mean that many of the more fundamental Christian doctrines were ever fully absorbed into Huichol *costumbre*. During the time of Zingg’s research in Tuxpan in the 1930s, for example, ‘the Virgin Mary, rather than the Holy Ghost, was seen as the third member of the Holy Trinity,’⁹⁷⁷ while in Santa Catarina in the early 1980s, Fikes observed that ‘Christ’s standing as an ancestor who set precedents which established certain customs for the Huichols as a people did not include the key Catholic concept of achieving individual salvation by good works and faith in the redeeming power of the Saviour’s blood.’⁹⁷⁸ And Weigand, working in the late 1960s in San Sebastián (described by Lumholtz as

⁹⁷⁴ J. J. Torres Contreras, *Relaciones de frontera...* p.90

⁹⁷⁵ J. C. Fikes, P. C. Weigand, A. García de Weigand, ‘Introduction,’ xxxiv

⁹⁷⁶ J. C. Fikes, ‘Huichol Indian Ceremonial Cycle...’ p.24

⁹⁷⁷ R. M. Zingg, *Los huicholes...* i, 59-61

⁹⁷⁸ J. C. Fikes, ‘Huichol Indian Ceremonial Cycle...’ p.59-60

the ‘most Catholic’ of the Huichol communities),⁹⁷⁹ mentions that the regional mestizo population still regarded the local religious practices as different enough from their own to ‘express paternalistic concern about the “Huicholitos,” especially about their pending damnation to hell, if they continue in their present customs.’⁹⁸⁰

It seems likely that the beliefs of most Huichols in the Cristero period, many years before Fikes or Weigand visited their communities, were less orthodox still. Before the Revolution, Lumholtz observed that while many Huichols were ‘clever enough to put on an external show of Christianity toward people from whom they expect some favour,’ nevertheless ‘the ancient beliefs, customs, and ceremonies still have a firm hold on the minds of the people.’⁹⁸¹ Even in San Sebastián, he reported, the local people practiced ‘a rather curious religion’ very different to orthodox Catholicism, with essentially pre-Catholic rituals being celebrated in the community’s church, whose patron saint was regarded as ‘Grandfather Fire... [while] the Crucifix is named Elder Brother, God of Wind and of Hikuli [peyote]; and the Virgin Mary is called Young Mother Eagle Above.’⁹⁸² Preuss, meanwhile, who visited the Sierra Huichola a few years later and was the first anthropologist to observe the entire year-long Huichol ceremonial cycle,⁹⁸³ noted that, while the Huichols celebrated various ‘Catholic’ fiestas, they were as yet far from ‘acostumbrado[s] a las creencias y a las costumbres católicas.’⁹⁸⁴ He found that very few Huichols were baptized,⁹⁸⁵ and defined the impact of the contemporary Josefino missionary effort as ‘nula,’ given

⁹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, pp.4-5

⁹⁸⁰ P. C. Weigand, ‘Co-operative Labor Groups...’ pp.84-85

⁹⁸¹ C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico...* ii, p.22-3

⁹⁸² *ibid.*, vol.ii, p.258

⁹⁸³ J. Jáuregui, J. Neurath, ‘La expedición...’ p.21

⁹⁸⁴ J. Jáuregui, J. Neurath (eds.), *Fiesta, literatura y magia...* p.145

⁹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p.182

that, within each community's church, 'los huicholes proceden con Cristo y los santos de la misma manera que suelen proceder con sus dioses en los templos paganos.'⁹⁸⁶

The subsequent expulsion of the Josefinos from San Sebastián and San Andrés during the armed phase of the Revolution is further testament to their failure to convert the Huichols to Catholicism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, making it difficult to accept Meyer's vision of a 'Christian' component within Huichol *costumbre* strong enough to push many Huichols into alliance with the Cristero rebels.

Meyer also argues that Magallanes 'se ocupaba [de] los huicholes de San Sebastián' from 1920 onwards,⁹⁸⁷ and that his death at the hands of General Juan Goñi in Colotlán in May 1927⁹⁸⁸ was a second important factor in generating the support of this community for the Cristero rebels.⁹⁸⁹ However, the success of Magallanes' efforts to evangelise the Huichol population of northern Jalisco is put in doubt by the anthropological accounts of Huichol religiosity in the post-Cristiada period, while his contacts with the population of San Sebastián in particular are not supported by the documentary evidence, calling into question his relevance to their participation in the Cristiada. Beyond doubt is the fact that Magallanes worked towards the 'evangelización de la Colonia de huicholes que se ha ido formando en la barranca de Azqueltán' between 1920 and 1921.⁹⁹⁰ However, Magallanes reported that 'los he visitado dos veces, sin haber conseguido absolutamente nada en su favor,'⁹⁹¹ and he soon became aware of the difficulties inherent in his task. His description of one

⁹⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.145

⁹⁸⁷ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.306

⁹⁸⁸ F. Sánchez, 'La Brigada...' in *David*, 22 Nov. 1957, p.261

⁹⁸⁹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.306

⁹⁹⁰ AHAG-Totatiche/C/3/E/13, Magallanes to Arzobispo, 4 July 1920

⁹⁹¹ *ibid.*

member of the group, who had been taken from his community and educated in Zacatecas over the course of seven years by the Bishop of Zacatecas, and had then returned to his old life in the Sierra, ‘sin que se distinga de los demás en otra cosa, que en él habla [castellano],’⁹⁹² clearly illustrates the determined resistance of many Huichols to giving up their *costumbre*. And Magallanes’ characterisation of the members of Azqueltán’s mixed refugee population as ‘enteramente salvajes e idólatras,’⁹⁹³ further underlines the failure of the *Josefinos* in the region, about which Magallanes himself made disparaging references, suggesting it was in part due to their inability to ‘emplear el dialecto [huichol] para la catequización.’⁹⁹⁴

Magallanes attempted to settle Azqueltán’s Huichol refugees at a nearby ranch and, anticipating the SEP’s subsequent attempts to involve the local political and military authorities in the task of ‘civilising’ the Huichols, he enlisted the help of the *Jefe de Defensa* of Totatiche, ‘quien mantiene relaciones amistosas con los huicholes desde antes de la revolución.’⁹⁹⁵ Once they were settled, Magallanes planned to teach them Spanish and, eventually, the catechism, and to that end he asked the Archbishop for an ‘altar portátil, a fin de poder celebrar la santa misa en el referido rancho.’⁹⁹⁶ However, he also observed that while ‘parece que no son hostiles a los sacerdotes... no nos hacen caso,’⁹⁹⁷ and a year later, having by now made at least five visits to the Huichol refugees, he complained that still,

‘muchos me huyen y se esconden en las cuevas y en los arroyos, a donde es necesario seguirles con la debida prudencia. Por más que he procurado

⁹⁹² *ibid.*

⁹⁹³ AHAG-Totatiche/C/3/E/13, Magallanes to Arzobispo, 15 Nov. 1920

⁹⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁹⁵ AHAG-Totatiche/C/3/E/13, Magallanes to Arzobispo, 6 July 1920

⁹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

ganarlos, con atenciones y con pequeños regalos, y con invitaciones, no he podido obtener que asistan a algunos de los templos de la Parroquia para allí catequizarlos... He notado que se oponen los mas viejos a que sus hijos aprendan la doctrina cristiana, lo mismo que a leer y escribir.⁹⁹⁸

This is the last of Magallanes' reports relating to work amongst the Huichols of any part of Jalisco contained in the AHAG, and it does not appear that there are any similar reports from later years in other archives. Rather, it seems that between 1921 and 1926, Magallanes (and the Jalisciense Church hierarchy in general) concentrated on re-establishing the old parishes that had been dissolved or destroyed during the Revolution (which had displaced many mestizos from their ranches in the frontier zone between Jalisco and Nayarit), and on setting up Catholic schools in these areas.⁹⁹⁹ Memories of Huichol hostility to missionaries during the revolution, together with the practical difficulties of reaching the communities of the Sierra, probably made the local Church all the more reluctant to devote time and resources to a new evangelisation project in Huichol territory, especially as Magallanes was the full-time parish priest of Totatiche, within the Archbishopric of Guadalajara, while at this time the Sierra Huichola proper – unlike Azqueltán – was officially part of the Bishopric of Zacatecas. Together with the fact that the anthropological record does not support the idea that the evangelisation of the Sierra Huichola was carried out with any more success directly after the Revolution than in the preceding years, and the lack of any mention of Magallanes in SEP or CNA reports relating to the Huichol communities of the Sierra between 1922 and 1925, it is likely that Magallanes' evangelisation project was largely limited to those hundred or so Huichol refugees¹⁰⁰⁰ who had fled the violence of the Revolution in their own communities – including San Sebastián – for

⁹⁹⁸ AHAG-Totatiche/C/3/E/13, Magallanes to Arzobispo, 23 June 1921

⁹⁹⁹ AHAG-Totatiche/C/3/E/13, Magallanes to Arzobispo, 6 July 1920

¹⁰⁰⁰ *ibid.*

the relative safety of Azqueltán, than with the Huichols of San Sebastián as a whole. This does not entirely rule out the idea that after his attempts to organise a Huichol colony in the Azqueltán canyon, Magallanes did work in some way towards ‘la evangelización de la sierra propiamente dicha,’¹⁰⁰¹ but it calls into question Meyer’s assertion that Magallanes exercised enough influence in the Sierra Huichola for his execution to have been a key factor in Huichol mobilization against the government.

However, while Catholic fervour and the martyrdom of a mestizo priest were not at the heart of Huichol recruitment to the rebel cause, religious (rather than strictly ‘Catholic’) beliefs cannot be discarded entirely as factors that influenced the sympathies of Huichol individuals relative to the warring parties of the Cristiada. Even though far from orthodox Catholics, it is evident that God ‘the Father,’ Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Holy Cross, and various other saints were all important figures within each Huichol community’s *costumbre*, with their images or icons playing an important part in ceremonies and festivals and additionally worshipped in churches, chapels, *tukipa* and *xirikite*. Magallanes noted that the Huichol refugees whom he visited in Azqueltán ‘tienen bastante devoción, a su modo, a nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, cuya imagen tienen en sus chosas y en sus cuevas’;¹⁰⁰² and both the Virgin of Guadalupe and Jesus Christ (regarded in Tuxpan, for example, as the ‘culture-hero of Mexicans and the first *kawiteru* to sing the Christian myth cycle’),¹⁰⁰³ did become figures around which both Cristero and pro-government Huichols rallied, regardless of their unorthodox understanding of the identity and significance of these saints. To this end, attempted thefts of ‘*santitos*’ were a common occurrence

¹⁰⁰¹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, p.306

¹⁰⁰² AHAG-Totatiche/C/3/E/13, Magallanes to Arzobispo, 15 Nov.1920

¹⁰⁰³ Zingg, *Los huicholes*, i, p.34

throughout the Cristiada in the Gran Nayar, to the extent that they may sometimes have motivated, in of themselves, raids on rival communities.¹⁰⁰⁴

According to Weigand, the actions of an individual priest – not Magallanes, however, but an unnamed ‘Cristero priest’ – also had an important effect on the sympathies of the Huichols of San Sebastián. This individual, bought to the community ‘a finales de 1926 o principios de 1927’¹⁰⁰⁵ by a local mestizo, may well be the same ‘fanático sacerdote’ mentioned as leading an attack on a SEP school in Minillas, Mezquitic, in October 1926, before escaping to ‘la sierra que habitan los huicholes.’¹⁰⁰⁶ Perhaps both references are to the militant priest Herculano Cabral, who is documented as living in San Sebastián in early 1928.¹⁰⁰⁷ Whoever he was, the priest apparently convinced Juan Bautista, the ‘Huichol semi-cacique of the San Sebastián gubernancia,’ to join the Cristero rebellion.¹⁰⁰⁸ The priest told the community that ‘the Federal Government was an instrument of Satan and, therefore, should be destroyed in the name of Christ the King,’¹⁰⁰⁹ and the fact that this message found a particularly receptive audience in San Sebastián may well be connected to the greater Catholic influence over the costumbre of this community compared to its neighbours. It was San Sebastián, after all, that was regarded by Lumholtz as the most ‘Christian’ of all of the Huichol communities, which had served as the base of the Josefinos until they were expelled during the revolution, and whose communal cabecera is to this day still ‘protected’ by a series of crosses erected by these missionaries.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Magdaleno Arrellano Soto; Pedro de la Cruz Ramírez; Salvador Sánchez

¹⁰⁰⁵ P. C. Weigand, ‘El papel de los indios huicholes...’ p.6

¹⁰⁰⁶ AHSEP-78-79/C/38281/E/17, González to DFEJ, 27 Oct. 1926

¹⁰⁰⁷ AAAR/C/14/E/57/Doc/6907, J. Ávila to Quintanar, 24 May 1928

¹⁰⁰⁸ P. C. Weigand, ‘Co-operative Labor Groups...’ p.19

¹⁰⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p.20

However, it is unlikely that the majority of the population of San Sebastián would have been won over to the Cristero side by words of the priest alone, given that most did not understand Spanish, nor the apocalyptic references running through his anti-government discourse. Instead, it is likely that the figure of the priest simply gave added authority to Juan Bautista's own anti-government message. The influence of Agustín Carrillo in Santa Catarina seems to likewise have played an important part in shoring up the loyalty of the majority in that community to the Federal government, and Meyer is therefore right to play up the importance of cacical decisions in explaining Huichol participation in the Cristiada.¹⁰¹⁰

In the immediate post-revolutionary period, both Bautista and Carrillo, through their command of the Spanish language, became link-men between their communities and outside forces, much as Patricio Mezquite had been a decade or so earlier. This 'worldiness' seems to have earned them the confidence of, and probably some level of influence over, their communities' traditional authorities – as we can see in Carrillo's documented role as a go-between in Santa Catarina's contacts with the Jalisco state government in the early 1920s. The intelligence, energy and ability of these caciques as orators also helped both men to become influential in their communities. It appears that Benítez's judgement of the power of oratory over the Coras almost fifty years later – that 'al pueblo acostumbrado al recitado de los mitos es sensible a la palabra "bonita"'¹⁰¹¹ – can be applied to the Huichols of the 1920s, as Bautista was described as 'a convincing speaker,'¹⁰¹² 'friendly, gay, objective, and critical,'¹⁰¹³ and as 'el

¹⁰¹⁰ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, pp.29-31

¹⁰¹¹ Benítez, *Los indios*, vol.iii, p.321

¹⁰¹² P. C. Weigand, 'Co-operative Labor Groups...' p.19

¹⁰¹³ O. Klineberg, 'Notes on the Huichol,' p.457

indio más influyente, inteligente y con aspiraciones que llaman la atención' in San Sebastián.¹⁰¹⁴ Bautista is also remembered today as a powerful shaman whose ability to channel supernatural forces conferred him a certain invulnerability, which suggests he also exercised significant charismatic authority over his followers.¹⁰¹⁵ It is not surprising, then, that their political influence combined with their relative youth at the outbreak of the Cristiada (the latter being a typical attribute of caciques across Mexico in the revolutionary period),¹⁰¹⁶ made these men convincing enough war leaders for a significant number of their fellow comuneros to follow them into battle.

But while the influence of these local caciques on Huchol participation in the Cristiada was important (as it was in many nearby Cora, Tepehuano and mestizo communities),¹⁰¹⁷ it cannot have been decisive, as many in Santa Catarina attempted to stay neutral during the conflict, while the majority in San Sebastián's anexo of Tuxpan stayed loyal to the government throughout the rebellion, despite Bautista's support for the rebels. Indeed, even the participation of San Sebastián's Cristero fighters in engagements outside of the Sierra Huichola was 'limited and unenthusiastic.'¹⁰¹⁸ The caciques themselves must also have had their own reasons for taking radically different positions in relation to the two sides in the Cristiada. In trying to explain the reasons for this, and their success in gaining the support of the majority within their communities, it is necessary to look beyond the realm of religious belief and the actions and influence of priests or of the caciques themselves,

¹⁰¹⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, I. Ramos, 'Informe,' 21 Nov. 1931

¹⁰¹⁵ Gilberto Bautista; Raul Vázquez Campos

¹⁰¹⁶ cf. P. Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt...* p.78-90; 19-20; S. Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata...* pp.72-3

¹⁰¹⁷ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.33-4

¹⁰¹⁸ P. C. Weigand, 'Differential Acculturation...' p.14

who would not have found as much support if their message had not chimed with sentiments that already existed amongst their communities' populations as a whole.

The available archival and oral evidence ultimately points to Huichol motivations for participation in the Cristiada as being determined by vaguely 'serrano' impulses, encapsulated by Weigand as 'una idea básica: la preservación y la defensa de sus comunidades, de la estructura de la comunidad y de la autonomía cultural del área.'¹⁰¹⁹ Land-grabs and invasions had long threatened the stability and cohesion of all of the different Huichol territories, while in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Cristero rebellion, the revolutionary Mexican state had been expanding its power more aggressively in the Sierra Huichola than the Catholic Church. Just as Purnell found in Michoacán,¹⁰²⁰ in the Sierra Huichola it was communal rivalries and land disputes, together with the effects of the Mexican state's agrarian reform and school-building programmes, that played the pivotal role in determining both popular and cacical Huichol sympathies at the outset of the Cristiada, rather than the influence of individual rebels, priests, or Catholicism in general.

Maintaining or reclaiming control of their communal territories was a decisive factor in Huichol participation in the armed phase of the Revolution, and Santa Catarina and San Andrés, despite lacking the support of government agronomists, continued to put their faith in Jalisco's state authorities for a solution to their agrarian problems, which defined their relationship with the Mexican state in the first half of the 1920s (at least

¹⁰¹⁹ P. C. Weigand, 'El papel de los indios huicholes...' p.10

¹⁰²⁰ J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* pp.149-58, pp.124-33

until the violent rejection of the SEP's attempt to establish a school in San Andrés in 1925). The traditional authorities of Santa Catarina, together with Agustín Carrillo, had even declared themselves 'agraristas' in an effort to gain the sympathies of Jalisco's Zunista administration in 1924.¹⁰²¹ In October 1927 Jalisco's interim government asked the Federal government to publish Santa Catarina's 'solicitud de ampliación de dotación de tierras' in Mexico's Periódico Oficial,¹⁰²² and in the same month Agustín Carrillo began to take part in the regional anti-Cristero campaign. A few months later, the Federal government officially recognised the claim.¹⁰²³ There must therefore have existed some sense of a 'patron-client' relationship between the dominant factions in San Andrés and Santa Catarina, and the state and Federal authorities. This, together with the fact that the mestizo neighbours of these communities – Huejuquilla, Tenzompa and San Juan Capistrano – were all rebel strongholds during the Cristiada, makes it unsurprising that their initial sympathies did not tend toward the Cristeros, and also undermines the rather reductive assertion of ex-Cristero leader Aurelio Acevedo that Agustín Carrillo's anti-Cristero position had been 'dictada por los ricos comerciantes de Mezquitic (Los Robles), pueblo que controlaba prácticamente la vida de Santa Catarina.'¹⁰²⁴

Meanwhile San Sebastián's lands had been invaded by Mezquitic, Villa Guerrero and Bolaños, to the east, and Huajimic, to the south,¹⁰²⁵ while San Sebastián also disputed a portion of territory with Santa Catarina. The community's authorities appear to have

¹⁰²¹ AGA-D/23/1425/leg.2/CCA/Dotación/Santa Catarina, de la Cruz, Carrillo et al, to Gob. Jal., 29 Dec. 1924

¹⁰²² AGA-D/23/1425/leg.3/CCA/Restitución/Santa Catarina, Gob.Jal. to Dir. de POEJ, 7 Oct. 1927

¹⁰²³ POEJ, 17 Jan. 1928

¹⁰²⁴ Aurelio Acevedo, in J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.30

¹⁰²⁵ P. C. Weigand, 'El papel de los indios huichols...' p.5

had little faith in the government's power to resolve these territorial conflicts, however, and did not, in the years before the Cristiada, develop working relations with any individuals who would later represent the side of the Callista state during the Cristero rebellion. Lacking allies in the government, and at odds over land rights with communities whose caciques opted for the government side during the Cristiada, San Sebastián's leaders thus sided with the rebels. As Weigand asserts, 'el objetivo formal de Bautista era preservar a la comunidad de los forasteros, tanto vecinos como indios.'¹⁰²⁶ Thus the long-running dyadic conflict between Santa Catarina and San Sebastián over the limits of their respective territories, helped to condition the radically divergent positions of each community's leaders, and makes the support of the majority of each community's population for these positions appear all the more natural.¹⁰²⁷

However, many in San Sebastián's semi-autonomous anexo of Tuxpan, despite facing similar territorial problems to San Sebastián, refused to rally to Bautista's leadership and declare allegiance to the Cristeros. The 'longstanding tensions' between the two settlements had been expressed violently during the revolution, and were probably rooted in Tuxpan's relatively recent foundation within San Sebastián's lands by refugees from the separate and by-then extinct community of Ostoc (which may have been seen as an 'invasion' by San Sebastián). Thus Tuxpan's loyalty to the government, which if viewed in purely agrarian terms seems a little perplexing, in fact

¹⁰²⁶ *ibid.*, p.6

¹⁰²⁷ cf. P. A. Dennis, *Intervillage Conflict...* pp.49-94

supports the idea that communal rivalry and territorial disputes played the most important role in deciding Huichol allegiances during the Cristiada.¹⁰²⁸

Local support for the state, as inspired by revolutionary agricultural policy, was tempered in the Sierra Huichola by the activities of the SEP. The unsavoury characters frequently employed as teachers, the meddling of these teachers in questions of land reform, and the threat that the SEP's curriculum posed to their *costumbre*, turned many Huichols against the revolutionary state that these teachers supposedly represented (as had also occurred in the Sierra Cora, and in many other parts of the country).¹⁰²⁹ For example, no government rural school had been established in Santa Catarina between 1920-1296, and so there had been no chance for drunken, abusive or exploitative teachers to cast the Mexican state in a bad light in that community. The only contact between Santa Catarina's authorities (including Agustín Carrillo) and the SEP had been through occasionally meeting Inspector Topete. These authorities clearly trusted Topete, as on hearing that he was to be withdrawn from the region, they wrote to the state government that:

‘el Prof. Don Diego Hernández Topete... tanto ha trabajado por que nos civilicemos... y hacemos de su conocimiento que no dejaremos de dirigirnos a ese Departamento a fin de que ninguna otra persona venga a civilizarnos, por que a este señor lo conocemos y nos conose nos quiere y guarda toda consideración y nunca nos ha hecho un mal.’¹⁰³⁰

Santa Catarina's leaders, then, appear to have also enjoyed a positive relationship with the SEP (if only because Topete had never had the chance to betray the good faith of

¹⁰²⁸ cf. J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* pp.134-62

¹⁰²⁹ cf. B. T. Smith, *The Roots...* p.232; A. Bantjes, *As if Jesus...* pp.33-5

¹⁰³⁰ AHSEP-45/C/36342/E/1, Agustín Carillo et al, to Gob.Jal., 3 Jan. 1926

the community's authorities), which enhanced the general positive regard with which they held the Mexican state.

However, while the leaders of San Andrés had faith in the willingness of the state to help them resolve their agrarian conflicts, local hostility toward the SEP was made explicit with their killing of Antonio Reza. It appears that a rather ambiguous relationship thus existed between either the state on one side, and the community's leaders and the population as a whole on the other; or between the state and a community divided between rival factions, one broadly supportive of the government, and the other opposed to it. Both explanations would account for San Andrés' generally non-committal stance during the Cristiada, and the contacts that the community's inhabitants established with both Quintanar and the Federal army.

Finally, by the end of 1925, both the leaders and much of the general population of San Sebastián seem to have come to the conclusion that the Mexican state was a threat to the autonomy and cohesion of their community. This general anti-government sentiment, combined with the added moral authority that a Cristero preacher lent to the anti-government stance of a persuasive community leader, made the community an obvious source of support for the Cristeros. With the memory of their recent 'victories over the vecinos during the Revolution proper' still fresh in the minds of many comuneros, this support extended to armed participation in the rebellion.¹⁰³¹ This analysis remains convincing even if we discount the idea that the missionary efforts of the Franciscans, Josefinos, or Cristóbal Magallanes had resulted in greater Catholic influence over San Sebastián's *costumbre* than that of the other

¹⁰³¹ Weigand, 'Co-operative Labor Groups...' p.20

Huichol communities, and that this in turn compounded San Sebastián's identification with the Cristeros on an ideological level.

The motivations for Huichol allegiances relative to the Mexican state or to the rebels during the first Cristiada naturally helped to determine the way that each community, or different groups within each community, participated in the rebellion itself. So too did the general desire for booty shared by the Huichol troops on either side of the conflict. The enthusiastic participation of the Juan Bautista's men in the taking of Mezquitic, for example, was in part due to the town's status as a regional commercial centre,¹⁰³² whose leading citizens possessed large herds of cattle,¹⁰³³ which were 'highly revered' in religious terms and the primary signifier of wealth amongst the Huichols in this period.¹⁰³⁴ Meanwhile, the consequences of this participation, and in particular the resultant breakdown of many aspects of costumbre, helped to determine subsequent Huichol participation in 'La Segunda.' Both conflicts have had a lasting influence on the political and cultural situation in the Sierra Huichola.

Explaining Tepehuano and Mexicanero participation in the Cristiada

While the narrative presented in this chapter, and the work of Meyer and Avitia Hernández, leaves little doubt that vast majority of Santiago Bayacora's mestizo population supported Mora's Cristero cause,¹⁰³⁵ there has been far far less research into the factors influencing the participation of southern Durango's Indian population

¹⁰³² J. Meyer, 'La revolución en occidente...' p.262

¹⁰³³ AAAR/C/14/E/58/Doc/6980, PM.Mezquitic, to Montellano, 8 June 1928

¹⁰³⁴ J. C. Fikes, 'Huichol Indian Ceremonial Cycle...' pp.80-82

¹⁰³⁵ See J. Meyer, *El coraje...*; A. Avitia Hernández, *El Caudillo...*

in the Cristiada. Given the traditional neglect of the Mexicaneros by both historians and anthropologists, there is almost no mention of their participation in the Cristiada in secondary sources, beyond Alvarado Solís's mention of their being victims of 'robos y violaciones' by rebel forces, which apparently caused the flight of much of the population.¹⁰³⁶ Given the lack of much documentary evidence of Mexicanero participation in the Cristiada, this section deals primarily with the case of the Tepehuanos, although some of my conclusions could probably be applied to the Mexicanero communities.

There has been more discussion, in the work of Meyer, Avitia Hernández, and in Antonio Estrada's Cristero novel *Rescoldo*, of Tepehuano participation in the first Cristiada; but still less than that relating to the Huichols, and certainly from a smaller variety of sources, all of which posit that the Tepehuanos overwhelmingly supported the Cristeros. Meyer, in line with his position that the Cristiada was a genuine revolution that enjoyed the sympathy of the much of Mexico's rural population, states that the Tepehuanos 'fueron cristeros en un 75%',¹⁰³⁷ which goes against the evidence presented above. Unsurprisingly, he argues that religion was a key factor in generating this apparently overwhelming Tepehuano support for the Cristeros.¹⁰³⁸ Meyer seems to have based this interpretation on the work of Mexican historian and indigenista Roberto de la Cerda Silva, whose 1943 article on 'Los tepehuanes' would have been one of the few sources on Tepehuano culture available to Meyer at the time of his research, and which Meyer paraphrases on several occasions.¹⁰³⁹ De la Cerda's

¹⁰³⁶ N. P. Alvarado Solís, *Oralidad y ritual...* p.44

¹⁰³⁷ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.29

¹⁰³⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰³⁹ eg. compare paragraph on Pueblo Nuevo region in: R. de la Cerda Silva, 'Los Tepehuanes,' p.566, with J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.29

explicit description of the Tepehuanos, in 1945, as Catholics who followed ‘las mismas costumbres de los mestizos’ and amongst whom ‘el sacerdote tiene gran influencia... al grado de que los caciques siempre buscan sus consejos,’¹⁰⁴⁰ leads Meyer himself to claim that the Tepehuanos of the 1920s were ‘los más aculturados y los más católicos de los indios de la sierra,’¹⁰⁴¹ leading to ‘seventy-five percent’ of the Tepehuano population naturally supporting the Cristeros.

However, de la Cerda exaggerates the level to which the Tepehuanos had been ‘acculturated,’¹⁰⁴² and thus the similarities between Tepehuano and mestizo religious beliefs. His article is obviously based on extremely limited fieldwork, with some added data from colonial sources thrown in (which leads to his confusion of the Tepehuanos of southern Durango with the very separate ‘Tepehuanos del Norte’ of Chihuahua). His insistence that ‘la cultura tepehuana ha desaparecido y solo se conservan de ella huellas debiles y esporádicas en pequeños grupos que viven en la abrupta montaña o cerca de las barrancas inaccesibles,’¹⁰⁴³ also involves his arbitrary dismissal of all visible evidence to the contrary as a sign of Cora or Huichol influence – including examples presented in other sections of his own article. For example, de la Cerda later admits that

‘No obstante ser catolicos, en algunos lugares tienen centros dedicados a actos religiosos primitivos: en la altura de la montaña, sobre una meseta, donde celebran las fiestas que llaman “mitote” la que se verifica en mayo, septiembre y diciembre, a ellos concurren tepehuanes de todos los pueblos.’¹⁰⁴⁴

¹⁰⁴⁰ R. de la Cerda Silva, ‘Los Tepehuanes,’ p.564

¹⁰⁴¹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.29

¹⁰⁴² In the context of the Sierra Tepehuana, the nature of ‘acculturation’ is contentious; see A. Reyes Valdez, ‘The Perpetual Return...’ p.92, pp.192-7; Pennington, p.24, p.43; with regards to ‘mestizo’ identity in the Gran Nayar as a whole, see this thesis, p.135, note 541

¹⁰⁴³ R. de la Cerda Silva, ‘Los Tepehuanes’, p.564

¹⁰⁴⁴ *ibid.*

While Meyer seems to have overlooked this evidence of Tepehuano religious heterodoxy, it is widely accepted by modern anthropologists that shaman-led *xiotalh* ceremonialism is as important to Tepehuano cosmology, socio-political organisation and agricultural practices as it is for the Huichols or the Coras,¹⁰⁴⁵ which clearly differentiates the Tepehuanos from their mestizo neighbours. Furthermore, Tepehuano ‘Catholicism’ is also very distinct from that practised by mestizo Mexicans. Neither priests nor missionaries ‘have direct access to the church or associated rites,’ which to this day remain entirely in the hands of members of each Tepehuano community’s traditional authorities;¹⁰⁴⁶ while the holy images and icons within these churches are ‘identified as Spanish or as mestizo gods and related to European activities,’ and depend for their power on the sacrifices – mainly in terms of ritual abstinences – of local shamans, who thus ‘manage to dominate [the] European gods [by] confining them to the church space.’¹⁰⁴⁷ These ‘tutelary deities’ are regarded as fundamentally different, and far more ‘dangerous,’ than the saints of their mestizo neighbours,¹⁰⁴⁸ and thus ‘the Tepehuan relationship with these foreigners’ gods is very different from that held by the canonical Church,’¹⁰⁴⁹ and has not been mediated by outsiders representing the Church hierarchy since the colonial period (despite the efforts of Franciscan missionaries active in the region today, whose attempts to take control of local rites and rituals have been wholly rejected by the Tepehuanos,¹⁰⁵⁰ with this rejection sometimes accompanied by the threat of violence).¹⁰⁵¹ The Tepehuanos

¹⁰⁴⁵ cf. Reyes, *Los que están...*, pp.189-226; idem., ‘The Perpetual Return...’

¹⁰⁴⁶ idem., ‘Their gods...’ p.2

¹⁰⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp.4-5

¹⁰⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁰⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.10

¹⁰⁵⁰ C. Cramaussel, ‘El sistema de cargos...’ p.75

¹⁰⁵¹ Saturnino Solís Mendoza

themselves remain ‘muy conscientes’ of the differences between their religion and mestizo Catholicism.¹⁰⁵²

However, Meyer’s assumption that most of the Tepehuano were essentially mestizo Catholics who happened to speak Tepehuano is complemented by his descriptions of mestizo Cristero leaders Valente Acevedo, Trinidad Mora and Federico Vázquez as ‘tepehuano aculturados,’ whose forces were made up of ‘indios que lo habian sido o que acababan apenas de serlo.’¹⁰⁵³ Lumping together all the inhabitants of southern Durango as some sort of undifferentiated, ‘half-Indian, half-mestizo’ mass, enables Meyer to ascribe to the entire population the idea of ‘religion’ as a key motive for their supporting the Cristeros. And in stressing the universality of this most fundamental of motives, it becomes more realistic for him to claim such massive, overwhelming local support for the Cristeros. However, it is likely that much of the ‘acculturation’ cited by Meyer to justify his analysis was, in itself, a result of the upheaval of the Cristero era, rather than a prior cause of Tepehuano participation in the rebellion. As Cramaussel points out, ‘la guerra cristera que cundió por la sierra... contribuyó a la desaparición de muchos pueblos tepehuano,’ which were replaced by, or their populations assimilated into, new mestizo communities established in the wake of a regional logging boom in the 1950s.¹⁰⁵⁴ And Mora, Acevedo and Vázquez meanwhile perceived themselves as, and were perceived by their mestizo and Tepehuano contemporaries as,¹⁰⁵⁵ Spanish-speaking, conventionally Catholic mestizos

¹⁰⁵² C. Cramaussel, ‘El sistema de cargos...’ p.75, p.94

¹⁰⁵³ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.29

¹⁰⁵⁴ C. Cramaussel, ‘Historia del poblamiento...’ pp.25-6

¹⁰⁵⁵ A. Estrada, *Rescoldo*, pp.74-5, p.154, p.163; Felipe Venegas

(despite Meyer and Avititía Hernández's mis-identification of Vázquez as a native of Temoaya).

It is true that various local 'santitos' are said to have given individual Tepehuano physical and spiritual strength, resistance and influence over men – in other words, conferred them with charismatic power. Just as in the rest of the Gran Nayar, however, this applied equally to figures on both the Cristero *and* government sides. While armed men rallied around particular saints or images, belief in their power did not translate directly into support for the Cristeros. Sixto Mendía, for example, was regarded as having obtained his 'powers' through an alliance with San Pedro of San Pedro Jícoras;¹⁰⁵⁶ while Juan Andrés Soto is today said to have consecrated himself to either San Andrés of San Andrés Milpillas (through typically Tepehuano offerings of flowers and ritual fasting), or to have left his men overnight and descended into a canyon – synonymous with 'dark forces' in Tepehuano culture – where he obtained a huge black horse and supernatural powers from the devil.¹⁰⁵⁷ In fact, the only orthodox 'Catholic' religious factor that helped garner support for the Cristeros in the Sierra Tepehuana was Porfirio Mayorquín's incorporation of Huajicori's rebel parish priest into his Cristero forces. Just as in San Sebastián, the priest's presence probably gave additional legitimacy to Mayorquín's anti-government position, and thus facilitated the latter's recruitment of local people – particularly those of Teneraca – into his forces.¹⁰⁵⁸ I would argue that this is not, however, evidence of Tepehuano religious feeling *directly* driving them to join the rebels, but is rather an example of one particular priest's moral authority helping to legitimise cacical power. Ultimately,

¹⁰⁵⁶ Saturnino Solís Mendoza

¹⁰⁵⁷ *ibid.*; Eulogio Ciriano Flores

¹⁰⁵⁸ Magdaleno Arrellano Soto

then, Tepehuano religious practice was too far removed from mestizo Catholicism, and too free – with the exception of a single, exceptional case – from the practical influence of the Church hierarchy, to have been much affected by the anti-clericalism of a state that was anyway practically non-existent in the region in this period. It therefore seems unlikely that Tepehuano support for the Cristeros was a spontaneous, violent expression of their Catholic faith in the face of revolutionary jacobinism.

While Avitia Hernández follows Meyer in describing the majority of the Tepehuanos as supporters of the rebellion, he dismisses Catholic beliefs as their motivation ‘por el simple hecho de que no recibían visitas sacerdotales.’ Instead he builds on the example of the seventeenth century Tepehuano rebellion, and on Fernando Benítez’s assertion that the ‘La Santa Cruzada fue su última oportunidad de mostrar que los olvidados y vencidos tepehuanes no habían muerto,’¹⁰⁵⁹ to argue that Tepehuano participation in the Cristiada was the culmination of a history of fierce resistance to the power of the Spanish crown and the Mexican State,¹⁰⁶⁰ an expression of some sort of millennial, rebel Indian spirit. Paraphrasing Meyer, he fudges around ethnic divides in southern Durango by claiming that ‘la mayoría de los cristeros de los municipios de Mezquital y Pueblo Nuevo, en Durango eran, o mestizos descendientes de tepehuán, o bien tepehuanes aculturados u occidentalizados.’¹⁰⁶¹ He then argues that

‘Dentro de la idiosincrasia tepehuán, la lucha guerrera tiene un lugar predominante: Sólo los que morían por la patria, los prisioneros de guerra que morían en poder del enemigo, los sacerdotes y los hombres y mujeres que se habían distinguido por sus virtudes y sabiduría, iban a la morada de Sahuatoba.’¹⁰⁶²

¹⁰⁵⁹ F. Benítez, *Los indios...* v, pp.57-58

¹⁰⁶⁰ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.6, p.406

¹⁰⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.164-6

¹⁰⁶² *ibid.*, p.160

For Avitia Hernández, this belief in a warrior's paradise 'explica parcialmente la constante participación de los tepehuanes en rebeliones y guerras de resistencia contra blancos y mestizos,'¹⁰⁶³ in the same way as Van Young asserts that 'messianism' was a motivation for previous rebellions of both Indians and mestizos in northern Mexico.¹⁰⁶⁴ However, Avitia Hernández's idea is based on poor ethnology, in this case that of Evarardo Gámiz, the same Durangense intellectual who had in 1924 briefly worked for the SEP as a maestro misionero, and subsequently authored, amongst other works, a *Monografía de la nación tepehuana*. It is in this book that the Tepehuano creator god, 'Sahuatoba,' and his Valhalla-like paradise at 'Masada,' first appear¹⁰⁶⁵ – not having been known to the Tepehuanos themselves beforehand.¹⁰⁶⁶ Given that the inhabitants of Santiago Bayacora were mestizos, and the Tepehuano 'warrior religion' was an invention of Gámiz, we can disregard messianic Tepehuano beliefs as a motivation for the population of southern Durango supporting the Cristeros.

Meyer and Avitia Hernández also assert that a conflict over the exploitation of the Sierra Tepehuana's pine forests helped to generate Tepehuano support for the Cristeros. Both historians describe the pro-government Tepehuano cacique Ascención (Chon) Aguilar as 'el primero en abrir el bosque communal a las compañías forestales,'¹⁰⁶⁷ and posit that he and his supporters were thus allied to politicians and businessmen in Durango and Mexico City with interests in the virgin pine forests of

¹⁰⁶³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁴ E. Van Young, 'Millenium on the Northern Marches...'

¹⁰⁶⁵ Evarardo Gámiz, *Monografía de la nación tepehuana*, pp.69-77

¹⁰⁶⁶ Antonio Reyes, personal communication, 2 Apr. 1014

¹⁰⁶⁷ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.29; also A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.164-6

the Sierra Tepehuana.¹⁰⁶⁸ Avitia even goes so far as to describe the Cristiada in the Sierra as ‘la lucha por el bosque sagrado.’¹⁰⁶⁹ This stress on logging as a key point of conflict is predicated on the complaint of Chano Gurrola in Antonio Estrada’s *Rescoldo* that ‘Vecino Mezquital recula siempre más adentro sierra. Toda sierra viene pelando palos. Tipihuán no puede vivir sin pinos.’¹⁰⁷⁰

However, having failed to find a single reference to any ‘Chano Gurrola’ in the archives or in present-day oral accounts of the Cristiada in the Sierra Tepehuana, I can only conclude that Gurrola is for the most part a literary invention, created by Estrada as a way of representing Tepehuano culture and beliefs in the form of a single character in his novel. Furthermore, *Rescoldo* is set during the Segunda Cristiada, and it is clear from the documentary evidence that, at the start of the First Cristiada, Aguilar was still far from being the powerful figure he would later become, while the forests of Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle (home communities of the fictional Gurrola and the very real, but still very young, Aguilar, respectively), had been subject only to ‘un aprovechamiento poco considerable’ in the early 1920s.¹⁰⁷¹ Logging was by then an important industry in El Salto,¹⁰⁷² to the north-west of the Sierra Tepehuana, and interest in the commercial potential of Santa María’s forests would lead to the ‘despojo’ of a large part of the community’s lands in the 1930s, which did influence local participation in ‘la Segunda’ (as the next chapter of this thesis will show). However, by drawing on *Rescoldo*, Meyer and Avitia not only make arguments based on the statements of a fictional character, but also, more

¹⁰⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.18

¹⁰⁶⁹ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.164-6

¹⁰⁷⁰ A. Estrada, *Rescoldo...* p.150, in *ibid.*, p.164-6

¹⁰⁷¹ AGA-BC/276.1/411/leg.1/Comunal/Restitución/Santa María Ocotán y Xoconoxtle, INI Report, N.D.

¹⁰⁷² C. Cramaussel, ‘Historia del poblamiento...’ p.22-3

importantly, anachronistically back-date the significance of logging activities and the strength of Aguilar's influence in the Sierra Tepehuana from the period of 'La Segunda' to that of 'La Primera' Cristiada.

Focusing exclusively on Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle, when trying to explain the participation in the Cristiada of individuals from across the Sierra Tepehuana, also puts excessive emphasis on events in a single, relatively well studied area to the exclusion of the rest – a common occurrence in studies of the Tepehuanos (and one that, as much more archival information exists for these two communities than for any other, this thesis may also sometimes be guilty of). However, the available documentary evidence, and oral histories collected from Temoaya and Yonora, San Francisco Ocotán, Taxicaringa, and Teneraca, in addition to that from Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle, show that cacical rivalries played a systematically important role in deciding the allegiances of the rest of the Tepehuano population in the Cristiada.

Meyer regards the phenomenon of caciquismo as most important in securing the loyalty of what he characterises as a Tepehuano 'minority' for the Callista state (as he also argues happened with the majority of Puebla's campesinos).¹⁰⁷³ This is in part a product of Meyer's exaggerated view of Tepehuano acculturation, which leads him to misidentify as mestizos two of the most important pro-government Tepehuano leaders of the period – Sixto Mendía and Cosme Solís. Thus Ascención Aguilar becomes the 'solo jefe indio' who supported the state during the first Cristero rebellion,¹⁰⁷⁴

¹⁰⁷³ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.104, p.310

¹⁰⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p.29

allowing Meyer to assign more ‘noble,’ organic motives to the Tepehuano ‘majority’ he alleges supported the Cristeros.

However, in line with the general picture that emerges from the documentary and oral evidence used as the basis of the narrative section above, Tepehuano allegiances seem to have been determined less by ideology, and more by internal factional conflicts related to the dynamics of caciquismo itself and, although to a lesser extent than in the Sierra Huichola, by inter-communal territorial conflicts. Geographical circumstance, forced recruitment, and the logic of the violence that characterised the Cristero rebellion, all subsequently helped to cement factional divides and swell the numbers of fighters on each side in the conflict; although these were still themselves a minority in relation to those Tepehuanos forced to abandon their communities ‘para salvaguardar sus vidas y proteger a las mujeres de violaciones [y al] mismo tiempo, también evitaban ser incorporados a las filas rebeldes o federales en la leva.’¹⁰⁷⁵

It is naturally tempting to assign political positions to the factions that emerged in the Sierra Tepehuana, and to identify those that declared for the state as ‘cosmopolitans,’ already allied with the state via their occupation of non-traditional offices – such as Jefe de Defensa – in the years before the outbreak of the Cristiada, and to characterise those who allied with the Cristeros as members of ‘conservative’ factions aligned with traditional communal governments, as occurred in the Sierra Cora. However, as discussed in previous chapters, many of the Tepehuano Cristero caciques, such as Juan Andrés Soto in Santa María Ocotán, José María Gutiérrez in San Francisco Ocotán and Dámaso Barraza in Temoaya and Yonora, had served (like Pedro

¹⁰⁷⁵ E. Rangel Guzmán, J. L. Marín García, ‘Desplazamientos...’ p.16

Quintanar) as Jefes de Defensa. If anything, these pro-Cristero caciques were more powerful at the outbreak of the Cristiada than key pro-government leaders like Sixto Mendía, Cosme Solís or Ascención Aguilar. In fact, the state was so weak in the region in the early 1920s that its representatives tended to simply approve, *ex post facto*, anyone powerful or popular enough to be able to claim some level of military control over a community, in exactly the same way that the municipal and state governments ostensibly named each community's Gobernador and Juez Auxiliar without any real influence over the selection of these officials, which was in fact controlled by the community itself (particularly by local elders). Having served as a Jefe de Defensa does not, therefore, necessarily indicate an ideological position *vis-à-vis* the Mexican state, or presage future loyalties during the Cristiada.

Trying to identify the ideological positions of different caciques in this period is also difficult in that most of our explicit information regarding Tepehuano factionalism comes from the years *after* the first Cristero rebellion. Thus there is a danger of identifying pro- or anti-Cristero leaders with certain ideological positions that they in fact adopted only as a *consequence* of their participation in the first Cristiada, which brought them into close contact with either pro-government or pro-Cristero ideologues.¹⁰⁷⁶ For example, in 1959 Riley and Hobgood noted the development of 'what may be termed political parties – still quite unstructured,' in the Sierra Tepehuana. These they characterised as either 'conservative' – made up of 'those individuals who are determined to retain the old ways of life, and especially to resist any further intrusion on the part of Mexican nationals' – or 'liberal' – consisting of

¹⁰⁷⁶ cf. A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, ii, pp.494-516

those ‘interested in the benefits of outside contacts, and... more receptive to outside ideas.’¹⁰⁷⁷

However, although Juan Andrés Soto killed Gregorio Aguilar in revenge for Aguilar’s murder of a traditional governor, and later, during the second Cristiada, destroyed a SEP Internado Indígena in Santa María Ocotán on the grounds that its existence threatened *costumbre*,¹⁰⁷⁸ he was also an ex-Jefe de Defensa who had pursued Aguilar with the full backing of the regional mestizo authorities, and during the first Cristiada voluntarily put himself under the authority of Juan Sifuentes – who had been charged with running the government school provisionally founded, but never actually opened, in Santa María in 1926.¹⁰⁷⁹ It is difficult, then, to identify Soto as a hardline ‘conservative’ who allied with the Cristeros purely because of his opposition to government schools or dislike of ‘Mexican nationals.’ Likewise, José María Gutiérrez, Cristero leader in the region around San Francisco, had been both traditional governor *and* Jefe de Defensa in his community, and had been in extensive contact with the Durango state government during the later stages of the Revolution, pledging loyalty to the new revolutionary order and asking for information ‘relativos a las nuevas leyes de reformas.’ The documentary evidence thus suggests as much potential ideological sympathy for the revolutionary regime on Gutiérrez’s part, as it does an identification with traditional local power structures; leading us to conclude, in line with oral accounts from San Francisco, that both his early contacts with the state and later declaration for the Cristeros were probably motivated less by ideology,

¹⁰⁷⁷ C. L. Riley, J. Hobgood, ‘A Recent Nativistic Movement...’ p.356

¹⁰⁷⁸ Trinidad Morales Rodríguez

¹⁰⁷⁹ AHSEP-68-69/C/37436/E/35, DEFD to DERICI, 2 July 1926

and more by the need to safeguard his position within his community in the face of changing local circumstances.

Of course there may have been a few cases in which ideological positions adopted during or immediately after the Revolution influenced a cacique's subsequent stance during the Cristiada. Gregorio Aguilar, for example, had been in close contact with Carrancista fighters during the revolution, and he was subsequently an important advocate of Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle's agrarian claims. If we can assume that his son, Ascensión, inherited something of Gregorio's pro-agrarian reform sentiments, it would help to explain his becoming a pro-government fighter and self-proclaimed 'agrarista' in the Cristero era. However, in Gregorio's case, local concerns, rather than ideological considerations, seem to have been most important in deciding his support for his own community's agrarian petitioning, while his interference in Huazamota's political crisis marked him out as disobedient and led to conflicts with the state government in 1919, probably contributing to their later disavowal of him after the assassination of Santa María's traditional governor.¹⁰⁸⁰ Indeed, Ascensión accompanied Gregorio while he was on the run and was also declared an outlaw; and he only made his peace with the communal authorities, led by Juan Andrés Soto and backed by state and municipal governments, after his father's death.¹⁰⁸¹ It may well have been the nature of this agreement with these outside forces, and his inheritance not of an ideology but rather of his father's tactical alliance with the pro-government Muñoz family of Huazamota and enmity with pro-Cristero Juan Andrés Soto, that actually decided his later allegiance to the Callista state.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See this thesis, pp.72-8, pp.141-2

¹⁰⁸¹ *ibid.*

The allegiances of many other Tepehuano caciques and their factional allies during the first Cristiada seem to have been based on the old dictum that ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend,’ or determined by communal territorial conflicts, rather than ideological positions regarding Church, State, or the presence of mestizos in their communities. In the years prior to the outbreak of the conflict, neither Church, State or mestizo settlers had a sufficiently strong presence in any Tepehuano community for powerful local ideological arguments to have developed for or against either institution. Internal power-struggles instead developed during the upheaval of the Revolution and the Arrietista and Delahuertista uprisings, when relatively wealthy and often semi-literate young men gained access to weapons and the support of armed outsiders and began to challenge traditional governmental structures within their communities. When another round of generalised, wide-spread violence arrived on their doorstep, and powerful, (relatively) well-armed groups of outsiders again attempted to gain the allegiance of the communities of the Sierra Tepehuana, rival leaders within each community (and their supporters) declared either for the rebels or for the Callista state, in order to bolster their own personal political and economic positions. These positions were themselves often tied up with inter- and intra-communal disputes, which had been exacerbated by the disruption caused by the Revolution.

For example, within Santa María Ocotán, one such dispute involved the communal cabecera on one side, and on the other the anxo of Candelaria (whose inhabitants

supported the rebels during the Cristiada).¹⁰⁸² Before the outbreak of the Revolution, the people of Candelaria had complained about abuses suffered at the hands of Santa María's authorities.¹⁰⁸³ Riley and Hobgood later reported in the 1950s that the inhabitants of Candelaria were 'somewhat jealous of Santa María,'¹⁰⁸⁴ and the community has since tried to claim independence from Santa María, establishing its own communal *xiotalh* patio.¹⁰⁸⁵ In *Rescoldo*, the Tepehuano Cristero character Chano Gurrola asserts that he joined the rebels in part because Santa María 'siempre mete cuchara contra Candelaria.'¹⁰⁸⁶ Although Gurrola is probably a fictional character, and the book is set during 'la Segunda,' in the context of documented conflicts between Candelaria and Santa María before the Revolution and after 'la Segunda,' the reference to the *unchanging* nature of these tensions suggests that such conflicts also existed during the 1920s, and prompted Candelaria's inhabitants to join the Cristeros in order to gain outside support in their conflict with Santa María.¹⁰⁸⁷

More common in this period were inter-communal territorial disputes. Sánchez Olmedo's argument that 'la tierra fue el motivo principal por el que los tepehuanos del sur entraron en esta lucha,' is extreme, and based entirely on Meyer's assertion that the inhabitants of Santiago Bayacora – in reality a *mestizo* population – made peace with the Callista state 'luego que obtuvo títulos de confirmación de terrenos comunales.'¹⁰⁸⁸ However, Dámaso Barraza had previously used the violence of the Revolution to settle his community's boundary disputes with a neighbouring

¹⁰⁸² Agapito Campos, 'El Combate...' in *David*, 22 July 1964, p.391

¹⁰⁸³ See this thesis, p.27

¹⁰⁸⁴ C C. L. Riley, J. Hobgood, 'A Recent Nativistic Movement...' p.356

¹⁰⁸⁵ A. Reyes Valdez, *Los que están...* p.41

¹⁰⁸⁶ A. Estrada, *Rescoldo*, p.150

¹⁰⁸⁷ Although, conversely, differing loyalties during the Cristiada could also have generated these later tensions between Candelaria and Santa María

¹⁰⁸⁸ J. G. Sánchez Olmedo, *Etnografía...* p.38, citing J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.20

landowner, and his initial decision to join the Cristeros was undoubtedly also influenced by territorial conflicts. While both Campos and De Jesús attribute Barraza's enthusiasm for the rebellion exclusively to his passionate Catholicism, oral testimony from Yonora itself suggests that Barraza's decision was influenced at least as much by his conflict with the caciques of Mezquital over their invasions of Temoaya and Yonora's communal landholdings, as it was by his desire to protect a Church hierarchy that had no permanent presence in Temoaya, and still less in its anexo of Yonora – at this point no more than a few scattered rancherías without even a chapel, and still less a resident priest.¹⁰⁸⁹ With Barraza thus locked in conflict with a group inherently associated with the revolutionary state, the arrival in the region of armed men committed to the overthrow of the political order, and who had also won impressive, perhaps God-given victories against Federal forces, must have seemed providential to Barraza.

Juan Andrés Soto, a native of Platanitos – an anexo of Santa María Ocotán located far to the north of the communal cabecera, closer to both Candelaria and to Barraza's stronghold of Yonora – would have certainly known about Barraza's decision. In order to avoid being identified as Barraza's enemy, and perhaps also believing that the support of the region's most powerful cacique for the Cristeros was an indication of their likely victory, and a chance for him to increase his influence in Santa María Ocotán, Soto decided to follow Barraza into an alliance with the Cristeros. Similarly, the decision of San Francisco Ocotán strongman José María Gutiérrez to side with the Cristeros was apparently made only *after* Barraza's ally Porfirio Mayorquín had arrived in San Francisco. Backed by a sizeable, multi-ethnic armed force drawn from

¹⁰⁸⁹ Felipe Venegas

communities across southern Durango and northern Nayarit, he promised wealth in terms of ‘confiscated’ cattle for those who followed him, and death to his enemies – defined as anyone who refused to support the ‘sacred’ cause.¹⁰⁹⁰ Both Taxicaringa – relatively close to Barraza’s base at Yonora – and Teneraca – in whose anexo of Jacalitos Mayorquín established his headquarters – also faced similar pressures (in the latter case compounded by the words of Mayorquín’s Cristero priest).¹⁰⁹¹

In Xoconoxtle, meanwhile, Ascención Aguilar saw in declaring for the Callista side an opportunity to take revenge against Juan Andrés Soto, his father’s killer, and to gain Federal support for his community in its territorial conflict with Quintanar’s Cristero capital of Huejuquilla to the east.¹⁰⁹² Aguilar and his followers were also probably antagonistic towards Barraza and his Defensa forces-turned-rebels because of their invasion of Xoconoxtle in March 1921.¹⁰⁹³ By taking the government’s side against his natural enemies, Aguilar also probably hoped to boost his own cacical influence in the region (which at this pointed rested mainly on his status as a son of the late Gregorio).¹⁰⁹⁴ Meanwhile, Sixto Mendía, from Santa María’s southern anexo of La Laguna del Burro, also declared against the Cristeros. If we can take Mendía’s grandson Asiano De la Rosa Calleros at his word, Mendía received arms from General Eliseo Páez himself,¹⁰⁹⁵ which, as Páez died in a battle with the Cristeros in January 1927, would have made him one of the earliest Tepehuano leaders to declare against the Cristeros. If Páez had come to Llano Grande before Cristero forces were

¹⁰⁹⁰ Basilio de la Cruz Gutiérrez

¹⁰⁹¹ Gregorio Villa Rangel; Manuel Arrellano

¹⁰⁹² POED, 31 Aug. 1924

¹⁰⁹³ AGA-D/leg.1/Comunal/Restitución/Sta. María Ocotán y Xoconoxtle, Gob.Dgo. to CLA. Mezquital, 30 Mar. 1921

¹⁰⁹⁴ Saturnino Solís Mendoza

¹⁰⁹⁵ A. de la Rosa Calleros, *Historia de la política y de la justicia del tepehuano*, p.128

active in the area, it would have been natural for Mendía to form an alliance with the government, rather than the rebels. And even if this was not the case, his decision may have been influenced by the fact that Llano Grande was located far from Barraza's power-base at Yonora, and was instead much closer to Huazamota – still firmly under the control of the Muñoz clan, who were themselves close allies of Mariano Mejía, at that point the most powerful representative of the Mexican state in the entire region.

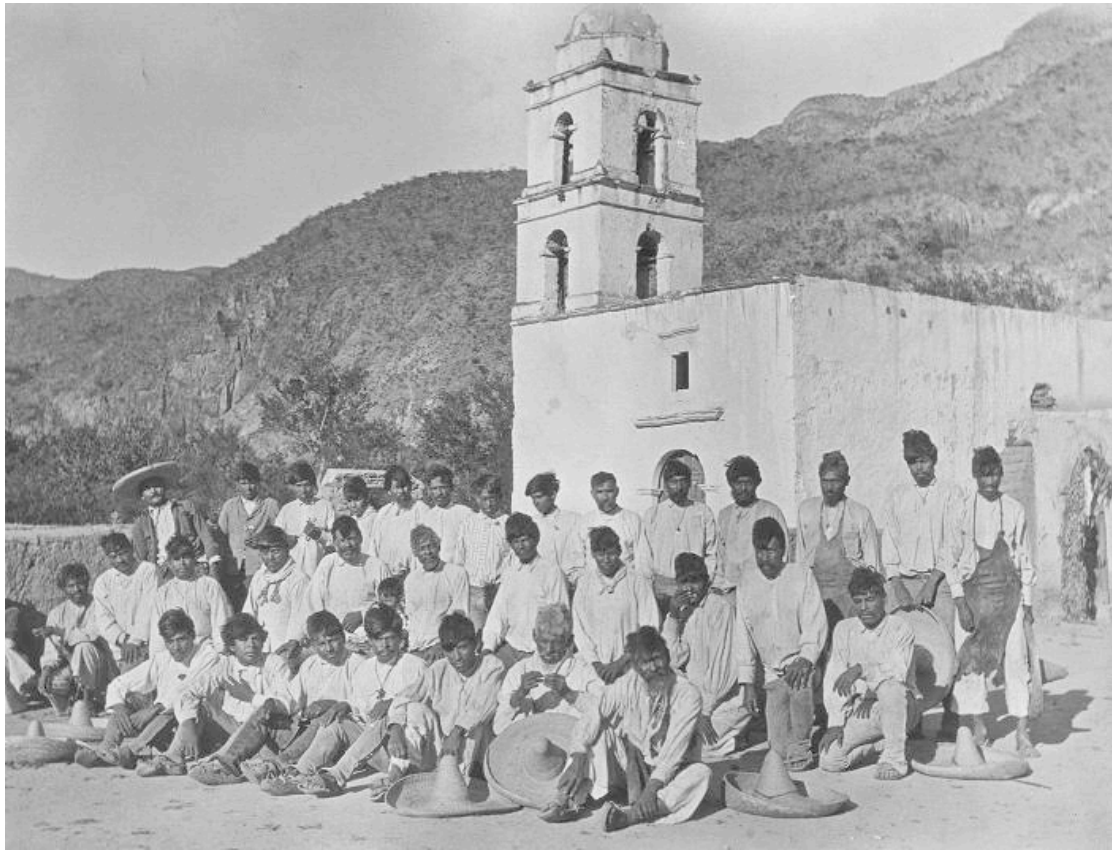
Each cacique could generally depend on a core of loyal supporters bound to him through ties of blood, ceremonial kinship, and clientelist self-interest, which were defined in the first case by origin, paternal surname and participation in familial *xiootalh* ceremonies, in the second case by several different forms, or degrees, of *compadrazgo*, and in the third case by political and economic ties. As outlined by Friedrich in the case of Naranja,¹⁰⁹⁶ factions within factions could emerge, but in the Sierra Tepehuana at the outbreak of the Cristiada, it is clear that individuals within each family *xiootalh* group, whose ranches were usually relatively close to the family *xiootalh* patio, tended to stick together in support of descent-group leaders in the face of shared territorial and military pressures. Thus Juan Andrés Soto's most loyal Cristero fighters were his brother, Pedro, and other relatives, such as Jacinto and Casimiro Soto and Gerardo Aguilar Soto. Sixto Mendía's brothers, Gregorio and Hilario, and his cousins Cosme, Agustín, Fernando and Benito Solís, meanwhile formed the core of Santa María Ocotán's pro-government Defensa.

Once these minority groups gained weapons and outside support, however, they quickly set about extending their areas of political, territorial and military control out

¹⁰⁹⁶ Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt...* p.78, pp.108-9

from their power-bases towards both neighbouring rancherías and the cabeceras of their communities. They promised booty to those who would join them, and declared that those who resisted them would be regarded as enemies. This extended even to communal traditional authorities, who before the disruption of the Revolution had been respected as the ultimate decision-makers in their communities, and whose persons were regarded as sacrosanct. The majority of the Tepehuano population responded to these new pressures, both internal and external, by trying to escape the conflict by physically removing themselves from it. However, just as in the Sierras of Nayarit and Jalisco, this exodus interrupted both the agricultural cycle and the interlinked communal costumbre. Thus the logic of war further weakened ritually-defined power structures within communities, while also leading both pro-Cristero and pro-government forces to become dependent on robbery and cattle-rustling for survival. This not only entrenched the enmity between the different factions (helping to spark new, even more intense violence during the 'La Segunda'), but, just as amongst the majority of Coras and Huichols for whom 'security' was also a prominent consideration, forced many of those who had escaped forcible conscription to enter into the conflict, in order to gain arms to defend their cattle from 'banditry,' or, starving and desperate, to obtain food.

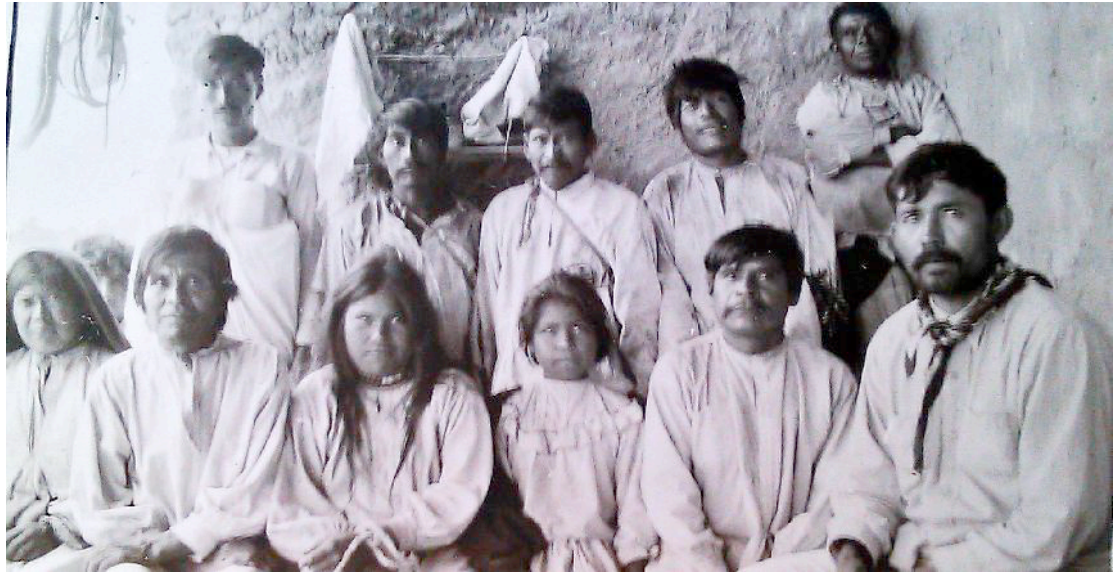
Illustrations



1. 'Convención de 'gobernadores' indígenas en San Miguel de Temoaya, Mezquital, para discutir sus asuntos agrarios.'



2. 'Los Jefes de Armas de la Región en El Cañón del Jesús María.'



3. 'En Dolores: Indios Coras de la región.'



4. 'Niños coras en la escuela rural de Jesús María, acompañados de su maestra, la señora Eugenia R. Gutiérrez... Hay varios niños mestizos o "vecinos" como se las llama en la región. Los coras llaman a los "vecinos" "NAPUETES."'



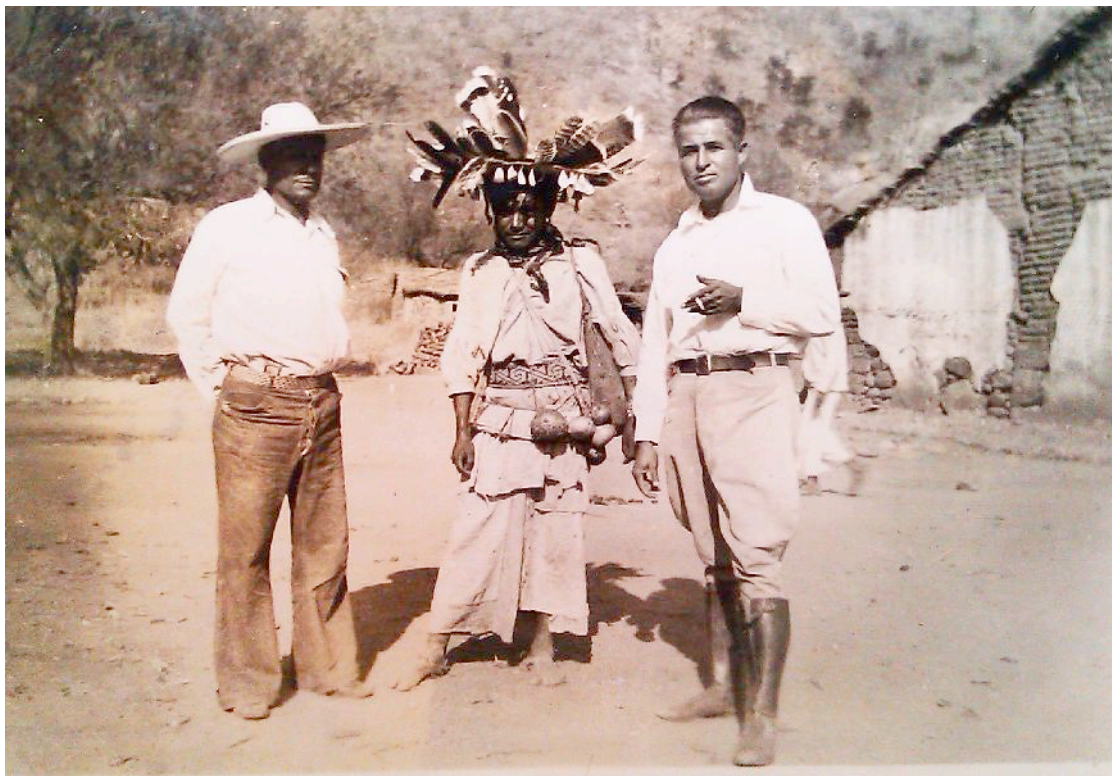
5. Porfirio Mayorquín (seated, centre) and his lieutenants, somewhere between Durango and Nayarit, c.1928



6. Juan Bautista (seated, centre-left) and his Huichol Cristeros from San Sebastián



7. 'Grupo de huichols que concurren a la población de Jesús María.'



8. 'Huichol de Arroyo del Fraile luciendo su típica indumentaria. El Inspector [Joaquín Rivera, right] y un vecino, lograron convencerlo de que se dejara fotografiar.'



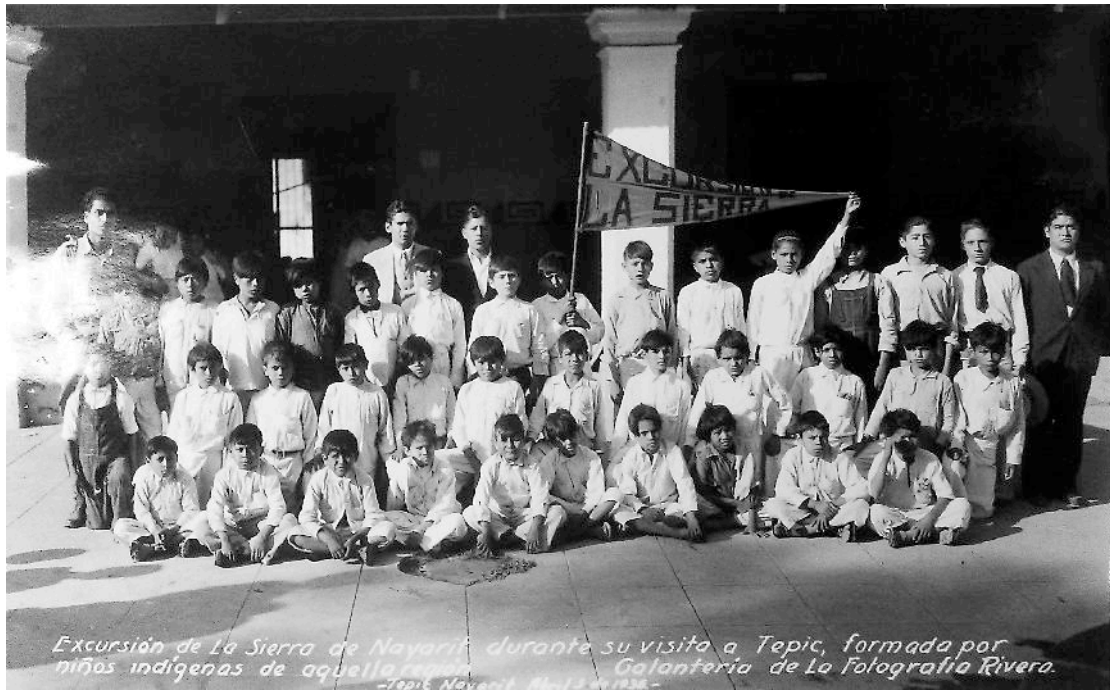
9. 'El C. Mayor Jesús Meza López, Jefe del Sector Militar en La Sierra, con un manojo de rábanos que le obsequieron los educandos de la escuela de Mesa del Nayar.'



10. Florencio Estrada (second from left) and Federico Vázquez (centre), somewhere in the Sierra Tepehuana, 1937



11. Huichol 'Segunderos,' c.1935



12. Children from the Sierra Cora on their trip to Tepic



13. 'Imitando a sus maestros, los coritas y huicholes tomaron asiento por primera vez en un camion.'



14. Cora youth taking part in long-jump competition. SEP policy-makers saw sporting events as 'a panacea for masculine degeneration' (M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...*p.42)



15. Residents of Huazamota receiving Major Meza during his tour of the Nayarit-Durango border region

Chapter Four: The Gran Nayar Between the Cristero Rebellions (1930-34)

In the Gran Nayar, the period between ‘los arreglos’ of June 1929, and the outbreak of ‘la Segunda’ Cristiada in late 1934, was in some ways a replay of the earlier revolutionary consolidation that followed the end of the Revolution in 1920. With the demobilisation of the Cristero rebels, a fragile peace returned to the region and the state renewed its efforts to incorporate the Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros into the fabric of the revolutionary Mexican nation-state that the Sonoran dynasty, under ‘Jefe Máximo’ Calles, sought to create.

Due to its recent anti-Cristero campaigns, the army’s presence in the Gran Nayar had expanded significantly by 1930, and the Federal zone commanders of Nayarit, Jalisco, Durango and Zacatecas were far more influential in the region than they had been in the years immediately following the Revolution. However, their role in Federal state-building efforts in the Gran Nayar remained limited, as although Federal officers exercised some authority in Jesús María and Santa María Ocotán, a thorough Federal occupation of the region was impossible. Rather, the military was represented in most communities by the Jefes de Defensa, whose semi-autonomous forces had played a key role in crushing the region’s Cristero rebels and were therefore more powerful than ever.

These Jefes de Defensa were therefore again the key mediators between their communities and the regional representatives of the SEP, who again spearheaded the Federal government’s incorporation efforts. SEP officials first sought the assistance of the Jefes de Defensa in recruiting local pupils for the Casa del Estudiante Indígena in

Mexico City. A handful of Cora and Huichol children – but not a single Tepehuano or Mexicanero – were subsequently enrolled in the school, but the policy was ultimately a failure and the children were quickly returned to their homes. The Casa del Estudiante Indígena itself was closed soon afterwards, and Rafael Ramírez, head of the DERICI, renewed attempts to set up schools within the communities of the Gran Nayar (including, for the first time, Tepehuano and Mexicanero communities).

In 1931, Calles replaced Puig Casauranc as Education Secretary with Narciso Bassols,¹⁰⁹⁷ a Marxist anti-clerical who had previously authored the ‘Ley agraria’ of April 1927, which had been an (ultimately rather unsuccessful) attempt to speed up agrarian reform.¹⁰⁹⁸ Bassols was more radical still as head of the SEP, and reformed the Federal education system according the doctrines of ‘socialist education,’ which ‘supplemented existing policy emphasising peasant behaviour reform with an intensified attack on superstition [and] religious practice’¹⁰⁹⁹ (which he sought to replace with the celebration of civic fiestas,¹¹⁰⁰ or to repackage as ‘folklore’).¹¹⁰¹ Bassols also ordered SEP officials to introduce anti-alcohol and sanitation programmes into the communities in which they worked,¹¹⁰² set up local postal services, encourage sporting events (which he saw as ‘a panacea for masculine degeneration’),¹¹⁰³ and establish ‘Internados Indígenas,’ which were now envisaged by SEP policy-makers as the best means of transforming Indians into ‘productive’

¹⁰⁹⁷ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.31

¹⁰⁹⁸ E. N. Simpson, *The Ejido...* pp.27-9, pp.81-97

¹⁰⁹⁹ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.5

¹¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* pp.93-5

¹¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p.46, p.125

¹¹⁰² *ibid.*, p.5

¹¹⁰³ *ibid.* p.42, pp.31-5

members of Mexican society.¹¹⁰⁴ All of the Federal schools would teach Indian children Spanish, basic literacy and numeracy, while introducing improved agricultural techniques, logging, tanning, and other small-scale industries into their communities.

As in previous years, however, conservative elders, traditional office-holders, anxious Indian parents, and in some cases amnestied local Cristeros, contested the influence of the Jefes de Defensa and the SEP's teachers in the region's communities, especially as the SEP's campaign against 'superstition' directly threatened the costumbre that traditionally regulated the social, political, economic and religious lives of the Coras, Huchols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros. Drawing on SEP reports, agrarian documents and oral histories, this chapter adds to the existing literature on 'socialist education' and Federal state-building in Mexico's Indian communities in the early 1930s,¹¹⁰⁵ by exploring the many ways in which this resistance occurred, and how it spawned new conflicts on top of older conflicts arising from territorial disputes, clan rivalries, and personal feuds, whose roots often lay in the violence of the Revolution and the Cristiada.

This chapter also illustrates how the continued reluctance of the 'revolutionary' state to implement agrarian reform in the region (especially after Calles' rightward, anti-agrarian shift in 1931),¹¹⁰⁶ left many communities more vulnerable than ever to land-grabs by mestizo landowners and their municipal- and state-level political allies. SEP

¹¹⁰⁴ cf. *ibid.*, pp.155-7

¹¹⁰⁵ eg. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...*; B. T. Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements...* pp.76-106; Bantjes, *As If Jesus...* pp.3-42; A. S. Dawson, *Indian and State...* pp.34-66; B. Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation...* 63-100

¹¹⁰⁶ Tyler Simpson, *The Ejido...*, pp.112-27

officials in some cases encouraged these attempted land-grabs in the name of increasing rural ‘productivity,’ or with a view to personal gain. The cultural, political and territorial conflicts generated by the SEP’s activities, communal caciquismo and mestizo land-grabs further exacerbated the growing tensions within and between the communities of the Gran Nayar, which began to peak towards the end of the Maximato in 1934. The resurgence of conflict between Church and State at national level, which prompted the local military authorities and pro-government Defensas to begin a campaign of terror against the region’s amnestied Cristero leaders, proved the flame that would set the Gran Nayar alight, and by the time of Lázaro Cárdenas’ accession to the presidency in December 1934, the region had become a battlefield once more.

Nayarit: the Coras

In the wake of ‘los arreglos,’ the revolutionary state turned its attention back to Nayarit’s estimated four thousand Cora inhabitants.¹¹⁰⁷ Mariano Mejía, once the region’s most powerful cacique, had returned from the Islas Mariás prison colony, but his influence in the Sierra had vanished along with his military prestige and his cattle – the foundation of his former wealth. In his place, two new mestizo authorities – ‘un representante del C. Gobernador del Estado con la denominación de Comisario Municipal,’ and Mayor Jesús Agustín Meza, ‘un miembro del ejército nombrado por la Jefatura de Operaciones’¹¹⁰⁸ – had been posted to Jesús María to exercise civil and military control over the ‘Subprefectura de la Sierra.’ However, the ‘Comisario’ had

¹¹⁰⁷ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 5 Aug. 1933

¹¹⁰⁸ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 2 Nov. 1932

little practical influence in the Subprefectura (essentially the Cora Alta), while in the Cora Baja the mestizo municipal authorities of Acaponeta, Rosamorada and Santiago Ixcuintla had little political control over the Cora communities that officially lay within their jurisdictions. Federal military officials and the SEP's inspectors and maestros rurales were thus the primary local representatives of the Mexican state in the Sierra.

Traditional Cora authorities also continued to govern the civil and religious affairs of each community. But three years of warfare and the accompanying feuds, population displacements and disruption of the annual cycle of *costumbre*, had weakened the legitimacy and power of these cargo-holders, over whom the Jefes de Defensa and their allies now wielded much influence. Factions led by conservative elders continued to contest the power of the Defensas and their allies, and by extension the local authority of the Mexican state, with which the semi-autonomous Defensas were ever more closely associated. In the five years between the end of the first Cristiada and the outbreak of 'la Segunda,' the renewed activities of the SEP and the acceleration of state-sponsored agrarian reform in Nayarit – which went hand in hand with further mestizo immigration into the region and the expansion of the mestizo *ejidos* bordering the communities of the Cora Baja – exacerbated these factional conflicts, which further fractured the internal cohesion of the Cora communities.

SEP officials returned to the Sierra Cora in 1930, but in that year only established two schools in the region: one in mestizo San Juan Peyotán, and another in San Juan Corapan. In the latter community, the inspector in charge of the region stressed that carrying out an effective 'labor social' was necessary to attract the 'las pocas familias

coras que hay en el Pueblo [y] familiarizarlas con la Escuela.’ He also appointed Eutimio Domínguez, ‘el único [habitante] que sabe leer,’ as president of the community’s ‘Comité Educativo,’ hoping that this would further guarantee the school’s success.¹¹⁰⁹ SEP officials also established a postal service linking La Mesa, Jesús María, San Francisco and San Juan Peyotán with Tepic,¹¹¹⁰ and set up ‘Ligas Antialcohólicas’ in each of these communities.¹¹¹¹

Rafael Ramírez also asked that Cora children be recruited for the Casa del Estudiante Indígena, where it was hoped that their becoming ‘fully modernized (and for that matter, mexicanized),’¹¹¹² would demonstrate that despite the SEP’s failures in the pre-Cristero period, the Coras were indeed capable of being ‘incorporated’ into Mexican society. Five Cora students were eventually recruited in Jesús María, La Mesa and San Juan Corapan,¹¹¹³ the respective strongholds of León Contreras, Mariano Solís and Eutimio Domínguez, the Sierra’s most powerful pro-government Cora caciques. They were all orphans (as no Cora parents would give their children to mestizo strangers),¹¹¹⁴ and their recruitment was made possible only ‘por mediación de los jefes Eutimio Domínguez y León Contreras,’¹¹¹⁵ who travelled to the capital ‘para ver en que lugar van a quedar los indios estudiantes y... dar cuenta a los familiares de ellos para que puedan quedar satisfechos.’

¹¹⁰⁹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38859/E/2, Magdaleno Vázquez to Jacinto E. Téllez (DEFN), 7 Aug. 1930

¹¹¹⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/10, Vázquez to DEFN, 23 Aug. 1930

¹¹¹¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/26, DEFN circular, 27 Oct. 1930

¹¹¹² A. S. Dawson, “‘Wild Indians,’...” p.336

¹¹¹³ AHSEP-84-85/C/38874/E/8, DEFN to DERICI, 14 Feb. 1930

¹¹¹⁴ Sandalio Sánchez etc, Corapan

¹¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

In 1931, the post of inspector-instructor in the Sierra was given to Manuel Durán Cárdenas, who established schools in Jesús María, Santa Teresa, La Mesa, San Francisco, Dolores and Ixcatán. He described the life in the region as ‘miserable por completo,’ adding that the Coras possessed

‘una aversión marcada y hereditaria a estar en sociedad y más entrar en relaciones con los mestizos; una vida primitiva es la que llevan, pues muchos andan desnudos cubiertos nada más que por un braguero; su alimento es frugalísimo no obstante ser poseedores los más de algunos bienes de fortuna que holgadamente podría producirles un mejor existir; la mayoría de los hombres son polígamos, tienen tres o cuatro mujeres, una es la legítima y las otras sus “cocineras” y toda la familia las bestias de carga; en tanto que el indolente marido está tendido a la bartola asoleándose, las mujeres desempeñan todo el trabajo, desde traer agua y leña y moler para las tortillas, hasta entenderse con los animales.’¹¹¹⁶

Durán’s disparaging outlook was compounded by the apparent desolation of the Cora communities. He reported that Jesús María was inhabited by only ‘diez o doce familias de coras y otras tantas de “vecinos,”’ except on the few occasions each year when ‘los coras dejan sus incipientes viviendas para vivir transitorialemente, dos o tres días, en el centro de su cacicazgo y celebrar el festival profano-religioso tradicional de la raza.’ Durán found the cabeceras of the rest of the region’s Cora communities similarly deserted. In La Mesa, only three of ‘las casas que se hallan diseminadas en la planicie’ were inhabited,¹¹¹⁷ while only the governor, mayordomo and a teacher lived permanently in Santa Teresa, which he described as

‘una veintana de casas caídas y destruídas, las más, dispersas por la planicie y sin moradores... triste y desolado es el lugar por el abandono en que está y por la falta de cultivo de aquel campo que podría producir grandes utilidades y el bienestar de los habitantes.’¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹⁶ AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/16, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 18 Apr. 1931

¹¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

Of course, Cora settlement patterns had always been dispersed, especially after Semana Santa, when most Cora families headed to their rancherías to sow their crops and carry out descent-group mitotes. However, Durán's reports also indicate the destruction that Cristero raids and Federal counter-attacks had wrought on the communal cabeceras, creating an 'absoluta carencia de maíz' in the region,¹¹¹⁹ and intensifying the dispersal of the Cora population.

Naturally, Durán saw education as the key to the 'transformation' of the Coras, and tried to persuade the traditional authorities of each community to promote attendance at the region's schools, which mainly taught Spanish, along with 'algunas prácticas de limpieza y hábitos de orden.' In Santa Teresa, the governor insisted that the five children who occasionally attended were the only children in the region, and Durán was reluctant to press the point further, given 'lo inútil que resulta con estos indios todo insistencia y más cuando es la primera vez que se entra en relaciones con ellos.' Instead, he encouraged the teacher to win the support of Santa Teresa's authorities by working as their scribe,¹¹²⁰ and advised his superiors that 'se necesita paciencia para tratar con la raza indígena, poco a poco se van venciendo las dificultades y hay que proceder lentamente si se quiere obtener un resultado satisfactorio.'¹¹²¹ In Jesús María, too, although more than one hundred children were officially enrolled at the school, only twenty-five actually attended classes.¹¹²² As in much of rural Mexico, local families needed their children to help in the fields,¹¹²³ and the community's traditional governor 'pidió con insistencia al grupo de niños que concurren al plantel

¹¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹¹²² AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/18, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 28 Mar. 1931

¹¹²³ cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.80, p.154, pp.96-7

establecido en esta localidad por tener que llevarlos a los ranchos y terrenos donde tienen sus siembras.’ Anxious not to lose the fragile support of the communal authorities, Durán accepted this request, and with the local teacher arranged a festival ‘en honor de los niños coras para despedirnos,’ an event he took advantage of to ‘hablarle en nombre de la Secretaría de Educación y pedirle su decidida cooperación en el nuevo año... desde luego se logró vencer la apatía propia de la raza, y queda el campo preperado para futuros trabajos.’¹¹²⁴

Despite Inspector Durán’s assertions that Cora resistance to schools could be overcome only by employing a gentle approach, he and the teachers under his authority soon began to challenge long-established Cora customs. In La Mesa, Durán went so far as to destroy the community’s *cepo* – ‘ese instrumento de castigo y tortura.’¹¹²⁵ He reported triumphantly that, under his supervision, ‘cortaron con una hacha la parte donde estaban los agujeros; esta madera y las cuñas para apretar los pies se quemaron allí mismo y el resto se empleó en bancas para el escuela.’¹¹²⁶ Even though he claimed that this act was carried out in the wake of ‘la deliberación consiguiente entre los viejos,’ it surely offended some of the more conservative members of the community. So would his other attempts to crack down on what he saw as Indian ‘vices,’ particularly the heavy drinking that was an important part of many Cora festivals.¹¹²⁷ In La Mesa he demanded, through an interpreter, that the elders not only support the school, but also moderate ‘la embriaguez que en ellos es

¹¹²⁴ AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/18, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 20 June 1931

¹¹²⁵ See ‘Glossary,’ this thesis.

¹¹²⁶ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 5 Dec. 1932

¹¹²⁷ M. K. Vaughan notes that ‘when teachers launched anti-alcohol campaigns, they seemed oblivious to liquor’s intimate role in sacralizing every event in the life cycle from birth to death’ (*Cultural Politics...* p.122), while A. Bantjes also notes that in the Mayo communities, the SEP’s anti-alcohol crusade caused widespread hostility to local teachers (*As If Jesus...* p.33)

frecuente y de ritual, pues en sus festividades es de rigor el embriagarse fuertemente.¹¹²⁸ He also reported from Jesús María, in terms that make his attitude toward Cora costumbre clear, that

‘con íntima satisfacción hemos visto que ancestrales usos han ido desapareciendo entre los niños y jóvenes que a [la escuela] concurren; en las orgías, que constituyen el obligado acto final de sus fiestas idolátrico-religiosas, ya no participan los indígenas que tienen contacto frecuente con el centro educativo, esto es un positivo triunfo del plantel y de la labor educativa allí desarrollada.’¹¹²⁹

The SEP administration generally encouraged mestizo immigration to the region, while the teachers themselves added to the number of mestizos living in the Cora communities. Somewhat surprisingly, Eutimio Domínguez prevented mestizos from settling permanently in Corapan,¹¹³⁰ but by 1932 the school in nearby Ixcatán was attended by a number of mestizo children.¹¹³¹ Various mestizos – including local teacher Román Muñoz and his family – now lived in Santa Teresa under the protection of the Cora Jefe de Defensa, Evaristo Castañeda.¹¹³² There had been a mestizo presence in Jesús María and San Francisco since the late nineteenth century, which had increased significantly during Mejía’s cacicazgo (to the extent that in Arroyo de Santiago there were more mestizos than Coras by 1930),¹¹³³ and their numbers continued to grow; while in Dolores, where the Jefe de Defensa was himself a mestizo, five other mestizo families had now settled.¹¹³⁴ These settlers tended to be natives of nearby mestizo-inhabited regions – Roman Muñoz was from

¹¹²⁸ AHSEP 84-85, C/38857, E/25, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 4 Nov. 1932

¹¹²⁹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 10 July 1932

¹¹³⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38859/E/2, Eulogio Ulloa, ‘Informe,’ 23 Nov. 1932

¹¹³¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 5 Dec. 1932

¹¹³² AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/16, ‘Censo Escolar: Santa Teresa,’ 14 Oct. 1931; Nabor Castañeda; Gonzalo Ramírez; Bruno Gómez Estrada

¹¹³³ AGN-Censo/ 1930/Nayarit/Arroyo de Santiago

¹¹³⁴ AHSEP-84-85/C/38860/E/16, ‘Censo Escolar: Dolores,’ 21 May 1931

Huazamota,¹¹³⁵ the Ramírez family living in Santa Teresa were from Huejuquilla, and many in Dolores hailed from Acaponeta¹¹³⁶ – and were a mixture of refugees who had fled the violence of the Revolution or the Cristiada, and traders, farmers and ranchers, often linked by family ties to earlier settlers, who arrived in the Sierra in search of land and commercial opportunities. Mestizo immigrants, mestizo teachers and the mestizo authorities in Jesús María had long been closely associated with one another; one teacher, Petra Tovar de Aquino, was Mejía’s comadre, and it was reported that she and many others

‘se han casado, no civilmente, [y] sus maridos y los intereses materiales que por allá tienen, influyen en los trabajos y en la vida de la escuela; ya están hechas al medio y conviven con las gentes del lugar con las mismas miserias morales y materiales, “el medio las ha absorbido.”’¹¹³⁷

Most of the Jefes de Defensa supported the settlement of mestizos in the communities under their control, arguing that the new arrivals would bring with them new technologies, and food, clothes and agricultural implements which they would sell cheaply to the Cora population, thus improving the local quality of life.¹¹³⁸ The ‘cosmopolitans’ also saw these outsiders as natural allies who could provide a counter-weight to the power of conservative elders. However, the growing power and influence of the mestizo municipal authorities in Jesús María, the increased mestizo immigration to other communities, and the attacks of their allies, the teachers, on *costumbre*, caused open resistance on the part of the region’s conservatives, to the

¹¹³⁵ AHSEP-84-85/C/38874/E/8, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 25 Jan. 1933

¹¹³⁶ Gonzalo Ramírez; Bruno Gómez Estrada

¹¹³⁷ AHSEP-84-85/C/38874/E/8, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 25 Jan. 1933

¹¹³⁸ Erasmo González; Agustín Lamas

extent that, by July 1932, Durán was complaining that ‘los Gobernantes de la tribu interrumpen nuestros trabajos.’¹¹³⁹

In Jesús María, for example, controversy arose after Durán had the Cora pupils stitch together a Mexican flag, which he hung from ‘el edificio principal del pueblo, que es la ruinoso iglesia de los franciscanos.’ While Durán framed the ensuing dispute in nationalist terms, reporting that ‘los indios coras ven con muchas prevenciones todo acto o manifestación de patriotismo,’¹¹⁴⁰ it is obvious that hanging an essentially ‘foreign’ banner in a sacred ritual space constituted a symbolic challenge on the part of the Mexican state to the authority of the community’s elders, and by extension to costumbre itself.¹¹⁴¹ Despite their earlier, limited support for the school, the traditional authorities now moved against it, and Durán reported soon afterwards that

‘en algunas ocasiones queda el centro sin alumnos porque así lo dispone el Gobernador de los Coras aserorado por los Viejos Consejeros, quienes ven con marcada aversión que los niños asistan a la escuela y más que empiecen a pronunciar palabras de una lengua que no es la suya.’¹¹⁴²

Documents cited by Coyle suggest that the violent incidents that occurred in Santa Teresa around the same time – including the beating to death and then burning of a man accused of sorcery, which some alleged had been carried out by one of the leaders of the community’s ‘Judea’ festival¹¹⁴³ – were symptoms of political instability in the community. In response, Evaristo Castañeda, Santa Teresa’s Jefe de

¹¹³⁹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas, ‘Informe anual,’ 31 July 1932

¹¹⁴⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 10 May 1932

¹¹⁴¹ cf. A. Bantjes, *As if Jesus...* p.12-3: ‘since symbols are at the heart of man’s attempts to understand the world, it is obvious that a struggle between Weltanschauungen involves an effort to eliminate the symbols of one legitimating system and replace these with new ones or imbue them with new meaning.’

¹¹⁴² AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas, ‘Informe anual,’ 31 July 1932

¹¹⁴³ See ‘Glossary,’ this thesis.

Defensa, warned that drunkenness would not be allowed during the ‘Judea,’ nor the participation of children, whom he ordered to attend school.¹¹⁴⁴

In nearby Dolores, the mestizo Jefe de Defensa also attempted to force Cora attendance at the school (whose teacher ‘empleó los golpes para tratar a los niños’),¹¹⁴⁵ and to organise the repair of the one road leading to the town (which the Cora elders ‘consideraron como un futuro peligro,’ as did conservatives in many other rural Mexican communities).¹¹⁴⁶ In response, the ‘Indios viejos, conservadores de la tradición y de los odios de raza,’ carried out ‘una verdadera campaña de castas,’ and in April 1932 ‘obligaron a las familias de los mestizos a que dejaran el pueblo.’¹¹⁴⁷ The teacher took the side of the exiled mestizos and ‘constantemente amenazaba a los indios con la intervención de autoridades superiores y con fuertes castigos que les tenía en constante zozobra,’¹¹⁴⁸ until ‘las gentes [coras] se remontaron a los cerros y se escondieron en los barrancos y hoy está el pueblo sin familias y parece no le volverán a habitar.’¹¹⁴⁹

In the wake of this resistance, Nayarit’s Director of Federal Education pressured Inspector Durán to redouble his efforts in the Sierra, complaining to officials in Mexico that Durán was ‘trabajando con poca actividad según puede desprenderse de sus propios informes.’¹¹⁵⁰ Durán therefore turned to the local mestizo authorities to

¹¹⁴⁴ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.186-187

¹¹⁴⁵ AHSEP-84-85/C/38860/E/16, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 24 Apr. 1932

¹¹⁴⁶ cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.85; K. Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics...* pp.137-51

¹¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁸ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 19 Mar. 1933

¹¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/3, DEFN to DERICI, 7 Mar. 1932

help him force Cora attendance at the government schools. He wrote to Jesús María's Comisario that

‘nuestros maestros han luchado mucho con las añagazas de los indios viejos, y yo, con profunda extrañeza, he visto que en lugares aislados se hallan los niños completamente desnudos cuidando un incipiente hato de borregos, y que las Autoridades Coras ni han respondido a mi llamado cuando he pretendido que nuestra escuela albergue a estos desgraciados niños.’

Durán asked both the Comisario and Mayor Meza to ensure that ‘no usen los Gobernadores y Autoridades coras de subterfugios y engaños guardando en las barrancas al mayor número de niños, especialmente las mujeres,’ and that ‘los niños no sean retirados del plantel por ningún motivo.’¹¹⁵¹

In response, the region's two chief mestizo authorities ordered the dispersed Cora population to settle permanently in their communal cabeceras so that their children could attend school.¹¹⁵² Their orders were initially obeyed by at least some families in the region,¹¹⁵³ which pleased Durán, who assured his superiors that soon, ‘sea una realidad el ingreso de estas gentes a la civilización.’¹¹⁵⁴ Bolstered by this momentary success, he intensified his campaign against Cora ‘superstition’ and drunkenness at festivals,¹¹⁵⁵ and ordered local teachers to ‘ir desterrando el uso de yerbajos nocivos, las practicas de superstición y la intromisión de los llamados “tatoanes,” “cantadores” o “hechiceros”... [para] que desaparezcan estas prácticas absurdas.’¹¹⁵⁶

¹¹⁵¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to Comisario Municipal, 22 Oct. 1932

¹¹⁵² AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 30 Oct. 1932

¹¹⁵³ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 6 Nov. 1932

¹¹⁵⁴ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 1 Nov. 1932

¹¹⁵⁵ AHSEP-84-85/C/38857/E/25, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 8 Mar. 1933

¹¹⁵⁶ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 5 Aug. 1933; cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.42-3

In the communities of the Cora Baja, the authority of Eutimio Domínguez, who dominated the traditional authorities of the region, checked the resentment that this campaign caused. Thus, Durán reported in April 1933 that ‘las Autoridades han tenido cuidado de unir a los individuos de la raza y acostumbrarlos a vivir en sociedad,’ and that the teachers in Rosarito, San Juan Corapan y San Pedro Ixcatán had few problems with local people and were quickly teaching the Cora children to speak Spanish.¹¹⁵⁷ In the Cora Alta, however, people now became increasingly hostile to the establishment of schools and the settlement of mestizos in their communities. By mid-1933, Durán complained that, although Jesús María was the region’s administrative centre, and thus a community whose inhabitants were frequently exposed to contact with outsiders, the local Coras still resented sending their children to school, and that as he ‘faltaba la influencia de las personas encargadas de la autoridad, los indios no sentían esta fuerza y poco a poco, como saben hacerlo, retiraban a sus hijos.’ Likewise, he described the inhabitants of San Francisco and La Mesa as ‘muy rehacios y buscan recursos para burlar las disposiciones y vivir libremente sin sujeción alguna,’ while Durán was forced to withdraw Santa Teresa’s teacher¹¹⁵⁸ after local people complained that he ‘does not dedicate himself to work, or to teaching the classes that he is supposed to give... [and instead] he dedicates himself to his commercial enterprise.’¹¹⁵⁹ Thus by August 1933, in all Nayarit there were only 126 male and 104 female Cora children enrolled in schools, while attendance was probably far lower still.¹¹⁶⁰

Although the SEP enjoyed more success in the Cora Baja, a second strand of the revolutionary regime’s state-building and social reformist project – government-

¹¹⁵⁷ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas, ‘Informe,’ 4 Apr. 1933

¹¹⁵⁸ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas, ‘Informe,’ 4 Apr. 1933

¹¹⁵⁹ Mercurio Flores to Unknown, in P.E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.188

¹¹⁶⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 5 Aug. 1933

sponsored agrarian reform – now began to alienate some of the formerly cooperative population of that region. None of the communities of the Cora Alta had experienced serious agrarian problems by this point, and in 1933 the local Cora population still regarded themselves ‘dueños del terreno,’ since ‘por tradición conservan aquellas tierras teniendo cada pueblo sus títulos de propiedad que datan de la época virreinal.’¹¹⁶¹ In the Cora Baja, however, various communities had already petitioned the government to certify their titles, reflecting local anxiety about the expansionist designs of neighbouring mestizo pueblos.

In the early 1930s, local and Federal politicians attempted to expand the reach of the state by dividing the lands of Nayarit’s haciendas into ejidos administered by their supporters. In 1931, Nayarit’s agrarista state senator Guillermo Flores Muñoz ‘movilizó la Liga Agraria y lanzó comisiones de agitación en todo el estado,’¹¹⁶² while in May 1934 the regional agrarista movement was further boosted by the passing of the ‘ley de fraccionamiento de latifundios en el estado.’¹¹⁶³ In the next six years 300 agrarian ‘solicitudes’ were put forward in the state, of which 280 were approved, compared with just 135 put forward and 39 approved between 1917 and 1934.¹¹⁶⁴ However, several of the newly created mestizo-inhabited ejidos on the edge of the Cora Baja, as well as groups of mestizos already settled in the region, now claimed ownership of, and applied for official title to, Cora communal landholdings. For example, in 1934, a group of mestizo ranchers who had settled within lands joint-owned by Saycota and San Blasito applied for a ‘dotación de ejido,’¹¹⁶⁵ while the

¹¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶² J. Meyer, ‘Historia del reparto...’ p.243

¹¹⁶³ *ibid.*, p.244

¹¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.245

¹¹⁶⁵ AGA-D/23/225/leg.1/CAM/Dotación/Saycota, ‘Informe: El Motaje,’ 23 July 1934

mestizo ejido of El Venado began to invade San Pedro Ixcatán's communal lands. This invasion was facilitated by the state government, which gave El Venado legal title to 3,279 hectares of land that had been stolen from the community by a private landowner and were later confiscated by the government after a dispute over tax payments.¹¹⁶⁶ A year later, a newspaper reported that '600 familias indígenas de San Juan Corapan... por decreto del Gobierno del mismo estado, han sido despojados de las tierras que desde tiempos inmemoriales poseían.'¹¹⁶⁷

The representatives of these Cora communities responded by demanding only that the colonial titles to their lands be respected. Like many other rural Mexicans with 'serrano' tendencies,¹¹⁶⁸ the Coras were reluctant to apply for 'dotación de ejidos,' as they continued to regard themselves as the legal owners of their lands and wanted to avoid paying any new taxes or fees (such as fifteen percent of their harvests to the ejido).¹¹⁶⁹ They were also aware that officially requesting 'dotación' or even 'restitución' would have required registering all of the members of the community entitled to communal lands and establishing new, state-sanctioned bodies like the 'Consejo de Vigilancia' and the 'Comisario de Bienes Comunales,' threatening communal political autonomy and adding a third tier of authority to communities still

¹¹⁶⁶ AGA-D/276.1/14/leg.1/Comunal/RTBC/San Pedro Ixcatán, Proc. de Pueblos to Dept. Agrario, 6 Oct. 1937

¹¹⁶⁷ AGN-LC/C/198/E/403/726/San Juan Corapan, clipping from 'El Universal,' 27 Nov. 1935

¹¹⁶⁸ D. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges...* pp.87-91: '[For many Mexicans], securing a restitution was justice, while securing a *dotación* was an insult, a matter of the state posturing as a *patron*.' See also R. D. Shadow, 'Production, Social Identity...' pp.43-5; J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* p.192

¹¹⁶⁹ AGA-D/276.1/14/leg.1/Comunal/RTBC/San Pedro Ixcatán, Cruz Salas to Proc. de Pueblos, 23 Nov. 1935

coming to terms with the creation of Defensas Sociales during the revolution.¹¹⁷⁰ However, the establishment of these offices – which were free from the influence of *costumbre* and of the ‘Consejos de Ancianos’ and open to mestizos – presented the new settlers, the local teachers and the ‘cosmopolitan’ Cora factions with an opportunity to wrest control from the traditional authorities, with the full support of the Mexican state. In the second half of the 1930s, state-backed agrarian reform would thus combine with mestizo immigration to cause new factional rifts within the communities of the Cora Baja, whose Defensas and traditional authorities had, until now, been united by *costumbre* and the politico-military power of Eutimio Domínguez.

Inspector Durán meanwhile saw no link between continued resistance to compulsory schooling in the Cora Alta and the SEP’s paternalistic and racist view of Indian culture, and the threat that its programme of cultural ‘transformation’ posed to Cora *costumbre* and local systems of authority. Instead he blamed Cora resistance on the local teachers, who had adapted themselves to the local environment and now lived ‘en un estado de miseria intelectual y económico mayor que la de los mismos habitantes.’¹¹⁷¹ Since the SEP’s Nayarit division could not afford to hire better-trained teachers,¹¹⁷² and force had already failed to improve attendance, Durán turned to technology to try to convey the wonders of modern Mexican ‘civilización’ upon ‘los indios más olvidados de nuestra Republica.’¹¹⁷³ Together with Nayarit’s new Director of Federal Education, Celso Flores Zamora, and several teachers, a film

¹¹⁷⁰ AGA-D/23/120/leg.1/CAM/Dotación/Saycota, Residents to Ing. Flores Vega, 27 June 1945; AGA-D/24/1163/leg.1/SRA/Restitución/Saycota, Ing. Zazueta G. to CLA Nay., 19 Dec. 1932

¹¹⁷¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 13 Sept. 1933

¹¹⁷² AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DERICI, 23 Oct. 1933

¹¹⁷³ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 25 Mar. 1934

operator, and two full-time porters, in early 1934 Durán travelled through the Sierra armed with ‘un aparato de cinematógrafo.’¹¹⁷⁴ He reported that

‘las exhibiciones cinematográficas causaron una honda impresión entre las gentes que en gran número acudieron, desde luego se notó el efecto que produjo en sus ánimos las distintas fases de las proyecciones, la iluminación eléctrica, etc., todo nuevo para ellos; fue una verdadera revolución espiritual que formará anales en aquella región olvidada.’¹¹⁷⁵

Durán also took the opportunity to persuade Zamora to authorise the establishment of an Indian boarding school in Jesús María, which he believed was essential to the incorporating the Coras into ‘la familia mexicana.’¹¹⁷⁶ Although the new governors of Jesús María, Santa Teresa and La Mesa had already refused to contribute ‘ayuda material alguna’ to the project, ‘por carecer éstas gentes de elementos de vida,’ Durán nonetheless secured one plot of land in Jesús María on which to build the Internado, and another on the shores of the Jesús María river on which to grow food for the pupils, and demonstrate modern agricultural techniques to local people.¹¹⁷⁷ It seems that his time with Zamora was well spent, as his plan for an Internado was finally approved by Nayarit’s Federal Education Department in mid-1934, and had opened its doors by the end of the year.

The establishment of the Internado only exacerbated the growing tensions in the Cora Alta. Coyle writes that that one of the first students from Santa Teresa, ‘now a quiet old man and Consejero,’ remembered that

‘Like all of the rest of the Cora students there, he was locked into the school at night for fear that he or the other students might flee... After a few years in the

¹¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁵ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 26 Mar. 1934

¹¹⁷⁶ AHSEP-84-85/C/38874/E/18, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 7 Jan 1934

¹¹⁷⁷ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 28 Jan. 1934

school, however, [he] proved his faithfulness and was given permission to return to Santa Teresa to visit his parents, whereupon they refused to let him return to Jesus Maria. Instead, they fled the town with their 12 year-old son in order to avoid the teacher who came after him...¹¹⁷⁸

Many other Coras similarly saw the boarding school as a threat to the integrity of their families, to the success of their agricultural activities (in which children played an important role), and to the political autonomy of their communities.¹¹⁷⁹ The Internado therefore ‘became a key point of opposition between those... who supported the government and those who did not.’¹¹⁸⁰ The growing tensions between these factions might have led to a state of all-out civil war in the Sierra Cora by 1935, had it not been for the outbreak of a second Cristero rebellion in neighbouring parts of Jalisco and Durango. The rebels once again began to raid the Cora communities, which gave the increasingly unpopular Defensas a renewed *raison d’ être*, and helped to restore – at least temporarily – some cohesion to the divided communities of the region.

Jalisco: the Huichols

In northern Jalisco, where the Cristero movement had been stronger than in Nayarit, ‘los arreglos’ did not bring about instant peace. While the bulk of the Cristero forces disbanded and returned to their homes, key rebel leaders like Pedro Quintanar remained distrustful of government promises of amnesty and of the willingness of their local enemies, the pro-government Jefes de Defensa, to observe such agreements. Therefore they and many others ‘no entregaron las armas y andaban por

¹¹⁷⁸ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.188

¹¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

los alrededores.¹¹⁸¹ Quintanar stayed close to his ranch near Mezquitic, which was raided by local Defensa forces and Federal troops under Generals Ortiz and López, who ‘confiscated’ all of his cattle and grain and eventually took his family hostage.¹¹⁸² In early 1930, Quintanar was forced to finally accept an amnesty offered him by Ortiz, who for the last year had also been in contact with ‘operatives in the Cristero support networks that stretched all the way to Mexico City to try and persuade Quintanar to surrender.’¹¹⁸³ In an attempt to safeguard his life, Quintanar joined General Ortiz’s entourage and moved to Chihuahua when Ortiz was transferred there a few months later. However, despite fleeing his home, Quintanar was assassinated in June 1930,¹¹⁸⁴ which may explain why Juan Bautista’s compadre, the rebel leader Pepe Sánchez, seems to have remained in arms until early 1932.¹¹⁸⁵

Anacleto López did not just target Quintanar’s herds. Like his counterpart Maximino Avila Camacho,¹¹⁸⁶ López engaged in the systematic theft of cattle from across the region, and a local Defensa fighter remembers recognising, ‘en la hacienda de Víboras, que era como su cuartel, animales de ... muchos otros conocidos, hasta un buey blanco, sabino, que yo había visto en los barbechos de gente pacífica.’¹¹⁸⁷ This policy of mass ‘confiscation’ also affected San Sebastián, where in May 1930 it was reported that ‘el jefe de la defensa social de Mezquitic... está sacando el poco ganado que les ha quedado.’¹¹⁸⁸ Members of the dominant Defensas of the region also invaded San Sebastián’s territory and various ‘sales’ of communal land compounded

¹¹⁸¹ J. Guadalupe Cenicerros, in M. Caldera, L. de la Torre (eds.), *Pueblos...* p.206

¹¹⁸² *ibid.*

¹¹⁸³ B. Fallaw, ‘Eulogio Ortiz...’ pp.141-2

¹¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁵ J. García Landa, ‘Juan Landa...’ in *Mi Pueblo*, Mar. 1996, p.15

¹¹⁸⁶ T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* p.107

¹¹⁸⁷ J. G. Cenicerros, in M. Caldera, L. de la Torre, *Pueblos...* p.206

¹¹⁸⁸ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, I. Ramos to DEFJ, Rafael Jiménez, N.D. [late 1930]

land-grabs already carried out during the Cristiada by other members of Huajimic's Defensa.¹¹⁸⁹

Attacks by San Sebastián's Cristeros on the community's semi-independent anexo of Tuxpan had forced many of the latter's inhabitants to flee, leaving local mestizos free to claim much of the community's land for themselves.¹¹⁹⁰ San Andrés's hold on its communal land was also more precarious than ever, as, in addition to the destruction, depopulation and factional in-fighting caused by the Cristiada, their agrarian claim had finally been received by Mezquitic's Comité Agrario in August 1929, only to be declared null and void 'en virtud de que se venció con exceso a dicho legajo el plazo... sin que hayan podido producirse el Dictamen y Resolución Gubernamental correspondientes.'¹¹⁹¹ In 1930 Santa Catarina, despite the support of its caciques for the government during the Cristiada, was in a similar position, and its representatives were forced to travel as far as Mexico City in 1930, 'con motivo de límites por haberse pretendido despojarlos de sus tierras.'¹¹⁹²

While the Federal army and their local mestizo allies attempted to stamp their authority on the Sierra Huichola through raids and land-grabs, the SEP renewed its attempts to bring about 'una nueva era de paz y de progreso' in the region by means of education.¹¹⁹³ Just as in the Sierra Cora, SEP officials initially focused on recruiting Huichol pupils for the Casa del Estudiante Indígena, who were to be

¹¹⁸⁹ AGA-D/276.1/79/leg.4/CCA/RTBC/San Sebastián, Agronomist's report, 24 Sept. 1954

¹¹⁹⁰ R. M. Zingg, *Los huicholes*, i, p.157

¹¹⁹¹ AGA-D/276.1/103/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/San Andrés, CNA to PM.Mezquitic, 18 Sept. 1929

¹¹⁹² AHSEP-78-79/C/38288/E/25, Ezequiel Haro to Puig Casauranc, 25 Aug. 1933

¹¹⁹³ AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/25, Ramón Durand, 'Informe,' 14 Jan. 1930

personally selected and taken to Mexico City by regional SEP Inspector Ramón Durand (not to be confused with Manuel Durán in Nayarit).¹¹⁹⁴

Victorio Poirett, a teacher working near Colotlán, warned Durand that ‘por medio del convencimiento, no conseguiremos conchararlos,’ and that recruiting Huichol pupils for the Casa would require the use of ‘algunos hombres armados, para sorprenderlos en sus chozas y coger a los chamacos,’ just as SEP officials had attempted to do in 1925. He added that ‘algunos vecinos de Mezquitic, Bolaños o Chimaltitán, que son los que están más cerca de los lugares donde habitan los indios,’ could be counted on to help them in this endeavour – reflecting the difficult, and often violent, relations between the Huichols and local mestizos. Alternatively, Poirett suggested that ‘un huichol muy Gobiernista amigo mío’ could assist them, as long as they did not try to recruit children in San Sebastián, as ‘este huichol no puede ver a los indios de [allá] por [ser] Cristeros,’ which shows that tensions between pro- and anti-government groups continued to dominate life in the Sierra Huichola.¹¹⁹⁵

Durand forwarded Poirett’s advice to Rafael Ramírez, who recognised that arming local mestizos to help the SEP forcibly recruit Huichol children would only create new tensions between the Huichols and the state, and replied that ‘si no es posible conseguir vengan indios con su libre consentimiento, sería preferible no traerlos.’¹¹⁹⁶ Shortly after, however, Genaro Rodríguez, who had been briefly named inspector-instructor of the region in late 1925 (at a time when no schools were functioning in the Huichol communities), managed to secure ‘los cinco indios huicholes,’ whom he

¹¹⁹⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/28, Durand to DERICI, 9 Jan. 1930

¹¹⁹⁵ AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/28, Poirett to Durand, 22 Jan. 1930

¹¹⁹⁶ AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/28, DERICI to Durand, 4 Feb. 1930

personally delivered to the Casa del Estudiante Indígena.¹¹⁹⁷ He did not explain how he had recruited these children, but given that within a month they had escaped ‘con rumbo desconocido,’ we can only infer that they had not been particularly enthusiastic about attending school.¹¹⁹⁸

In the wake of this failure, and with indigenous education policy at national level now moving away from the experimental Casa del Estudiante Indígena and back to a strategy of establishing schools for Indian children within their own communities,¹¹⁹⁹ Inocencio Ramos was put in charge of supervising the Sierra Huichola in late 1930. In contrast to the SEP officials previously sent to the region, Ramos, who had been ordered to defend ‘los intereses del indio... con una actitud prudente y dentro de las normas constitucionales,’¹²⁰⁰ quickly won the cooperation of Huichol leaders by bringing their problems to the attention of the Federal government. In the former Cristero stronghold of San Sebastián, for instance, Ramos drafted a complaint on behalf of the communal authorities, informing his superiors that the local Defensas ‘llevan su ganado [y] que en lugar de darles garantías es lo contrario,’ and asked that ‘se nos den garantías. Por que si así siguen peligros, por que dicen que tenemos a abrirles los ojos al indio.’¹²⁰¹ Ramos also began to help the Huichol communities with their various agrarian claims, whose ‘expedientes... no han podido ser recabados... como consecuencia ineludible del estado de rebelión en que se haya esta Entidad

¹¹⁹⁷ AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/28, DERICI to Rodríguez, 20 Feb. 1930

¹¹⁹⁸ AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/28, DERICI to Rodríguez, 26 Mar. 1930

¹¹⁹⁹ A. S. Dawson, “‘Wild Indians,’...” p.352-3

¹²⁰⁰ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, DEFJ, to DERICI, 11 July 1931

¹²⁰¹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Ramos to DEFJ, N.D. [late 1930]

Federativa desde 1926,¹²⁰² and which the local municipal authorities, who were leading the invasion of Huichol lands, had tried their best to block.

In November, Ramos reported that in Tuxpan, whose inhabitants sought to reaffirm the existence of their community in the eyes of the Federal government, ‘fué aprobada la escuela por 127 indios ante el Gobernador de ellos es J. Jesús de la Cruz.’¹²⁰³

Ramos also gained permission from the elders of San Sebastián to establish a school ‘bajo el teja de la casa real de ellos, mientras se hacen las piezas de las escuelas.’¹²⁰⁴

A few months later, in March 1931, the communal authorities of San Andrés similarly approved a school for their community, and promised to set aside 50,000 square metres for a ‘terreno de cultivo,’ where the teacher would demonstrate new crops and improved agricultural techniques to the inhabitants, the products of which would support the school and its pupils.¹²⁰⁵

In summer 1931, Ramos travelled to Guadalajara to obtain ‘un Certificado Catastral del terreno de San Sebastián.’¹²⁰⁶ This secured him the firm friendship of Juan Bautista, who – contrary to Weigand’s assertion that ‘con el desplome formal de la revuelta cristera en 1929... se retiró hacia las montañas para pelear a la defensiva’¹²⁰⁷ – instead appears to have returned home peacefully to his community, where Ramos described him as ‘el Presidente indio.’¹²⁰⁸ Far from displaying the hostility to the SEP

¹²⁰² AGA-D/276.1/103/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/San Sebastián, CLA Mezquitic to Gob. Jal., 12 June 1929

¹²⁰³ AHSEP-78-79/C/38283/E/22, Ramos, ‘Informe,’ 17 Nov. 1930

¹²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁰⁵ AHSEP-78-79/C/38260/E/5, DEFJ to DERICI, 1 Mar. 1931

¹²⁰⁶ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.2/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Ing. Balderas, ‘Informe,’ 7 Nov. 1936

¹²⁰⁷ Weigand, ‘Los huicholes in las revoluciones...’ p.6

¹²⁰⁸ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Ramos to DEFJ, N.D. [late 1930]

that might have been expected from a recently demobilised Cristero fighter, Bautista probably saw supporting a government school as a way of reconciling with the state, and thus avoiding the fate that had already befallen many of the region's other former Cristero leaders. In any case he agreed to become head of the community's 'Comité de educación,'¹²⁰⁹ and on 12 July he helped organise a meeting at San Sebastián's 'Casa Real' between Ramos, his assistant Ramírez, a local Federal officer and the community's traditional authorities. With Bautista serving as his interpreter, Ramos explained to the community

‘la misión que les traía a esta región a los citados Profesores, por la Dirección de Educación Federal del Estado, quien en su grande deseo de instrucción, pretende cultivar a la Tribu Huichol a fin de acercarla a los Pueblos Civilizados. Enteradas las Autoridades de la Tribu, así como los principales que forman el poblado ya mencionado, estos, quedaron enterados de que deben presentar a sus hijos al Colegio que con fecha 1/o, del presente mes quedó abierto para la instrucción de los mismos, manifestando todos que están conformes con los beneficios que el Gobierno les dá.’

In return, the communal authorities demanded 'mayor seguridad de sus pequeños intereses y vidas,' and 'una protección franca y efectiva de parte del Gobierno, toda vez que dicha tribu a sido hostilizada de tiempo atrás por varios elementos que se encuentran al servicio de las Autoridades de los Municipios vecinos.'¹²¹⁰ Ramos duly forwarded this request on to his department, prompting Jalisco's Director of Federal Education to warn his own superior, Rafael Ramírez, that 'estoy pronto a llevar las quejas de [Ramos] y de los indios a donde corresponda, pues estimo que esta es una de las obligaciones profesionales, pero pongo a usted en antecedentes por si se provocaran con ésto algunas dificultades.'¹²¹¹

¹²⁰⁹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Ramos, 'Informe,' 21 Nov. 1931

¹²¹⁰ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Ramos, 'Informe,' 12 July 1931

¹²¹¹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, DEFJ to DERICI, 11 July 1931

Ramírez decided not to obstruct Ramos' advocacy work in the Sierra Huichola, and by the end of the year Ramos had launched an official claim for 'restitución de tierras' on behalf of the authorities of both San Sebastián and Tuxpan, who alleged that 'desde hace tiempo y abusando de nuestra ignorancia Autoridades Municipales e individuos particulares nos han despojado de las tierras de nuestra propiedad.'¹²¹² The traditional governors of both communities, as well as local caciques Cenobio de la Cruz, Zenón Romero, Santos de la Cruz, Pascual González, and Juan Bautista, all signed the claim. These men had fought one another during the Cristiada, and would fight again a few years later when Bautista joined the remnant Cristeros of 'La Segunda' and attacked Romero and de la Cruz, who headed Tuxpan's pro-government Defensa. For the moment, however, the threats to the landholdings of both San Sebastián and Tuxpan were severe enough to triumph over the long-standing tensions between these rival leaders.

In January 1932, the process of 'restitución de tierras' for San Sebastián and Tuxpan officially began. The authorities in Mezquitic attempted to block the communities' joint claim, and informed Jalisco's agrarian commission that

'no existen títulos o documentos que traten del despojo de terrenos de que se quejan los indígenas del pueblo de San Sebastián Teponahuatlán... Además hago de su conocimiento, que esta Autoridad no es causante del imaginario despojo de que se quejan estos indígenas, porque en la actualidad poseen los indígenas del mencionado pueblo, es el mismo que han poseído hace cientos de años.'¹²¹³

¹²¹² AGA-D/24/1680/leg.1/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Ramos to Gob.Jal., 27 Dec. 1931

¹²¹³ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.1/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, José Egurvido to CLA, 1 Feb. 1932

However, in February the claim was published in the *Diario Oficial*,¹²¹⁴ and in July Ramos and a commission of Huichols again travelled to Guadalajara where they received a copy of the official title to San Sebastián and Tuxpan's lands.¹²¹⁵ Shortly after, three agronomists arrived in San Sebastián to survey the community's boundaries. Given that 'la experiencia ha enseñado a estas gentes que con ese pretexto se los despoja de sus tierras,'¹²¹⁶ Ramos accompanied the community's authorities 'hasta México a comprobar con títulos en mano a la oficina de Bienes Nacionales,' where on appeal they managed to reverse an official decision to leave 30,000 hectares of communal land outside the new boundaries.¹²¹⁷

While Ramos thus provided invaluable assistance to various Huichol communities, few Huichols reciprocated by sending their children to government schools. In April Juan F. Sevilla, the newly-appointed SEP inspector for northern Jalisco and south-eastern Zacatecas, visited San Sebastián, where as part of a national anti-alcohol crusade he gave a speech about the ruinous consequences of alcoholism, and was able to persuade the locals to prohibit the sale of alcohol in their community by local mestizo merchants.¹²¹⁸ However, despite Ramos' attempts to organise farming and logging cooperatives, build two separate classrooms for boys and girls, and to sow five hectares of communal land to supply grain for the school and its pupils,¹²¹⁹ attendance at the school remained low. As in many other parts of Mexico,¹²²⁰ the

¹²¹⁴ DOF, 15 Feb. 1932

¹²¹⁵ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.2/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Ing. Balderas, 'Informe,' 7 Nov. 1936

¹²¹⁶ AHSEP-78-79/C/38284/E/17, Ramos to DEFJ 18 Aug. 1932

¹²¹⁷ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.2/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Ing. Balderas, 'Informe,' 7 Nov. 1936

¹²¹⁸ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, Sevilla to DEFJ, 25 Apr. 1932

¹²¹⁹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Ramos, 'Informe,' **21 Nov. 1931**

¹²²⁰ cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.90-1, pp.96-97, pp.152-3

community flatly refused to allow girls to attend until a female teacher could be found for them,¹²²¹ while the majority of the boys who attended were ‘huérfanos del padre y madre y otros nomas mamá tienen,’ and lacked clothes and food. While Ramos obtained five hectolitres of corn from the authorities in Mezquitic, he reported that much more would be needed if all of the community’s children were to attend.¹²²² As in the Sierra Cora, in the run-up to the rainy season the few parents who had agreed to send their children to the school also demanded that Ramos ‘les permita llevarse a sus hijos, porque, con más urgencia que en los pueblos de mestizos, se van a lugares distantes a sembrar sus tierras.’¹²²³

Meanwhile, the schools set up the year before in San Andrés and Tuxpan had ceased to function, since

‘los maestros que se designaron para instalar las escuelas, fracasaron lamentablemente y me vi obligado a buscar lugares que sustituyeran a los expresados, ya que la principal causa del fracaso fué, ser aquellos lugares habitados por indígenas y estar a una distancia enorme y por tanto, muy difíciles de ser controlados por la Inspección.’¹²²⁴

A teacher recently sent to establish a school in Santa Catarina also left after only a few days in the community.¹²²⁵ Ramos suggested that Luis Carrillo – one of the few Huichol alumni of the Casa del Estudiante Indígena not to have returned to ‘sus costumbres de raza, con tendencias a seguir la vida nómada de sus ancestros’¹²²⁶ – should take this teacher’s place in Santa Catarina.¹²²⁷ However, there were no

¹²²¹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Ramos to DEFJ, 8 May 1932

¹²²² *ibid.*

¹²²³ AHSEP-78-79/C/38286/E/21, Sevilla to DEFJ, 14 May 1932

¹²²⁴ AHSEP-78-79: C/38280/E/10, DEFJ to DERICI, 15 July 1932

¹²²⁵ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, Sevilla to DEFJ, 25 May 1932

¹²²⁶ AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/5, clipping from ‘Las Noticias,’ 25 Mar. 1933

¹²²⁷ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Ramos to DEFJ, 8 May 1932

openings available for Carrillo, as Sevilla refused to dismiss any of the teachers who had failed in the Sierra, instead transferring them to mestizo ejidos in less remote areas.¹²²⁸ This earned Sevilla a rebuke from Jalisco's Director of Federal Education, who told him that it was 'precisamente en esas regiones distantes habitados por indígenas... donde la [SEP] tiene obligación de crear y de sostener sus escuelas hasta convertirlas en el instrumento más eficaz del mejoramiento económico y social de esas gentes,' and, rather than close schools, he needed to recruit better teachers.¹²²⁹ However, conflicts within Jalisco's SEP administration,¹²³⁰ together with the brief rebellion of a group of former Cristeros in the Jalisco-Zacatecas borderlands, delayed any further SEP initiatives in the Sierra Huichola for another six months.

The systematic assassination of ex-Cristero leaders, and the recent passing of the 'Ley de Cultos del Estado de Jalisco,' which allowed for one priest per 25,000 inhabitants (equivalent to the combined populations of Huejuquilla, Mezquitic, Huejúcar and Santa María de los Angeles),¹²³¹ exacerbated residual tensions between the municipal authorities and the amnestied Cristeros of northern Jalisco and southern Zacatecas, many of whom launched a new rebellion in December 1932. Among them was Pepe Sánchez, whom Griseldo Salazar and Mezquitic's Defensa had threatened with summary execution if he showed his face in the town, which had prevented him from collect the 'salvoconducto' owed him by the local authorities, which the Defensa had

¹²²⁸ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, Sevilla, 'Informe,' 15 July 1932

¹²²⁹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, DEFJ to Sevilla, 28 July 1932

¹²³⁰ Zenaido Michel Pimienta, *Episodios históricos de la educación en Jalisco* (Guadalajara: Talleres Vera, 1960), p.96

¹²³¹ M. Rivera, 'Yo era Sacristán...' in *Mi Pueblo*, Oct. 1995, p.7

in turn used as a pretext to further ‘molestarlo y acusarlo de que no había entregado las armas.’¹²³²

The outbreak of this new revolt prompted the Federal military to ‘entrar en gran actividad para sofocar los levantamientos en su origen y hasta el JOM en Zacatecas personalmente tuvo que excursionar en esta Zona.’¹²³³ Federal troops ordered much of the rural population to reconcentrate in the towns of the region, so as to cut the rebels off from sources of supplies and new recruits from, San Sebastián’s school – the only one left in the region – was closed after Ramos was forced to leave the community for Bolaños.¹²³⁴ It was not until late February 1933 that he was able to return and reopen the school, ‘desaparecidas ya las causas de orden militar que la habían hecho suspenderla.’¹²³⁵

The defeat of the rebels, and the appointment of Erasto Valle as Jalisco’s Director of Federal Education, which put an end to conflicts within Jalisco’s SEP administration,¹²³⁶ allowed the SEP to renew its work in the Sierra Huichola. In March a one-room school was established in Santa Catarina, and Luis Carrillo was appointed teacher, as Ramos had earlier recommended.¹²³⁷ Meanwhile Valle himself announced he would establish boarding schools for the Huichols on state-owned land.

¹²³² E. Bañuelos Villagrán, in M. Caldera, L. de la Torre, *Pueblos...* p.242-3

¹²³³ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, Sevilla, ‘Informe,’ 12 June 1933

¹²³⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, Ramos, ‘Informe,’ 17 Apr. 1933

¹²³⁵ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, Sevilla to DEFJ, 18 Apr. 1933

¹²³⁶ Z. Michel Pimienta, *Episodios históricos...* p.96; cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.33

¹²³⁷ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, Sevilla, ‘Informe,’ 19 Apr. 1933

Taking inspiration from the colonial policy of ‘congregación,’¹²³⁸ and from Vasconcelos’ more recent ideas of teachers as ‘misioneros,’ Valle envisaged the ‘dotación’ of state lands to Huichol families as a way of concentrating the population, ‘como han cuajado en tiempos remotos alrededor de las iglesias.’ In turn, this would solve the problems that dispersed Huichol settlement patterns had long presented the SEP.¹²³⁹

In March Valle set off on a tour of the Sierra to find potential sites for such Internados. On his return, he reported that the Huichols numbered around 5000, had a ‘gran apego en sus costumbres [y son] reacios para asimilarse a las costumbres de los blancos y mestizos,’ and lived in ‘la miseria’ due to their ‘indolencia ancestral... con tendencia a la caza, más bien que a la cría de animales y refractarios al cultivo, al que sólo de un modo rudimental se dedican en pequeña escala.’¹²⁴⁰ He also noted that ‘sus armas se reducen a un pequeño arco y flechas como de 50 cm de largo con punta de madera muy resistente.’ This bleak report reflected the reality of the post-Cristiada settlement in the region, which had by now seen the theft of most Huichol livestock by Federal troops and the Defensas, and the confiscation of many rifles and the concealment of the rest. Valle concluded that, despite the Huichols’ active participation in the Revolution and the Cristiada, they were not a ‘raza guerrera,’ and in the face of threats ‘se limita a huir.’¹²⁴¹

¹²³⁸ cf. S. M. Deeds, ‘Los tepehuanes en misiones jesuitas...’; L. Gómez Canedo, ‘Huicot: Antecedentes...’

¹²³⁹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/15, DEFJ to DERICI, 6 Feb. 1933

¹²⁴⁰ AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/5, clipping from ‘Las Noticias,’ 25 Mar. 1933

¹²⁴¹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/12, DEFJ to DERICI, 30 Mar. 1933

As for the SEP's current efforts in the region, Valle reported that the school in San Sebastián consisted of a few huts made of straw, and lacked enough pupils to justify its continued existence, although he declined to close it as he viewed Inocencio Ramos' continued presence in the community as essential to preventing the exploitation of local people by mestizos.¹²⁴² He ordered Ramos to boost attendance, but recognised this was difficult, given that local families had to help feed the pupils, and therefore saw the school as a burden. Furthermore, when supplies of 'pinole, tortillas o maíz tostado' – the only food available – were exhausted, the pupils had to return home until Ramos could secure enough grain to feed them again.¹²⁴³

Valle therefore continued to view Internados as the best way to 'incorporar' the Huichols, despite having suffered 'la peor desilución al darme cuenta de que de esa tribu no puede esperarse ninguna ayuda material y moral, y por lo tanto el mencionado internado sólo puede crearse contando para ello con la ayuda del Gobierno Federal o del Estado.'¹²⁴⁴ He suggested establishing Internados in San Sebastián, San Andrés and Las Latas (an anexo of Santa Catarina), each staffed by a male director and a female assistant who would teach fifty pupils to speak, read and write Spanish, raise crops and animals more efficiently, build 'better' houses, eat 'better' food, and wear 'better' clothes, reflecting the overwhelming ethnocentrism of SEP policy, and its representatives' faith in the total superiority of their own mestizo Mexican culture over Indian ways of life that had been adapted to local conditions over hundreds of years.¹²⁴⁵ Once they had been trained, the Huichol graduates would

¹²⁴² *ibid.*

¹²⁴³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/5, clipping from 'Las Noticias,' 25 Mar. 1933

¹²⁴⁵ cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.26-9; pp.151-4

receive plots of land near the school, together with agricultural equipment, and local teachers would try to ensure that the graduates ‘no se desconecte moral e intelectualmente de sus familiares ni del internado.’¹²⁴⁶

However, the huge projected cost of the project, of 42,300 pesos a year, led Rafael Ramírez to reject Valle’s plans,¹²⁴⁷ while the Huichols themselves also undermined Valle’s attempts to impose a ‘foreign’ culture on their communities, using mestizo ignorance of the Huichol language to their advantage.¹²⁴⁸ Valle had sent teacher José Jaime Macías to San Andrés, where he managed to win local approval for the establishment of an Internado. However, just as the communal governor was to officially confirm the community’s support,

‘un huichol viejo se arrodilló levantando las manos hácia arriba y vueltas hácia el sellador, le pidió en su lenguaje que se suspendiera, y luego inclinando tres veces la cabeza ante los demás huicholes les dirigió algunas palabras en su propio idioma, las que discutieron aprobateriamente. En seguida el Gobernador me dijo: “vienes tú a mandarlo el Internado y te lo haces responsable de los otros maestros que vengan?” No, lo dije, por que no tengo Titulos ni Diplomas académicos y además, el Gobierno sabrá a quien mandará. Entonces repuse: “El pueblo no lo quiere la escuela si tu no vienes a mandarla y no ponemos el sello.”’¹²⁴⁹

Given their earlier experiences with the local teachers, it is not surprising that the elders of San Andrés would trust only teachers whom they had already met and who would take personal responsibility for any conflicts that their presence caused. Thus the SEP’s past errors in dealing with the Huichols scuppered Valle’s plan to establish Internados in their communities.

¹²⁴⁶ AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/4 Valle, ‘Plan educativo para la región de los Huicholes,’ 25 May 1933

¹²⁴⁷ AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/4, Ramírez to Valle, 13 June 1933

¹²⁴⁸ cf. James C. Scott, *Weapons...*, p.19-21

¹²⁴⁹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38265/E/31, Macias to DEI, 12 Feb. 1942

Meanwhile northern Jalisco's mestizo ex-Cristeros were growing more militant, despite the Federal army having crushed their uprising in early 1933. In August, Erasto Valle reported that armed 'fanáticos' had recently killed a teacher near Colotlán,¹²⁵⁰ and the mestizo-inhabited areas surrounding the Sierra Huichola quickly became a notorious hotbed of anti-SEP sentiment.¹²⁵¹ By December, many local schools were unable to function because 'se ha perdido la seguridad en los caminos por esta región.'¹²⁵² In January 1934 Bassols issued new instructions to SEP officials and teachers across Mexico, which added controversial classes in sexual education to an already markedly socialist and anti-clerical curriculum,¹²⁵³ leading many campesinos to imagine that teachers 'iban a desnudarse a los niños y a las niñas en la escuela, para cometer inmoralidades.'¹²⁵⁴ A month later, the militant ex-Cristero politico-military leaders who made up the so-called 'Guardia Nacional' (GN) declared war on the revolutionary state, announcing that anyone caught selling or drinking alcohol, playing pool, dancing, or going to the cinema or theatre, would be fined by the 'Cristero' authorities, 'pues no es justo que mientras unos gimen bajo los trastornos y calamidades de la guerra, las demás se entreguen a diversiones preparadas de ante mano por enemigos, por decirlo así, de nuestro movimiento.'¹²⁵⁵

Santa Catarina, Tuxpan and San Andrés all seem to have regarded an alliance with the Federal and state governments as the best way to avoid being sucked into the renewed

¹²⁵⁰ AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/6, Valle, 'Informe anual,' 18 Aug. 1933

¹²⁵¹ D. L. Raby, 'Los maestros rurales...' pp.194-7

¹²⁵² AHSEP-78-79/C/38281/E/8, Rubalcaba to DERICI, 31 Dec. 1933

¹²⁵³ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/5, Braulio Rodríguez, 'Circular,' 30 Jan. 1934; cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.90

¹²⁵⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/7, DEFJ to DERICI, 29 June 1935

¹²⁵⁵ AAAR/C/12/E/46/Doc/5663, GN 'Circular # 4,' 4 Feb. 1934

violence, and to secure the protection of their communal territories. In San Andrés, ‘individuos poco escrupulosos’ from pro-Cristero Huejuquilla ‘elevaron [una] solicitud de tierras [de San Andrés] con intenciones ilícitas,’¹²⁵⁶ while San Juan Capistrano also continued to invade the community’s territory.¹²⁵⁷ The authorities of San Andrés’ anexo, Guadalupe Ocotán, also reported that a landowner from Nayarit, Fernando Rocha, ‘declara que este pueblo... lo ha comprado el Supremo Gobierno de México.’¹²⁵⁸ They added, however, that although ‘no somos de conformidad que se nos vendan nuestros pueblos,’ they were open to renting out some of their territory ‘a cualquier persona que nos solicite,’¹²⁵⁹ indicating their willingness to compromise with the Jalisco state government if it would protect them from land-hungry mestizos across the state line in Nayarit. Land-grabs and mestizo pressures thus failed to turn San Andrés and Guadalupe Ocotán decisively against the state.

The leaders of Tuxpan’s pro-government Defensa also looked to the Federal government to protect them from the encroachments of the mestizo caciques of Chimaltítan, Bolaños, and Huajimic.¹²⁶⁰ To that end they wrote to President Abelardo Rodríguez in August 1933, demonstrating their loyalty to the state by requesting the establishment of a school in their community.¹²⁶¹ The authorities in Santa Catarina also remained as strongly pro-government as they had been during the Cristiada. Although the school that had been established there was unpopular with most inhabitants, and suffered poor attendance due to local distrust and the demands of the

¹²⁵⁶ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.2/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Balderas, ‘Informe,’ 7 Nov. 1936

¹²⁵⁷ AGA-D/276.1/103/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/San Andrés, Reps to CNA, 19 May 1933

¹²⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁶⁰ AGA-D/276.1/137/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/Tuxpan, C.de la Cruz, Z. Romero and P. Chino, to CNA, 26 Mar. 1935

¹²⁶¹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38260/E/2, María García M. to DEFJ, 15 Jan. 1934

agricultural cycle,¹²⁶² the community's teacher, Luis Carrillo, was himself Huichol, and apparently knew how to avoid seriously offending local sensibilities. The community's authorities therefore continued to tolerate the school's existence, especially as it served as a direct link with the Federal government to which the community looked for the protection of its patrimony.

However, just as in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Cristiada, the presence of a government school ultimately exacerbated the pressures on San Sebastián's lands. In August 1933 Inocencio Ramos was dismissed from his post 'por falta de Certificado de 6/o año y que se dijo explotaba a los huicholes, lo que no logré comprobar.'¹²⁶³ It is tempting to connect Ramos' dismissal with his advocacy on behalf of San Sebastián and Tuxpan, which had threatened the interests of the region's mestizo caciques. Valle himself had noted that, all too often,

'cuando un maestro o Inspector denuncia francamente los inicuos procedimientos de trato al indio, los interesados que resultan afectados se valen de cuantos procedimientos están a su alcance, generalmente recomendaciones de personas muy influyentes, y echan por tierra todo y a veces hasta resulta castigado el maestro denunciante, lo que hace que el indio le pierda la fé al ver que es un individuo incapaz de hacer algo en su beneficio.'¹²⁶⁴

The actions of Ramo's eventual replacement, a mestizo from nearby Nóstic named Apolonio González, reinforce the hypothesis that Ramos' dismissal was motivated by the cupidity of local mestizo elites. In early 1934, Juan Bautista informed Ramos, who continued to work as an advocate for the community, that González

¹²⁶²AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/10, Sevilla, 'Informe,' 12 June 1933

¹²⁶³AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Valle to DERICI, 13 Mar. 1934

¹²⁶⁴AHSEP-78-79/C/38282/E/15, Valle to DERICI, 6 Feb. 1933

‘tiene días que da clase y días que no y cuando les da es un rato. Está más limpio el patio de las casas de los huicholes, [que] el frente del salon. En el salon se vendió licor, así me dijo el Presidente del Comité y me preguntó que sería bueno hacer, y yo le dí el consejo que los echara fuera del Salón de clases a mi consta que sacaron otro día el barril de vino [de mezcal].’¹²⁶⁵

Worse still, Ramos himself later reported that, around this time,

‘el Sr. Prof. Apolonio y J. Grisendo Salazar, éste último Jefe de la Defensa de Mezquitic, hacían cabeza ante la Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento pidiendo tierras en el Pueblo de San Sebastián... estoy seguro que los Huicholes no pidieron ejidos, y ahora que fui a la Sierra le pregunté a un Huichol y me dijo que no, que los de Mezquitic habían pedido tierras del Pueblo de San Sebastián.’¹²⁶⁶

The attempts of San Sebastián’s teacher and Mezquitic’s Jefe de Defensa to apply for, on behalf of the community, a type of agrarian reform that would allow them to ‘apoderarse de [sus] tierras,’¹²⁶⁷ must have led many of San Sebastián’s inhabitants to connect the invasion of their communal lands by local mestizo municipal authorities with the government school in their community, and with state-promoted agrarismo. Such an association would have caused widespread outrage, ruptured Juan Bautista’s momentary reconciliation with the revolutionary government, and pushed him back into the arms of the region’s resurgent ex-Cristeros.

Durango: the Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros

In southern Durango, the strength of the Cristero movement, coupled with the political upheaval caused by the defection of Governor Amaya and Zone Commander Urbalejo to the Escobaristas, meant that many local Cristero leaders viewed ‘los

¹²⁶⁵ AHSEP-78-79/C/38267/E/35, Ramos to DEFJ, 7 Feb. 1934

¹²⁶⁶ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.2/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Balderas, ‘Informe,’ 7 Nov. 1936

¹²⁶⁷ *ibid.*

arreglos' with suspicion, and were reluctant to abandon their hard-won gains in the region. Alberto Terrones Benítez, whom Calles had appointed interim state governor in Amaya's place,¹²⁶⁸ enlisted Padre Abundio Nájera to persuade the rebels to accept amnesty, and at a meeting in Mezquital on 16 July the priest duly warned Trinidad Mora that

'él que siga sobre la lucha, la Iglesia ya no responde por nada porque ya no hay causa, si van para alguna parte a proveer de que comer ya es un robo y si el afectado pide auxilio y va la federación, en seguimiento de aquellos, y si se pelean y hacen bajas son suicidios que hacen.'¹²⁶⁹

Porfirio Mayorquín retired to private life soon after, but was almost immediately assassinated at his ranch in Jacalitos by the leader of northern Nayarit's Defensa forces, who sought vengeance for the death of an uncle killed by Mayorquín in Acaponeta at the height of the rebellion.¹²⁷⁰ Mayorquín's former comrades therefore had little trust in the government's offers of amnesty, and they demobilised only after Terrones Benítez gave their leaders government posts, or incorporated them into new Defensa forces who, amid growing banditry and rural unrest, were entrusted with 'la persecución de los salteadores, y... el castigo de los mismos.'¹²⁷¹

Although Florencio Estrada and his men claimed to be 'dispuestos a cooperar con el Gobierno en todo tiempo,' they were unable to return to Huazamota 'porque los Señores Muñoz y Gutiérrez, que forman las autoridades civiles y rurales... no nos han proporcionado las garantías.' They were therefore incorporated, along with Juan Andrés Soto and his Tepehuano pro-Cristeros, into the reformed Defensa of Santa

¹²⁶⁸ J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* p.447

¹²⁶⁹ A. Campos, 'Santiago...' in *David*, 22 Dec. 1960, p.76

¹²⁷⁰ Rangel, *Imágenes e imaginarios*, p.473

¹²⁷¹ AHED-FR/C/4/E/1423, Terrones Benítez, 'Circular 35,' 1 Nov. 1929

María Ocotán,¹²⁷² while Valente Acevedo was made Jefe de Defensa in Taxicoringa¹²⁷³ (the community to which Quintanar's ally and commander of the 'Libres de Chalchihuites,' Francisco Sánchez, also retired).¹²⁷⁴ In a deal that echoed the terms of Pancho Villa's settlement with the Sonoran regime in 1920,¹²⁷⁵ the Cristeros of Santiago Bayacora agreed to demobilise after the expropriation of 'la hacienda Santa Rosa... que sirviera de dotación ejidal a los combatientes,'¹²⁷⁶ while their commander-in-chief, Trinidad Mora, was given a potentially profitable position as a forestry chief in Bayacora, responsible for issuing permissions and collecting payments for 'la explotación del terreno' around his pueblo.¹²⁷⁷

However, the pro-government Aguilar and Flores families and their allies continued to dominate Xoconoxtle, where they headed the Defensa and controlled the traditional government.¹²⁷⁸ Florencio Estrada and his Tepehuano allies, despite joining Santa María's Defensa, settled far from the community's cabecera, where Sixto Mendía, Cosme Solís and their allies constituted a rival paramilitary force, and had secured the re-election as governor of Cosme's brother Francisco, arguing that 'si ponemos uno de los rendidos es capaz que pone dificultades.'¹²⁷⁹

While the rancour between the former Cristeros and the Durango state government had subsided by 1930, the robberies and acts of extreme violence committed by both

¹²⁷² AHED-AR/C/4/E/83, Florencio Estrada to Gob.Dgo., 24 Oct. 1932

¹²⁷³ AHED-FR/C/1/E/226, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 4 May 1934

¹²⁷⁴ 'Coronel Francisco Sánchez Hernández,' in *David*, 22 Aug. 1956, p.16

¹²⁷⁵ J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* pp.66-70; F. Katz, *The Life and Times...* pp.719-23

¹²⁷⁶ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.246; J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, iii, p.20

¹²⁷⁷ AHED-AG/C/2/E/102, José Ramón Valdez, to Bayacora Reps., 30 Apr. 1931

¹²⁷⁸ AHED-M/C/11/E/35, Chon Aguilar et al., to Gob.Dgo., 11 Sept. 1933

¹²⁷⁹ AHED-M/C/7/E/89, Cosme Solis et al., to Gob.Dgo., 25 Dec. 1929

sides during the Cristiada continued to divide the communities of the region, and reinforced older factional feuds between rival Tepehuano *xiotalh* groups. In January 1930, for example, Francisco Solís informed the authorities in Mezquital that the amnestied Cristeros ‘están disgustados con nosotros.’¹²⁸⁰ He added that they had ‘engaña[do] al Gobierno entregándoles tan sólo las armas que no les servían,’ and that due to their previous cattle rustling, an innocent female member of the Solís clan had recently died of hunger, while

‘en las mismas condiciones se encuentra mucha gente de la que fue azotada por la revolución cristera... no pueden menos que enfurecerse y pedir con toda energía que se las devuelvan siquiera la mitad de los animales que aún quedan en poder de los cristeros rendidos de los que también se quejan que tienen armas y no dejan de amenazarlos.’¹²⁸¹

These complaints reached Durango’s Confederación de Sindicatos Obreros y Campesinos, who wrote to Terrones Benítez, that the stolen cattle were still in the hands of the amnestied Cristeros, ‘los cuales a pesar de haberse presentado en días pasados ante el Gobernador del Estado, no quieren aún reconocer al Gobierno Establecido en el Municipio de Mezquital.’¹²⁸² They added that ‘es llegado el momento de que se proceda al desarme de estos Jefes infidentes que no ofrecen ningunas confianzas,’ and accused the Cristeros of conspiring with Padre Nájera against the government, even though he had helped persuade them to lay down their arms in the first place.¹²⁸³

¹²⁸⁰ AHED-AR/C/2/E/14, Francisco Solís, to PM.Mezquital, 30 Jan. 1930

¹²⁸¹ AHED-AR/C/2/E/14, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 10 Feb. 1930

¹²⁸² AHED-AG/C/1/E/77, CSOC, to Gob.Dgo., 12 Feb. 1930

¹²⁸³ AHED-AG/C/1/E/77, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 8 Feb. 1930

Terrones Benítez, whose position as interim state governor was precarious,¹²⁸⁴ was reluctant to act against the ex-Cristeros, who he saw as potential allies against Durango's military authorities, who were plotting against him, and the regional agrarista movement, which had turned against Terrones Benítez after he clamped down on local agrarian reform in line with Calles' new anti-agrarista policies.¹²⁸⁵ Despite the accusations levelled against the ex-Cristeros, he therefore refused to disarm them, which saved them from the fate of the former Cristeros in many other parts of the country.¹²⁸⁶ Rather, he ordered Mezquital's municipal authorities to use 'medios conciliatorias, para que [los amnestiados] depongan la actitud amenazante que han asumido.'¹²⁸⁷

Terrones Benítez was nonetheless overthrown in late 1930, and replaced by José Ramón Valdez, head of Durango's branch of the PNR and its Sindicato de Campesinos Agraristas.¹²⁸⁸ Freed from his gubernatorial duties, in December Terrones Benítez accompanied Durango's new Director of Federal Education, Rafael Villeda, on a visit to the Sierra Tepehuana, where the SEP planned to establish 'sistemas de mejoramiento económico, social y cultural, pues la indolencia, el vicio, el fanatismo, el desconocimiento de nuestro idioma y el obscurantismo privan entre los habitantes de esas regiones.'¹²⁸⁹ Following this trip, Villeda announced the formation of a new 'zona escolar' in southern Durango, which would be supervised by an inspector based in Mezquital responsible for establishing schools in 'todos los

¹²⁸⁴ AGN-POR/1930/E/111/F/1546-8290, Jaime Carrillo, to Pres., 5 Mar. 1930; B. Fallaw, 'Eulogio Ortiz...' p.154; cf. T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* p.158

¹²⁸⁵ AGN-POR/1930/E/111/F/1546-8290, CSOC to Pres., 30 Mar. 1930; M. Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs...* p.157

¹²⁸⁶ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, pp.345-6

¹²⁸⁷ AHED-AR/C/2/E/14, Gob.Dgo., to PM.Mezquital, 21 Feb. 1930

¹²⁸⁸ P. Navarro Valdez, *El cardenismo...* pp.54-6

¹²⁸⁹ AHSEP-68-69/C/37438/E/2, Maurilio P. Nájuez, 'Informe,' 20 June 1929

núcleos indígenas que viven en estado semi-salvaje y absolutamente fuera de la acción del Gobierno.’¹²⁹⁰ Villeda also asked for the building of new roads through the Sierra that would link Durango with Nayarit, Jalisco and Zacatecas. These roads would facilitate the penetration of the Sierra by both the state, and private companies – often one and the same, given that many generals and politicians used their ‘cacical power to foster their own private enterprises’ in this period¹²⁹¹ – with interests in ‘los grandes recursos naturales’ of the region.¹²⁹² Terrones Benítez, who had worked in the mining industry before entering politics and was therefore ‘muy entendido... [en] la minería,’ spent much of the trip collecting data on the Sierra’s ‘riquezas metalíferas,’ which Villeda noted were currently ‘inexplotables por lo que los indios no permiten la permanencia de los blancos en sus dominios.’¹²⁹³ The interest of both of these officials in the region’s natural resources anticipated the controversial involvement of soon-to-be state governor Carlos Real in the 1934 ‘despojo’ of much of Santa María and Xoconoxtle’s lands in favour of companies interested in exploiting the region’s virgin pine forests.

Villeda also demanded that the SEP approve the establishment of seventeen schools in the Sierra.¹²⁹⁴ Accordingly, in August 1931, a school opened in Huazamota, in response to the petitions of los Muñoz,¹²⁹⁵ while the pro-government Aguilar and Flores families who dominated Xoconoxtle (and who would, not surprisingly, emerge as key players in the regional logging industry in the late 1930s), also set aside

¹²⁹⁰ AHSEP-68-69/C/37434/E/4, DEFD to DERICI, 27 Dec. 1930

¹²⁹¹ P. Gillingham, ‘Military Caciquismo...’ 219; see also T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* p.104, p.131; M. Wasserman, *Pesos and Politics...* pp.20-1, p.87

¹²⁹² AHSEP-68-69/C/37434/E/4, DEFD to DERICI, 27 Dec. 1930

¹²⁹³ *ibid.*

¹²⁹⁴ AHSEP-68-69/C/37432/E/18, DEFD to DERICI, 10 Feb. 1931

¹²⁹⁵ AHSEP-68-69/C/37416/E/25, T. Muñoz et al., to Gob.Dgo., 10 Apr. 1931

communal land for a school.¹²⁹⁶ However, the majority in Xoconoxtle were far from enthusiastic about this project, and the school closed after a few months ‘porque los indios empezaron a hostilizar al maestro a quien amenazaron de muerte, porque llegaron a creer que el Gobierno lo que deseaba era quitarles sus tierras porque son muy ricas.’¹²⁹⁷ This was an early example of the way in which the growing politico-economic ties between the SEP, Durango’s political elite, and the pro-government Tepehuano caciques¹²⁹⁸ would exacerbate the factional conflicts within communities already divided by the violence of the Cristiada.

For the moment, however, the state government did its best to keep the peace in the Sierra, fearful of the fragility of the post-Cristiada settlement in the region. Valdez ignored the warnings of Sixto Mendía that Teneraca and various other ‘pueblos indígenas ya están levantados de vuelta,’¹²⁹⁹ and indeed sent ten rolls of white cotton cloth to Teneraca as a gift.¹³⁰⁰ He also backed the inhabitants of San Bernadino Milpillas against the Defensa of Pueblo Nuevo, who had raided various rancherías belonging to the latter community and stolen

‘maíz, cera, guate y un rebozo, un pantalón, ropa hecha de hombre blanca, agujas, centavos los que encontraban, redes, unos quesos, unas cuerdas de una guitarra, unos platos de fierro, maíz de semilla, una vaquilla que mataron, edad 2 años, un caballo prieto que se llevaron, una mula de propiedad de Sr. Pablo Rios; dos armas, una c.44 y una c.30 y un macho ensillado y enfrenado, [y] unas espuelas.’¹³⁰¹

¹²⁹⁶ AHSEP-68-69/C/37416/E/24, DEFD to DERICI, 10 Apr. 1931

¹²⁹⁷ AHSEP-68-69/C/37431/E/3, DEFD to DERICI, 1 Nov. 1931

¹²⁹⁸ including los Solís, who during Terrones Benítez’s visit to Santa María asked that he help them ‘con unos pocos de elementos de bida por que nos encontramos [en] tan difisil [una] situación’ (AHED-M/C/7/E/96, Francisco Solis to Terrones Benítez, 28 Jan. 1931)

¹²⁹⁹ AHED-M/C/8/E/121, Alejandro Santana, Hilario Soto, to Gob.Dgo., 13 May 1931

¹³⁰⁰ AHED-M/C/8/E/121, Gob.Dgo. to Santana, 22 May 1931

¹³⁰¹ AHED-FR/C/4/E/1426, Andrés Aguilar, to Gob.Dgo., 19 Apr. 1931

Although Pueblo Nuevo's Jefe de Defensa claimed that he had been targeting local rebels,¹³⁰² Valdez ordered him to halt his attacks on the community and return the stolen items,¹³⁰³ while Durango's zone commander also threatened to 'proceder militarmente en contra de esa Defensa si se llegan a repetir casos como el que nos ocupa.'¹³⁰⁴

From mid-1931, however, factional tensions linked to the feuds that had emerged during the Cristiada mounted in the context of renewed regional political instability. In August Calles deposed Governor Valdez for being overly 'agrarista,' but was unable to install his preferred candidate. Pastor Rouaix was thus appointed as a compromise, caretaker governor until elections for a new constitutional governor could be held, in June 1932. Valdez had retained the support of the state's agrarista movement and remained head of Durango's PNR, which put him forward as their official candidate. This was an obvious challenge to Calles' authority, and his response was to promote a new political party, the PID (Partido Institucional Duranguense),¹³⁰⁵ formed from loyalist elements of the PNR and the CROM, with General Carlos Real as its candidate.¹³⁰⁶

In southern Durango, Antonio Heredia (who had headed Mezquital's pro-government Defensa during the Cristiada and was now the provisional municipal president), together with the anti-Cristero Tepehuano Defensa leaders, remained loyal to Valdez in the run-up to the June elections, identifying themselves as 'agraristas.' Heredia was

¹³⁰² AHED-FR/C/4/E/1426, Facundo García to Gob.Dgo., 29 Apr. 1931

¹³⁰³ AHED-FR/C/4/E/1426, Gob.Dgo. to García, 24 Apr. 1931

¹³⁰⁴ AHED-FR/C/4/E/1426, JOM Dgo. to García, 24 Apr. 1931

¹³⁰⁵ Perhaps the first of Mexico's 'Institucional' parties

¹³⁰⁶ P. Navarro Valdez, *El cardenismo...* pp.54-56

a dedicated anti-clerical, who registered local members of the clergy,¹³⁰⁷ ordered inventories of the contents of the municipality's churches,¹³⁰⁸ and did his best to obstruct the 'labor insana' of Padre Nájera, who 'no obstante de ofrecer a los cuatro vientos cumplir con las disposiciones y sanciones de nuestra cara Constitución,' was accused of preaching that 'los que legalmente trabajaban con sus patronos las están gozando de todo placer y los que tratan de quitar los terrenos siempre están en la vil miseria.'¹³⁰⁹ The amnestied ex-Cristeros of the region therefore entered into an unlikely alliance with the handpicked gubernatorial candidate of their former arch-nemesis, Calles, to oppose their local, 'Valdecista' enemies. Florencio Estrada, for example, actively campaigned for Carlos Real's victory 'hasta donde nos fue posible; ayudando a controlar los pueblos de Temohaya, Santa María, Teneraca y hasta Huazamota: hasta conseguir contar con la mayor parte de havitantes, para depocitar el voto a favor de [Real]... con el sincero fin de que hubiera Paz, en nuestra olvidado pueblo.'¹³¹⁰

After Real's inevitable victory, he appointed his ex-Cristero allies in the Sierra to positions of military and political power wherever possible. Ex-Cristeros Zacarías Rodríguez and Apolinar Flores were named municipal president and commander of Mezquital's Defensa,¹³¹¹ while in Santa María Ocotán, ex-Cristeros Fernando Cumplido, José María Gurrola and Zenón Flores secured the following year's governorship for Jesús Soto, a close relative of Juan Andrés.¹³¹² This unlikely shift in the regional political dynamic exacerbated tensions between former Cristeros and pro-

¹³⁰⁷ AHED-AR/C/4/E/3, Gob.Dgo., Circular to PMs, 25 June 1931

¹³⁰⁸ AHED-AR/C/3/E/41, Heredia to Flores, 19 June 1931

¹³⁰⁹ AHED-AR/C/3/E/41, Heredia to Gob.Dgo., 9 July 1931

¹³¹⁰ AHED-AR/C/4/E/83, Florencio Estrada to Gob.Dgo., 24 Oct. 1932

¹³¹¹ AHED-FR/C/4/E/353, Reps of El Troncón to Gob.Dgo., 8 Sept. 1932

¹³¹² AHED-M/C/10/E/34, Gob.Dgo. to PM.Mezquital, 13 Oct. 1932

government factions in the Sierra. The community's anti-Cristero faction complained that 'los principales fanáticos mejor dicho ladrones de esta tierra... a pesar de averse sometido están trabajando constantemente por ponernos en mal con el Gobierno perjudicándonos lo que pueden y hechándonos la culpa a nosotros,' and asked that 'los malos elementos los ynstigadores [de] levantamientos [y] los Judas y los ladrones sean retirados de nuestro sona... [como] no queremos andar más en revueltas.'¹³¹³ In Huazamota, Nabor Muñoz also 'warned' Governor Real that the amnestied Cristeros 'causaron muchos males' in the Sierras of Durango and Nayarit,

'dejando a las madres sin sus hijos, en toda esta región pasan de 40 hombres asesinados por ellos y sus acompañantes, que sería largo enumerar los hechos de barbarismo cometidos asta en personas indefensos, matando asta mujeres de mayor edad...'

Muñoz asked that a commission be sent to investigate his claims and to prevent atrocities being carried out against himself and other 'hombres honrados.'¹³¹⁴

Real ordered new Municipal President Rodríguez to organise the investigation into Muñoz's allegations. Rodríguez, although claiming to be impartial, of course reported back that the conduct of his allies 'ha sido intachable según las investigaciones que pude hacer sobre el particular,' and that Muñoz, a notorious partisan of Valdez, 'se extralimitó más cuando también anduvo de revolucionario.'¹³¹⁵ Backed up by Florencio Estrada,¹³¹⁶ Rodríguez also accused the anti-Cristero faction of Mezquital's Defensa, together with that of Xoconoxtle, of trying to kill him, since shortly after the confirmation of Real's victory

¹³¹³ AHED-FR/C/4/E/452, Francisco Solis et al., to Gob.Dgo., 28 Oct. 1932

¹³¹⁴ AHED-FR/C/4/E/453, Nabor Muñoz to Gob.Dgo., 22 Oct. 1932

¹³¹⁵ AHED-FR/C/4/E/453, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 19 Nov. 1932

¹³¹⁶ AHED-AR/C/4/E/83, Estrada to Gob.Dgo. 24 Oct. 1932

‘al grito de “Viva Valdez,” salieron los miembros de la mencionada Defensa, corriendo por los calles de la población disparando sus armas y que en casa mataron a un compañero Realista, quién murió gritando que Viva Real y golpearon a otros y a una mujer de los mismos y que a mi casa me fueron a buscar como tres veces...’¹³¹⁷

Eventually Governor Real endorsed the ex-Cristeros’ complaints and ordered the commander of a Federal detachment based in Mezquital to keep the peace in Santa María, accused Sixto Mendía of ‘desarrollando una labor impolítica... que da motivo a la intranquilidad de los vecinos de la región,’¹³¹⁸ and ordered Rodríguez to ‘conciliar los intereses de los bandos que en la misma Municipalidad puedan existir,’ despite Rodríguez himself being a member of one of these rival groups.¹³¹⁹

By now the relations between Church and State had severely deteriorated at national level. In September 1932 the Pope spoke out against the persecution of Catholics in Mexico, and in response President Rodríguez expelled the Vatican’s delegate to Mexico, Ruíz y Flores. In Durango, zone commander Pablo Macías urged Rodríguez to send him extra troops ‘como medida preventiva, por ser el Estado de Durango muy fanático,’ and also asked that ‘un agente hábil’ be assigned to spy on the Archbishop, who ‘ya recomienda en sus sermones la necesidad de la penitencia y abstinencia de concurrir a fiestas o diversiones “profanas,” para lograr así el regreso del delegado papal.’¹³²⁰

¹³¹⁷ AHED-M/C/10/E/34, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 20 Sept. 1932

¹³¹⁸ AHED-M/C/10/E/34, Gob.Dgo. to Jefe de Destacamiento Fed., 13 Oct. 1932

¹³¹⁹ AHED-FR/C/4/E/452, Gob. Dgo to PM.Mezquital, 7 Nov. 1932

¹³²⁰ AGN-ALR/C/159/E/541/9, Gral. Macías to Pres., 14 Oct. 1932

General Macías believed that the inhabitants of the Sierra Tepehuana were likely to revolt,¹³²¹ and a month later a brief Cristero rebellion did indeed break out in neighbouring parts of Zacatecas and Jalisco. The Guardia Nacional also named Federico Vázquez ‘Jefe accidental de Operaciones Militares en el Estado de Durango,’ appointed Valente Acevedo his second-in-command, and ordered both men to swear allegiance to the ‘Segundero’ cause, obey the Guardia’s rules and regulations at all times, and form ‘subcomités especiales’ in every ranch in the Sierra, no matter how small, who would support the Guardia’s forthcoming military campaign.¹³²²

However, neither Vázquez nor Acevedo actually mobilised against the government, while other amnestied Cristero leaders found themselves helping to promote the SEP’s local programme. Elsewhere in Mexico, most former Cristeros repudiated Narciso Bassols’ radical, ‘socialist’ school curriculum.¹³²³ However, once Carlos Real became Durango’s governor, he began working with the state’s new Director of Federal Education, Ramón Méndez, to promote ‘escuelas que luchan por incorporar a nuestra civilización a los aborígenes cuya situación actual realmente los aparta aún de la característica rudimentaria de humanidad relativamente con el medio general de nuestra Nación.’¹³²⁴ And, seeing an opportunity to reinforce the influence of his ex-Cristero allies in the region, who could also help to persuade their Tepehuano allies to welcome mestizo teachers in their communities, he persuaded his superiors not only

¹³²¹ *ibid.*

¹³²² AAAR/C/12/E/46/Doc/5669, GN to Vázquez, 15 Sept. 1932; GN to Acevedo, 15 Sept. 1932; GN to Vázquez, 26 Oct. 1932

¹³²³ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.34-5; J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* p.132, p.193

¹³²⁴ AHSEP-68-69/C/37431/E/6, Gob.Dgo. to Bassols, 25 Nov. 1932

to establish an Internado in Santa María Ocotán, but also to hire Juan Sifuentes as the school's teacher and commission Florencio Estrada to provide it with supplies.¹³²⁵

The Internado finally opened its doors in April 1933,¹³²⁶ but, despite the backing of Sifuentes and Estrada, the Internado's staff immediately found themselves 'en un medio hostil a tal grado que se les ha llamado extranjeros o espías del Gobierno, que van con el deliberado propósito de quitarles sus costumbres, su religión y sus propiedades.' The Internado also faced the usual problems encountered by the SEP in other parts of the Gran Nayar, caused by the dispersal of the local population and the region's poor communications and bad roads.¹³²⁷ Even the few families who agreed to send their children to the school – which initially counted twenty-two male pupils – 'sacan a los muchachos cuando gustan dizque porque los necesitan; no mandan ni una sola mujer porque desconfían de la coeducación y... para su bailes al parecer sagrados que hacen por familias, están pidiendo sin cesar que se les deje en libertad para disponer de sus muchachos.'¹³²⁸ After several visits to Santa María, Méndez managed to extract promises from a number of families that, after the harvest, they would send their children to the school, but he remained far from convinced that the Internado would fare any better the next year, noting that 'el indio es voluble en sus decisiones cuando le conviene, y no es posible saber si en esta ocasión cumplirán su promesa de mandar mayor contingente de varones, quizá hasta señoritas y de edificar el plantel.'¹³²⁹

¹³²⁵ AHSEP-68-69/C/37432/E/6, DEFD to DERICI, 19 May 1933; AHSEP-68-69/C/37441 E/10, DEFD to DERICI, 31 Oct. 1933

¹³²⁶ AHSEP-68-69/C/37432/E/6, DEFD to DERICI, 25 Apr. 1933

¹³²⁷ AHSEP-68-69/C/37432/E/6, DEFD to DERICI, 31 Mar. 1933

¹³²⁸ AHSEP-68-69/C/37432/E/6, DEFD to DERICI, 19 May 1933

¹³²⁹ AHSEP-68-69/C/37432/E/6, DEFD to DERICI, 14 June 1933

Durango's military authorities, meanwhile, continued to worry about the loyalty of the region's amnestied Cristeros. From early 1933, Durango's new zone commander, Anacleto López, ordered Lieutenant Colonel J. Guadalupe Contreras and the pro-Valdez Defensa commanders of Xoconoxtle, Santa María Ocotán and Huazamota to 'neutralise' the ex-Cristeros of the Sierra, despite the alliance of the latter with Governor Real. In February, General López attempted to force Mezquital's municipal government, dominated by ex-Cristeros, to submit to military rule. In 1930 the nation's Defensas had already been ordered to consider themselves 'como Reserva del Ejército Nacional, quedando por lo tanto a las órdenes inmediatas de los CC. JOMs respectivos,'¹³³⁰ and he now prohibited municipal governments from using the Defensas for police duties, except when authorised by the military authorities.¹³³¹ He then instructed Lieutenant Colonel Contreras to confiscate the weapons of anyone in the Sierra who was not an officially registered member of a Defensa,¹³³² which became the pretext to raid the properties of ex-Cristeros across the region.¹³³³

Chon Aguilar was also sent to Santa María in search of 'privately-held' weapons. He naturally attempted to disarm his old enemies, such as José María Gurrola, who complained that Aguilar 'ha observado mala conducta' and confiscated two of his rifles.¹³³⁴ Likewise, Contreras ordered Florencio and Eleuterio Estrada to disarm in April, which they regarded as an attempt to leave them defenceless 'para poder acer con nosotros lo que les paresca.'¹³³⁵ Factional tensions intensified throughout the year, and in September Chon Aguilar accused new municipal president Guzmán,

¹³³⁰ AHED-FR/C/4/E/2150, SDN Circular 16, 6 June 1930

¹³³¹ AHED-FR/C/4/E/400, Gral. López, Circular 114 to PMs, 24 Feb. 1933

¹³³² AHED-FR/C/4/E/400, López to Contreras, 30 Mar. 1933

¹³³³ AHED-M/C/11/E/96, Gobernador de Teneraca to Julian Rivera, 13 May 1933

¹³³⁴ AHED-FR/C/4/E/400, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 27 Apr. 1933

¹³³⁵ AHED-FR/C/4/E/400, Florencio and Eleuterio Estrada to Gob.Dgo., 8 Apr. 1933

another ex-Cristero, of insulting him and threatening him at gunpoint, alleged Guzmán was a member of a Catholic prayer group, and asked that he be removed as municipal president, ‘por que no creemos prudente que una autoridad sea miembro de una agrupación que es en contra de la linea de conducta que se ha trazado EL SUPREMO GOBIERNO.’¹³³⁶ In turn Guzmán accused the Defensas of Mezquital and Xoconoxtle of being ‘los mismos Agraristas y los mismos también que fueron contrarios al Partido Realista, y que por lo mismo no ha sido posible caminar de acuerdo entre ellos y yo.’¹³³⁷ A few weeks later, Teneraca’s governor complained (not for the first time) that Contreras, who claimed to be acting on the orders of Anacleto López, was confiscating cattle that they had either been legitimately bought or had been given to them by the Federal government after ‘los arreglos.’¹³³⁸

The region’s ex-Cristeros called on Governor Real to replace López and Contreras, ‘por ser quien[es] ajita y apolla a los Valdecistas jefes de Defenzas... dándoles ordenes sin causa justificada para que nos aprendan y nos desarmen donde nos encuentren; cosa que conociendo sus hechos ponen en gran intranquilidad á esta región pacífica.’¹³³⁹ They also claimed that Cosme Solís and Sixto Mendía were stealing their cattle, demanded that Chon Aguilar be tried for sheltering local bandits and for his own robbery of cattle, horses and mules, and alleged that ‘los Solis y Mendía... no son conformes al Establecimiento del [Internado] y en distintas formas molestan a sus cooperadores.’¹³⁴⁰

¹³³⁶ AHED-M/C/11/E/35, Chon Aguilar, José Flores et al., to Gob.Dgo., 11 Sept. 1933

¹³³⁷ AHED-M/C/10/E/34, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 23 Sept.1933

¹³³⁸ AGN-ALR/C/161/E/542.7/45, Residents of Teneraca to Gob.Dgo., 15 Oct. 1933

¹³³⁹ AHED-FR/C/1/E/404, Cumplido to Gob.Dgo., 15 Oct.1933

¹³⁴⁰ *ibid.*

Reflecting the unusual alliance of convenience between the SEP and the Sierra's amnestied Cristeros, Ramón Méndez backed this last allegation. He reported that the community's pro-Cristero faction 'respondió desde un principio al llamado que se le hizo,' and blamed poor attendance at the Internado on the refusal of Santa María's pro-Valdez leaders to 'aporte de buena gana sus elementos,' despite Méndez having 'emprendido una verdadera campaña mediante gestiones ante el Jefe de las Operaciones de esta Entidad.'¹³⁴¹ The presence of ex-Cristeros among the school's staff probably inspired this opposition to the school on the part of a faction which otherwise claimed to support the Callista order in the community.

Ironically, however, Federal commanders and Méndez's own superiors within the SEP further hampered the progress of the Internado. Although Méndez regarded Sifuentes as an 'elemento indispensable para el funcionamiento [del] internado,' Rafael Ramírez dismissed him in November 1933,¹³⁴² arguing that Sifuentes was unqualified for the job of maestro rural, having received only four years of primary education.¹³⁴³ Florencio Estrada also lost his job around this time, after his enemies in Huazamota complained to the local military authorities about Estrada's 'manejos indebidos de los dineros y vituallas' at the Internado.¹³⁴⁴ With time, Sifuentes and Estrada might have helped to bridge the cultural differences between the mestizo outsiders of the SEP and the local Tepehuano population, just as they had been able to link Quintanar's mestizo rebel command and Juan Andrés Soto's Tepehuano fighters during the Cristiada; but this chance was lost due to the bitterness of local factional

¹³⁴¹ AHSEP-68-69/C/37432/E/6, DEFD to DERICI, 21 Nov. 1933

¹³⁴² AHSEP-68-69/C/37441/E/10, DEFD to DERICI, 31 Oct. 1933

¹³⁴³ AHSEP-68-69/C/37441/E/10, DEFD to DERICI, 13 Nov. 1933

¹³⁴⁴ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.295

feuds, and the belligerence of both the military and the national-level SEP administration. The Federal government's continued antipathy towards the former Cristeros would soon sabotage the state government's attempts to enforce a peaceful settlement on the Sierra Tepehuana, in turn destroying hopes for the prompt 'integración' of the Tepehuanos into the Mexican nation.

However, SEP officials were seemingly blind to the threat that rapidly increasing factional tensions in the Sierra, and the departure of Sifuentes and Estrada from the Internado, now posed to their work. Instead, Méndez reported that local confidence in the Internado was increasing,¹³⁴⁵ and asked for resources to establish schools in Xoconoxtle, Temoaya, Teneraca, San Francisco de Ocotán and San Lucas de Jalpa.¹³⁴⁶ In line with Bassols' vision of teachers as champions of revolutionary ideals, Méndez also promoted agrarismo in the Sierra. Interim Governor Pastor Rouaix had noted in late 1931 that the claims of Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle, pending since 1917, had been neglected due to a shortage of agronomists and because claims in other parts of the state had taken priority.¹³⁴⁷ While the amount of lands distributed to peasants had increased during Real's governorship, this distribution had involved the 'fraccionamiento' of hacienda lands, rather than 'dotación.' Real had also exempted the state's biggest landowners, particularly in the Laguna region, from the effects of reform, and took advantage of state agrarian policy to increase his own landholdings.¹³⁴⁸

¹³⁴⁵ AHSEP-68-69/C/37435/E/37, DEFD to DERICI, 31 Dec. 1933

¹³⁴⁶ AHSEP-68-69/C/37435/E/18, DEFD to DERICI, 17 Jan. 1934

¹³⁴⁷ AGN-POR/1931/C/99/6001T-7000T, Fernando Arenas to Pres., 16 Oct. 1931

¹³⁴⁸ P. Navarro Valdez, *El cardenismo...* pp.54-56; B. Fallaw, 'Eulogio Ortiz...' p.159

It was not until September 1933, when Méndez informed Bassols that Santa María had been waiting fifteen years for a response to its claim against San Juan Capistrano, that the state government turned its attention to the agrarian problems in the Sierra. Méndez added that Santa María's authorities had already sent maps, plans and a colonial title to the CNA, and asked that their claim be given preferential attention.¹³⁴⁹ As the CNA denied all knowledge of the claim,¹³⁵⁰ Real finally ordered agronomists to carry out 'trabajos topográficos relacionados con la restitución de tierras a los pueblos de Xoconoxtle y Santa María de Ocotán.'¹³⁵¹

However, the work of the agronomists renewed a controversy over the ownership of more than 120,000 hectares of land that in 1899 had been taken, at least on paper, from both Santa María and Xoconoxtle: the so-called 'Predio de la Montaña.' This land had been sold by its *de jure* mestizo owner to an American businessman, and was later confiscated by the state government in lieu of unpaid taxes, although it had remained in the *de facto* possession of the local Tepehuano population.¹³⁵² In the same year that agronomists arrived in Santa María, Governor Real sold the 'Predio' – now apparently measuring 177,105 hectares – to Esteban G. Rosas. Santa María's inhabitants denounced this sale as 'un despojo que se pretende hacer por medio de las autoridades de aquel Estado y por algunos capitalistas,'¹³⁵³ and saw it as having been facilitated by the SEP, given Méndez's role in bringing government engineers to Santa María, his attempts to secure a larger plot of the community's land for the

¹³⁴⁹ AHSEP-68-69/C/37431/E/28, DEFD to DERICI, 6 Sept. 1933

¹³⁵⁰ AHSEP-68-69/C/37431/E/28, Antonio Hidalgo to CNA, 6 Oct. 1933

¹³⁵¹ AHED-M/C/10/E/34, Gob.Dgo. to PM.Mezquital, 1 Jan. 1934

¹³⁵² AGA-BC/276.1/411/leg.1/Comunal/Restitución/Santa María Ocotán y Xoconoxtle, INI Report, N.D.

¹³⁵³ AGN-ALR/C/184/E/552.5/459, León García to Pres., 9 May 1934

construction of a larger co-educational school, and his plan to ‘establecer [un] aserradero, participando en el trabajo los alumnos.’¹³⁵⁴

These initiatives may well have been motivated by Mendez’s genuine belief that despite ‘las inmensas riquezas naturales que tienen a su alcance, [los tepehuanos] viven una vida miserable, amagados por la imposibilidad de explotación que les imponen las pésimas comunicaciones.’¹³⁵⁵ But they stoked fears that the establishment of the Internado was part of a government plot to strip Santa María Ocotán of its communal lands. By June, local tempers had risen to the extent that the Internado’s teachers were in danger, and Méndez ordered them to be careful and use only ‘la persuasión científica ya en reuniones generales o en conversaciones personales con los vecinos.’¹³⁵⁶

If the Internado was in an increasingly precarious position, so too were the region’s ex-Cristeros. The controversy over Santa María’s lands weakened Real’s position, as Terrones Benítez seized on his ‘counter-revolutionary’ behaviour to try to tarnish the old Callista’s reputation.¹³⁵⁷ Real was unable to protect his local allies from the Federal military and the ‘Valdecista’ Defensas, whose onslaught had been bolstered by Calles’ crackdown on the Church and the outbreak of ‘la Segunda’ elsewhere. In August 1934, Real informed Estrada that his life was now in danger, and offered to help him flee Durango with his family.¹³⁵⁸ Similar messages also reached Trinidad

¹³⁵⁴ AHSEP-68-69/C/37432/E/6, DEFD to DERICI, 26 Oct. 1933

¹³⁵⁵ AHSEP-68-69/C/37429/E/12, DEFD to DERICI, 20 June 1934

¹³⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁵⁷ AGN-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, Terrones Benitez to Pres., 3 Nov. 1934

¹³⁵⁸ A. Estrada, *Rescoldo...* p.57

Mora,¹³⁵⁹ who was outraged, declaring: ‘Quién puede, con derecho, impedirme que me levante en armas para escapar de ser asesinado en mi casa? Por lo menos que se nos permita defendernos.’¹³⁶⁰ Together with around fifty followers from Bayacora, he took up arms again in late October,¹³⁶¹ and headed to Cerrito Gordo – located between Teneraca and Taxicaringa – to meet with Federico Vázquez, Valente Acevedo, Florencio Estrada, and Juan Andres Soto, who agreed to ‘hacer un sólo grupo,’ and appointed Mora the leader of a new regional Cristero rebellion.¹³⁶²

Conclusions

Between 1930 and 1934, the efforts of SEP officials, Federal commanders and their Indian allies to promote the state-building policies of the revolutionary government had further divided communities already split by violent factional feuds and clan rivalries, and turned many individuals against the state. These conflicts had been compounded by the involvement in local agrarian conflicts of teachers, politicians and local mestizo caciques, and the Federal state’s failure to address resultant local concerns. Across the region, conservatives thus saw the SEP’s activities as threatening both costumbre and communal landholdings; especially in San Sebastián, whose teacher had colluded with the region’s mestizo elite in an attempt to dismember the community’s territory, and in Santa María Ocotán, where the Internado was caught up in a controversy over sales of communal land, and also

¹³⁵⁹ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Unknown to Pres., N.D.

¹³⁶⁰ ‘El Mayor Florencio...’ in *David*, 22 June 1955, pp.166-167

¹³⁶¹ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Unknown to Pres., N.D.

¹³⁶² AAAR/C/12/E/44/Doc/5562, ‘Acta levantada en Cerrito Gordo,’ 22 Nov. 1934

dragged into a violent conflict between armed factions linked to rival pro- or anti-Cristero caciques.

While the tensions within and between communities mounted from 1930, Church-state conflict was again brewing at national level. As Catholic opposition to new anti-clerical legislation and the SEP's increasingly radical curriculum grew, Calles and the Federal military increased their repression of both the clergy and amnestied Cristeros in an attempt to prevent the outbreak of a new mass uprising. However, this sabotaged the unlikely attempts of state governments and local SEP officials to reconcile the Gran Nayar's amnestied Cristeros with the regional post-Cristiada settlement. The chance to establish a stable peace in the Gran Nayar was thus lost, and by the time that Cárdenas acceded to the presidency in late 1934, national tensions had combined with worsening local factional and inter-communal conflicts, and increasing threats to former Cristeros, to drive many of them to take up arms again. Across the region, wholesale violence would thus define the six years of Cárdenas' rule – a period still regarded by the Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros not as one of radical reform and political consolidation, but as the final, ferocious climax of the long-running war that had started with the overthrow of Porfirio Díaz in 1911.

Chapter Five: Cardenismo and ‘La Segunda’ in the Gran Nayar (1935-40)

Lázaro Cárdenas, far from being another docile front-man for the continued rule of Calles, began to ‘display a wayward heterodoxy’¹³⁶³ from the moment that he was nominated as the PNR’s official candidate, and as president he began to enact the ideas enshrined in the 1917 revolutionary Constitution. He organised the working classes into the unions who would form one of the main pillars of PNR (and subsequently PRI) rule;¹³⁶⁴ nationalised the nation’s railways and oil industry;¹³⁶⁵ backed radical agrarian reform;¹³⁶⁶ and despite Bassol’s resignation in May 1934, he pushed forward with the SEP’s programme of ‘socialist education.’¹³⁶⁷

Cárdenas’ radicalism caused frequent controversy, however, and his presidency was characterised by social and political tumult, including the outbreak of a number of regional rebellions referred to collectively as ‘la Segunda Cristiada.’ In many regions, ‘la Segunda’ was small in scale and scope, dismissed in contemporary government reports as ‘banditry’ or as isolated flare-ups of violent ‘fanaticismo,’ and characterised by some later historians as no more than the disparate uprisings of a few rebel bands.¹³⁶⁸ However, the Cristero political leaders of the so-called GN claimed that ‘la Segunda’ was the much broader resistance of committed Catholics to the ‘atheist communism,’ radical agrarian reform and socialist education promoted by

¹³⁶³ A. Knight, ‘The Rise and Fall...’ p. 249

¹³⁶⁴ N. Hamilton, *The Limits...* p.108

¹³⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.140

¹³⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.105

¹³⁶⁷ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.34-6

¹³⁶⁸ cf. J. Tuck, *The Holy War in Los Altos*, p.182-5; M. Puente Lutteroth, *Movimiento Cristero...* p.10

Cárdenas.¹³⁶⁹ A number of more recent studies have shown that, although the GN certainly exaggerated the overall national significance of the uprising, in certain parts of the country the violence was widespread, intense, and relatively long-lasting.¹³⁷⁰ Schools and ejiditarios were the main targets of popular violence,¹³⁷¹ which was often backed by landlords and hacendados seeking to sabotage Cárdenas' radical agrarista project.¹³⁷²

Oral histories, literary accounts,¹³⁷³ and the later reminiscences of former Cristeros in *David*, together with the documents produced by the SEP and the Cristero rebels themselves in this period, all show that that throughout Cárdenas' sexenio, intense and pervasive violence dominated the Sierras of Nayarit, northern Jalisco and, especially, southern Durango, where the last of the 'Segundero' rebel commanders, Federico Vázquez, and his primarily Tepehuano guerrilla fighters, only finally laid down their weapons in 1941. However, unlike in most of Mexico, landlords were largely non-existent in the Gran Nayar, and in the surrounding areas in fact tended to support the state, rather than the rebels. And while many of the Gran Nayar's rank and file 'Segunderos' were indeed motivated by their opposition to 'socialist education' and agrarian reform, this opposition was less an ideological one predicated on local allegiance to political Catholicism. Instead, as Bantjes has also noted of the Mayos who took part in a 'Segundero' rebellion in 1935,¹³⁷⁴ Cora, Huchol, Tepehuano and

¹³⁶⁹ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.367; cf. H. 'Martínez,' 'Manifiesto al pueblo de Durango,' in Avitía Hernández, pp.349-50

¹³⁷⁰ D. L. Raby, 'Los maestros rurales...' pp.194-7; A. Bantjes, *As if Jesus...* pp.24-60

¹³⁷¹ D. L. Raby, 'Los maestros rurales...'; M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.91-162; J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* p.132

¹³⁷² B. Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation...* pp.121-56;; B. Cervantes et. al., *La vida airada...* p.49

¹³⁷³ A. Estrada, *Rescoldo...*; M. Ángel Menéndez, *Nayar*

¹³⁷⁴ A. Bantjes, *As If Jesus...* p.35

Mexicanero participation in ‘la Segunda’ was more the product of their opposition to the way in which individual representatives of the state – local SEP officials, military commanders, and the Defensa leaders with whom these former were ever more closely associated – had attempted to apply radical state policies, often for personal gain. Thus land-grabs carried out under the cover of agrarian reform, attempts on the lives of amnestied Cristero leaders in order to settle old feuds, and the attacks of SEP ‘anti-fanatics’ on local *costumbre* and associated communal power-structures, alienated many of the inhabitants of the Gran Nayar and pushed some of them into a new rebellion against the State.

Furthermore, while Vaughan argues that the State’s voluntary, top-down negotiation and compromise put an end to the violence,¹³⁷⁵ this chapter shows that in much of the Gran Nayar it was the strength of the military response to the uprising, on the part of both local Defensa forces and the increasingly mechanised Federal army, which led to the defeat of the rebels. My research also further coincides with that of Bantjes in demonstrating that in the context of the violence of ‘la Segunda,’ the Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros, whether through collaboration with the State or rebellion against it, forced the government to halt its attacks on *costumbre*, and, particularly through the actions of the newly-formed Departamento Agrario (which replaced the old CNA),¹³⁷⁶ to grant them concessions that, in the short term at least, allowed them to maintain control of their political autonomy and communal landholdings.¹³⁷⁷

¹³⁷⁵ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.19-20, pp.35-6

¹³⁷⁶ DOF, 17 Jan. 1934

¹³⁷⁷ cf. Bantjes, *As If Jesus...* p.10, pp.75-8

Nayarit: the Coras

‘Segundero’ violence in Durango, Zacatecas and Jalisco quickly spread to the Sierra Cora, where SEP Inspector Durán reported in December 1934 that, due to the activities of rebels in the Sierra Tepehuana, ‘los pueblos limítrofes de Nayarit se encontraban desgarnecidos... [y] los planteles situados en el corazón de la sierra han sufrido la falta de niños y la cooperación de vecinos y autoridades por la alarma, no injustificada, que reina en esos lugares.’¹³⁷⁸ However, despite the optimistic assertion by Acaponeta’s Cristero chief Pablo Rangel, that the Coras ‘dice[n] que no hay Dios más bonito que el nuestro y están con nosotros,’¹³⁷⁹ of all of the peoples of the Gran Nayar, the Coras provided the least support for the rebels of ‘la Segunda.’

Opposition to compulsory schooling, mestizo immigration into their communities and the support of the Defensas for both did indeed push a few Cora individuals into rebellion, as did personal feuds and the desire for cattle and other booty. Some Coras were also conscripted into the rebel forces. But few Coras sympathised with the rebels for any genuine religious reasons, and most who had fought in the first Cristero rebellion had ended up on the winning, government side by the end of that conflict, and likely doubted that the outcome of ‘la Segunda’ would be any different. Thus there was little popular enthusiasm for the new uprising, while the power of the Cora Defensas – who were well armed and organised, and could count on the backing of Mayor Meza’s Federal troops – served as a further deterrent. Meanwhile, the raids of the mestizo, Tepehuano and Huichol rebels on Cora communities boosted local support for the Defensas (which many people now depended on to protect them),

¹³⁷⁸ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas, ‘Informe,’ 12 Jan. 1935

¹³⁷⁹ AAAR/C/13/E/55/Doc/6707, Pablo Rangel to GN., 18 June 1935

while also prompting the flight of mestizo teachers and the closure of schools, which temporarily placated discontented Coras. Many of the Coras themselves were also forced to flee their homes for the forests and canyons of the region, surviving on corn they saved from the previous harvest and whatever else they could hunt or gather, which dispersed feuding factional groups and froze internal communal conflicts.

Due to the slackness of the region's scanty Federal troops,¹³⁸⁰ the Cora Defensas quickly became the main force in the Federal government's regional counter-insurgency campaign, frequently pursuing 'Segundero' rebels beyond Nayarit's state limits.¹³⁸¹ As early as December 1935, at El Jagüey, near San Juan Capistrano, '400 gobiernistas entre coras poblanos y federales' forced a party of seventy Cristeros to make a disorderly retreat back into the Sierra around Huazamota, in the process losing several men and their flag, 'el cual fue encontrado por un huichol en una barranca inmediata a donde fue la batalla, junta a unos restos.'¹³⁸² Rebels commanded by Pepe Sánchez attacked a party of pro-government Coras near El Jagüey a few days later, but his men were forced to retreat back to Tenzompa again, as 'no dimos cuenta que la mayor parte de la gente la tenían por las cumbres de la Sierra, así que cuando menos lo esperamos nos pegaron por el flanco izquierdo teniendo que matar unos aboca de rifle para darse paso.'¹³⁸³

Local violence continued to grow in intensity, however, and in January 1936 rebels based in Acaponeta penetrated almost as far south into Nayarit as Tepic.¹³⁸⁴ The Cora

¹³⁸⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38873/E/2, Lucas Ortiz to JOM Nay., 21 May 1935

¹³⁸¹ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.305

¹³⁸² AAAR/C/13/E/54/Doc/6309, Cristero military report, 14 Dec. 1935

¹³⁸³ AAAR/C/12/E/51/Doc/6006, Guadalupe Pedroza to GN, 27 Dec. 1935

¹³⁸⁴ AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5853, Cristero report, 'Parte NE de Nayarit,' 8 Jan. 1936

Alta was subject to the frequent raids of Cristeros, who burned rancherías, stole food supplies, and murdered or occasionally conscripted into their forces any civilians they could lay their hands on.¹³⁸⁵ The Cora Defensas fought back, and in May 1936, 200 Cora ‘gobiernistas’ attacked a Cristero band near San Juan Capistrano, forcing Zacatecan Cristero chief Guadalupe Pedroza to retreat from the area before pillaging the local rancherías.¹³⁸⁶ But older informants still remember fleeing their homes at the first sign on the horizon of the dust raised by the rebel cavalry,¹³⁸⁷ while in the parts of the Sierra Huichola and Sierra Tepehuana bordering the Cora Alta, stories are still told of the huge herds of cattle amassed by local rebels during their raids on the Cora communities.¹³⁸⁸

The siege mentality that prevailed in the Sierra Cora due to these outside threats temporarily lessened inter-factional conflicts, as in many cases ‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘conservatives’ worked together to protect their communities, as ritual specialists used their supernatural abilities to augment the military strength of local Defensas.¹³⁸⁹ But dormant local tensions were rekindled by the reopening of Jesús María’s unpopular government Internado, which had been temporarily closed due to the threat of ‘Segundero’ raids, but was now guarded by Meza’s Federal troops and León Contreras’ Defensa. Regional SEP Inspector Joaquín Rivera regarded Contreras as a positive, ‘progressive’ presence in Jesús María, reporting that he and his family were ‘perfectamente aseados en su persona y vestidos, lo que nos hace prever que el triunfo

¹³⁸⁵ Nabor Castañeda Lemús; Juventino Mejía Rivera; Nemesio Rodríguez Rodríguez

¹³⁸⁶ AAAR/C/12/E/51/Doc/6021, Pedroza to GN, 31 May 1936,

¹³⁸⁷ Candido Contreras; Nabor Castañeda Lemús

¹³⁸⁸ Rosalio Salvador Carrillo; Pedro de la Cruz Ramírez

¹³⁸⁹ Nabor Castañeda

no es imposible.¹³⁹⁰ Rivera also claimed that, by mid-1936, other Cora families had been convinced of ‘las ventajas que obtendrán al ingresar al Internado.’ Given the disruption caused by the new rebellion, which had exacerbated the normal hardships of the lean months just before the harvest, the most obvious of these ‘ventajas’ was probably the daily food supply guaranteed to the pupils, which in addition to tortillas apparently included ‘62g avena, 120g carne, 280g pan... 30g pasta, 30g arroz... 60g azúcar, 75g manteca, 62g panocha y 225g de frijol.’¹³⁹¹ However, Nayarit’s director of Federal education noted that in fact, ‘los alumnos fueron reclutados casi a la fuerza y que de 25 que llegó a tener como máximo, hoy apenas conserva 8 y tiene el magisterio que vigilarlos estrictamente para que no sean arrancados del plantel de manera furtiva.’¹³⁹² The continued attempts of mestizo civil and military authorities to force attendance at the school (which frequently involved imprisoning defiant Cora parents), and the tendency of local mestizos to exploit the Cora population ‘en forma inicua... y por todos los medios posibles,’ further increased Cora opposition to the Internado and to the mestizo authorities and settlers associated with it.¹³⁹³

In late March, Rivera and the staff of the Internado decided to take the few students they had managed to enrol – a mixture of Coras, Huichols and mestizos from La Mesa, Jesús María, Arroyo de Santiago, San Juan Peyotán and Huaynamota – on a trip to Tepic. The children were accompanied by some of their parents and, given that ‘Segundero’ violence continued to wrack the Sierra, ‘algunos indígenas de las Defensas de Mesa del Nayar y Huaynamota, haciendo un total de 45 entre educados y

¹³⁹⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38886/E/14, Joaquín Rivera, ‘Informe annual,’ 16 July 1936

¹³⁹¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38886/E/14, Rivera to DEFN, 14 July 1936

¹³⁹² SEP 84-85, C/38891, E/7, DEFN, ‘Informe General,’ 19 Aug. 1936

¹³⁹³ *ibid.*

adultos.’¹³⁹⁴ The trip was timed to take place during Semana Santa, when the Cora children would normally have been participating in the communal rituals of ‘La Judea.’¹³⁹⁵ Thus the excursion, during which the children competed in basketball and athletics competitions,¹³⁹⁶ and took part in marches and other ‘revolutionary’ celebrations with the local mestizo children, was also designed to ‘desvincular [a los coras] de sus antiguas tradiciones, practicadas con asiduidad no obstante la falta de ministros de culto.’¹³⁹⁷ The trip was also envisaged as ‘el primer eslabón para el futuro entendimiento de las razas huicol y cora con la mestiza,’¹³⁹⁸ and Rivera reported enthusiastically that on their return to the Sierra, children from La Mesa and San Juan Peyotán,

‘los segundos casi blancos por su poca mezcla... sin que nadie los aconsejara guiados únicamente por el sentimiento de compañerismo, fueron a despedirse de aquellos con quienes habían convivido estrechando su mano y llamándolos por su nombre contestando con suma alegría los del Nayar, todos coras... Considerando que la amistad que se iniciado bajo tan buenos auspicios deberá seguirse cultivando a fin de borrar la barrera que hasta hoy ha existido entre dichas razas.’¹³⁹⁹

These glowing reports were over-optimistic, however, as the attempts of SEP officials to ‘encausar sus danzas y ritos en sentido inverso al religioso’ bolstered Cora opposition to government schools, and caused the resurgence of violent factional conflicts between ‘conservatives’ and the local Defensasa and their ‘cosmopolitan’

¹³⁹⁴ AHSEP-84-85/C/38886/E/12, González Sánchez to DEFN, Apr. 1936

¹³⁹⁵ The Cora Easter Week festival was key to legitimising traditional communal power structures, and also helped to initiate children into communal life (P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* pp.143-50). Amongst the Yaqui, SEP officials also deliberately disrupted the Lent festival, which played a similar role (M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.148-9)

¹³⁹⁶ cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* p.42; cf. p.75, pp.94-5,

¹³⁹⁷ AHSEP-84-85/C/38886/E/14, Rivera to DEFN, 31 Mar. 1936

¹³⁹⁸ AHSEP-84-85/C/38886/E/14, Rivera to DEFN, 25 Apr. 1936

¹³⁹⁹ *ibid.*

Cora and mestizo allies.¹⁴⁰⁰ Tensions came to a head after the region's mestizo authorities launched a new effort to concentrate Cora populations around each community's cabecera. In La Mesa, for example, Rivera reported that murders connected to accusations of sorcery had become a common occurrence. In one case the local teacher intervened to stop an attack on an individual 'acusada de practicar la hechicería para causar males incurables,' preventing his attackers from burning him alive. However, in a clear challenge to the teacher's authority, 'una vez fuera del alcance de la vista de la maestra le dieron muerte [a puñaladas] y lo colgaron.'¹⁴⁰¹

Santa Teresa had also been seriously split by 'distanciamientos entre los mismos coras, porque unos permitieron que se avecindara un mestizo contra la voluntad de la mayoría.'¹⁴⁰² Open inter-factional warfare was then triggered by the acquiescence of Evaristo Castañeda, the local Jefe de Defensa, to the SEP's request to take logs from Santa Teresa's forests near its communal boundary with Jesús María, to use in repairing the Internado's roof. In Santa Teresa many saw this as a threat to the integrity of the community's territory. In response, the Defensa's conservative opponents, including the traditional governor and several other communal authorities, attempted to assassinate Castañeda, who along with other Defensa members was seized by the 'devils' taking part in the 'Judea' festival in 1936. The prisoners were then

'dragged to the courthouse where they were to be jailed and perhaps executed by the cargo system officers who had just taken over from the Centurions. But as he was being jailed [Castañeda] managed to get hold of a knife. In the struggle he was stabbed deeply in the stomach, leaving his intestines exposed. Government officials soon heard of this rebellion, and sent soldiers from Jesús María, Mesa del

¹⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38886/E/14, Rivera to DEFN, 12 May 1936

¹⁴⁰² AHSEP-84-85/C/38886/E/14, Rivera to DEFN, 31 Mar. 1936

Nayar, and San Francisco. These soldiers freed [Castañeda] and his men, and took the two cargo-system Governors who had seemingly been involved in planning the attack into custody. These Governors were initially jailed in Jesus Maria while [Castañeda] was taken overland to Tepic to undergo surgery for his wound. This surgery was successful, and [Castañeda] returned to supervise the execution of the former Governors who had been returned to his custody.¹⁴⁰³

In the wake of this dramatic confrontation between Santa Teresa's two conflicting forms of authority, the defeated 'conservatives' fled to Dolores and Saycota. They took the staffs of traditional office with them, leaving the new, 'cosmopolitan' traditional authorities whom Castañeda had appointed to govern the community, without the customary symbols of their legitimacy. The episode is also an early indication of the way in which the integration of the Sierra Cora into the national economy exacerbated already severe internal conflicts over cultural and political autonomy, and would create new inter-communal disputes over control of local resources.

In the Cora Baja, territorial conflicts of the kind only just emerging between Santa Teresa and Jesús María were more severe. The 'Segundero' violence in neighbouring Jalisco, Durango and Zacatecas spurred increasing mestizo immigration into the region, which exacerbated existing conflicts and created new ones, destabilising communities that had been, until now, rather more tranquil than those of the neighbouring Cora Alta. By 1937, San Pedro Ixcatán, San Juan Corapan, Rosarito, San Pedro de Honor, Corapan, and Saycota and San Blasito (whose inhabitants owned joint title to their lands), all saw their communal territories as threatened by mestizo settlers and neighboring mestizo ejidos, and had filed requests for the confirmation of their colonial land titles and the surveying and marking out of communal boundaries.

¹⁴⁰³ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.190

A sympathetic agrarian official recommended that these requests be granted free of charge, in order to facilitate the ‘incorporación de estas Tribus a la civilización.’¹⁴⁰⁴ However, many such requests were transmuted at communal, state or Federal government level into full-blown petitions for ‘dotación’ or ‘restitución.’ Three factors were at work: the ambiguity surrounding the legal status of ‘bienes comunales,’¹⁴⁰⁵ the state’s preference for the creation of new ejidos controlled by its ‘agrarista’ clients over the simple titling of existing landholdings (made official policy under Abelardo Rodríguez and continued by Cárdenas),¹⁴⁰⁶ and the opportunities to gain power and money that control of agrarian authorities offered to mestizo settlers and their allies in the local Defensas Sociales.¹⁴⁰⁷ These latter groups therefore pushed for ‘dotación’ or ‘restitución’ against the wishes of the majority, who wanted only the validation of communal land titles. In San Diego de Alcalá, for example, a new request for ‘dotación’ was launched by a single mestizo who,

‘con fines políticos y valiéndose de engaños, los hizo firmar papeles en blanco que después utilizó para hacer una solicitud de ejidos y crear así un buen ambiente como propagador de las doctrinas agrarias ante el gobernador del estado que fungía en aquella época.’¹⁴⁰⁸

The Cora authorities of Saycota similarly rejected a request for ‘dotación’ earlier made in their name as the product of ‘la agitación provocada entre ellos por elementos políticos que trataron de desorganizarlos,’ and claimed that they were anyway still in control of their ‘terrenos comunales donde cultiven y... además todos los terrenos que

¹⁴⁰⁴ AGA-D/276.1/14/leg.1/Comunal/RTBC/San Pedro Ixcatan, Proc. de Pueblos to Dept. Agrario, 20 July 1937

¹⁴⁰⁵ E. N. Simpson, *The Ejido...* pp.81-97, pp.482-8

¹⁴⁰⁶ J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* p.599; D. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges...* p.91; J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* pp.156-7

¹⁴⁰⁷ cf. D. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges...* pp.129-30

¹⁴⁰⁸ AGA-D/24/1163/leg.1/SRA/Restitución/Saycota, Ing. Zazueta to CLA, 19 Dec. 1932; cf. the rather similar story of Primo Tapia’s request for ‘dotación’ in Naranja, in P. Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt...* p.91

rodan a su comunidad... pertenecen a ellos mismos.’¹⁴⁰⁹ However, the Federal government refused to nullify these ongoing claims, which in Saycota led some Coras to join with mestizo colonists in trying to take control of lands traditionally shared with San Blasito, rupturing the formerly close political and ritual bonds between the inhabitants of the two communities.¹⁴¹⁰ Meanwhile, as the number of mestizos settled in San Pedro Ixcatán grew, disputes between local Coras who demanded only the validation of the community’s title, and mestizos who petitioned for ‘resistencia’ so as to force the establishment of an agrarian committee (through which they sought to take political control of the community), led to increasing inter-ethnic conflict. Local tensions were further exacerbated by the attempts of mestizo settlers to win the ‘dotación’ of the formerly communal lands they had seized from Ixcatán, which resulted in the establishment of an ejido at El Zopilote.¹⁴¹¹

As agrarian conflicts in the Cora Baja – and, from late 1938, the Sierra Huichola – mounted, the communities of the Cora Alta, sandwiched between these two regions, began to face new pressures on their own landholdings. With the population already on edge due to the constant threat of rebel raids and outbreaks of factional violence, surveys of Cora Baja and Huichol communal boundaries were often understood by the inhabitants of the Cora Alta as preludes to the ‘invasion’ of their own territories. In response to these perceived threats to their lands, local pro-government leaders became increasingly receptive to the agrarista propaganda of SEP officials,¹⁴¹² military commanders and politicians in Jesús María, and of local mestizos who hoped

¹⁴⁰⁹ AGA-D/24/1163/leg.1/SRA/Restitución/Saycota, ‘Residents of Saycota’ to Ing. Flores Vega, 27 June 1945

¹⁴¹⁰ AGA-D/23/225/leg.1/CAM/Dotación/Sayocota, ‘Informe: El Motaje,’ 31 May 1946

¹⁴¹¹ AGA-D/276.1/14/leg.1/Comunal/RTBC/San Pedro Ixcatán, ‘Informe: El Zopilote,’ ND, 1939

¹⁴¹² M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.30-1

to use the agrarian reform process, and the formation of new agrarian authorities that came with it, to their own advantage.

The SEP also accelerated its attempts to integrate the Coras into the regional and national economies.¹⁴¹³ Rafael Villeda, formerly head of Federal schooling in Durango and now Director of Indigenous Education in Nayarit, noted that the ‘prolongada y casi utópica esperanza de redimir a esas razas por medio de la educación’ had been largely unsuccessful, and that ‘un programa práctico de acción económica exclusivamante’ was the only real way to ‘controlarlos.’¹⁴¹⁴ However, new SEP-administered economic programmes mainly worked to the advantage of the local mestizos, and in fact encouraged more mestizo settlers to arrive in the region. Examples are the provision of loans from the state Banco Agrícola ‘para los productos de la leche y préstamos para ganado,’ aimed at reducing reliance on subsistence agriculture, and other schemes to halt the ‘tala de los bosques’ associated with slash and burn farming, so that the Sierra’s forests could instead be logged ‘efficiently’ (and thus more profitably).¹⁴¹⁵ As usual, the new arrivals quickly established links with the local mestizo military and civil authorities, who helped them secure communal land for planting and cattle raising. Such policies also increased the awareness of Cora leaders of the monetary value of their lands and resources, which had previously formed part of a landscape defined by ritual,¹⁴¹⁶ rather than its potential for profitable exploitation.

¹⁴¹³ *ibid.*, pp.190-1

¹⁴¹⁴ AHSEP-84-85/C/38887/E/11, DEFN to Felipe Madera, 28 Mar. 1938

¹⁴¹⁵ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/25, Madera, ‘Informe,’ 26 Dec. 1936

¹⁴¹⁶ J. Jáuregui, *Los coras*, p.23-4

By 1937, agrarian petitions had begun to emanate from the communities of the Cora Alta. León Contreras and the traditional authorities of Jesús María petitioned President Cárdenas to meet with them to discuss, among other problems, the issue of land titles in the Cora Alta.¹⁴¹⁷ Two years later the ‘Frente Indigenista Nayarita,’ an organisation headed by regional SEP Inspectors Amado González Davila and Manuel Durán Cárdenas, long-serving local teachers Petra Romero and Heriberto Parra, and ‘representatives’ of the local Cora and Huichol traditional authorities, again wrote to the President seeking the immediate intervention of the Federal government, and in particular the Departamento Agrario, since, they claimed, ‘las Tribus de Nayarit... son víctimas de explotadores mestizos que amparados por las Autoridades del lugar, despojan de sus tierras y de sus bienes a los indígenas de la Sierra,’ singling out for particular blame ‘la preponderancia nefasta del sector militar que [los] despoja con algunos comerciantes mestizos.’¹⁴¹⁸

The alleged exploitative role of the Jefes de Defensa, the SEP and mestizo government officials¹⁴¹⁹ also cast doubt on the legitimacy of the traditional communal office-holders, who were increasingly dominated by these authorities. In La Mesa and Santa Teresa, the local SEP inspector complained that while ‘los representantes de la tribu indígena cora, a quienes acostumbran llamar “gobernadores,”’ had pledged to support the schools in their communities, their efforts to increase attendance had been strongly resisted by many parents, ‘debido a que los padres de familia temen que sus hijos sean llevados por la fuerza, de la escuela rural al Internado Indígena, como ya se

¹⁴¹⁷ AGN-LC/C/77/E/121/52, León Contreras et al., to Pres., 20 Sept. 1937

¹⁴¹⁸ AGN-LC/C/156/E/151.3/1251, ‘Frente’ to Pres., 20 July 1939

¹⁴¹⁹ M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.156-7

han dado casos, y a lo cual están terminantemente opuestos.’¹⁴²⁰ It is not surprising that rumours of abductions had spread amongst the Coras, given that SEP officials later mentioned several cases in which

‘se llevaba por la fuerza a los niños coras con soldados armados de la Defensa Rural, amarrandoles como prisioneros peligrosos; niños que vivían a muy lejos distancias de la escuela, y quienes por las causas antotadas y no entendiendo una sola palabra de las clases de la maestra, huían de sus hogares a ocultarse en el bosque, buscando el consorcio con las fieras y prefiriendo la vida montaraz a las enseñanzas de la maestra.’¹⁴²¹

The legitimation crisis of the traditional authorities was further compounded by the disruption of communal ceremonialism caused by Segundero raids, which prompted the governors of several communities to complain that ‘su autoridad no es respetada como ellos quisieran.’ They attempted to reassert themselves by appealing to Nayarit’s state governor, General Juventino Espinoza, to officially recognise their positions.¹⁴²² The crisis in Santa Teresa was particularly serious, since Evaristo Castañeda had imposed new, more compliant traditional authorities there. A ceremonial elder and descent-group leader who now headed the community’s conservative exiles formed an armed group in 1938, and threatened to attack the community, causing anxiety amongst both Santa Teresa’s ‘cosmopolitans’ and the mestizo authorities in Jesús María.¹⁴²³ However, while SEP officials recognised that tensions in the Sierra Cora obstructed their civilizing mission, they continued to identify the Coras, rather than their own activities, as the problem, complaining that

¹⁴²⁰ AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/19, Madera to Gob.Nay., 25 Feb.1938

¹⁴²¹ AHSEP-84-85/C/38887/E/3, Felipe Madera, ‘Informe,’ 24 Jan. 1940

¹⁴²² AHSEP-84-85/C/38887/E/11, Felipe Madera to Gral. Juventino Espinoza, 25 Feb. 1938; President Cárdenas had officially recognised the Yaqui governors in October 1937, as part of his deal and return of lands. Gral. Espinoza, perhaps not coincidentally, had been zone commander of the Yaqui Valley in 1931, and Cárdenas would appoint him to that position again in 1939, cf. M. K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics...* pp.150-5

¹⁴²³ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.12

‘los casiquillos... han explotado a la gente inculta, desvirtuando la campaña más noble como esta, haciéndola aparacer peligrosa en el sentido de que el Gobierno quiere instruir a los adultos para hacerlos soldados, o que pretende hacerlos agraristas, comunistas, etc.’¹⁴²⁴

Although Federal troops and the Cora, Huichol and Tepehuano Defensas had by 1940 largely defeated the Gran Nayar’s ‘Segunderos,’ the factional divisions within the Cora communities, the diminishing legitimacy of the region’s traditional authorities, and the emergence of inter-communal agrarian conflicts, caused an upsurge in the violence of local feuds that obstructed not only the activities of the SEP, but also the attempts of Nayarit’s state government to cement its political control over the region. In 1939, the ‘Subprefectura de la Sierra’ was awarded municipal status and renamed ‘El Nayar,’¹⁴²⁵ while in the Cora Baja, San Pedro Ixcatán became part of the new municipality of Ruíz, which was created from the eastern part of Santiago Ixcuintla.¹⁴²⁶ These changes increased the influence of local mestizo municipal authorities on the Cora communities and their ‘cosmopolitan’ leaders, and further undermined the region’s political stability. El Nayar’s first municipal president, the pro-government Cora Jefe de Defensa of La Mesa, Mariano Solís, was assassinated in 1941 while dancing at a festival in San Francisco. Local people today remember his murder as the work of enemies he had made during an earlier career as a ‘bandolero,’¹⁴²⁷ and his killing was apparently welcomed by most of the region’s Cora population, whom he had tried to control at gunpoint and who regarded him as a

¹⁴²⁴ AHSEP-84-85/CC/38887/E/3, Madera, ‘Informe,’ 24 Jan 1940

¹⁴²⁵ POEN, Gral. Juventino Espinosa, Decreto, 6 Sept. 1939

¹⁴²⁶ POEN, Gral. Juventino Espinosa, Decreto, 15 Mar. 1940

¹⁴²⁷ Aurelio Cánare; Bruno Gómez Estrada; This is perhaps a reference to his participation in the mass theft of cattle from the Jesús María-San Francisco area by the Defensas of the Cora Baja and La Mesa during the first Cristiada

‘tyrant.’ A year later, Santa Teresa’s Jefe de Defensa Evaristo Castañeda was also killed, ‘about five metres from the door of the courthouse’ as the community celebrated the festival of Santo Santiago:

‘Mr. [Castañeda] was patrolling the area and had apprehended a subject who is a native of Dolores, and struggling arm-to-arm with said individual a soldier of the Rural Defense Brigade fired a shot to defend the commandant, instead hitting him five or six centimetres from the right ear, causing him to fall dead.’¹⁴²⁸

The new, mestizo president of El Nayar – a nephew of Mariano Mejía – dismissed the killing as the result of a ‘vulgar dispute amongst drunks.’¹⁴²⁹ However, the fact that Castañeda’s assailant was from Dolores – the refuge of Santa Teresa’s conservative exiles – suggests that factional tensions played a part in the death of this stalwart supporter of compulsory schooling, mestizo immigration and the integration of his community into the national economy. That both of these killings took place during communal fiestas also illustrates the way in which Cora costumbre had by now become a ‘battleground within a long-term factional struggle between intruding non-indigenous people (and their [Cora] supporters) and the other [Coras] who opposed the policies of these outsiders.’¹⁴³⁰ The post-revolutionary settlement in the Sierra Cora was thus defined by continuing factional conflict, and the growth of newer, inter-communal agrarian struggles – both products of the divergent responses of the Cora population to attempts to politically, culturally and economically integrate their communities into the revolutionary nation-state.

¹⁴²⁸ P. E. Coyle, *From Flowers...* p.191-192

¹⁴²⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴³⁰ *ibid.*, p.237

Jalisco: the Huichols

By late 1934, ‘Segundero’ rebels dominated much of the mestizo-inhabited region surrounding the Sierra Huichola. From the Zacatecan canyons to Puente de Camotlán, Pedro Sandoval attacked schools, Defensas and Federal troops; Epitacio Lamas launched a rebellion in Huejuquilla; Quintanar’s former lieutenant, Trini Castañon, took up arms in Valparaíso; and Padre Buenaventura Montoya abandoned the Church, which refused to support ‘la Segunda,’ to lead an armed band near Mezquitic.¹⁴³¹ Rebel violence reached the Huichol communities of northern Jalisco in December, when two bodies were found near San Sebastián’s contested boundary with Santa Catarina. Mezquitic’s Defensa, led by Griseldo Salazar, used this as an excuse to step up the Defensa’s harassment of the San Sebastián (in reality part of a separate, long-running land dispute).¹⁴³² In the same month, San Sebastián’s teacher, Apolonio González, fled the community and ‘se reconcentró en Nóstic por temores supuestos.’¹⁴³³ A few weeks later, he and his brother Pablo were killed in Nóstic by ‘elementos ex-cristeros que como tales actuaron en la pasada rebelión contra el Gobierno Revolucionario,’¹⁴³⁴ led by Pepe Sánchez.¹⁴³⁵ It is possible that Juan Bautista and his Huichol ex-Cristeros joined Bautista’s compadre Sánchez in this attack, since González had been an ally of their old enemy, Griseldo Salazar, and an accomplice in the latter’s attempts to take control of San Sebastián’s lands.

¹⁴³¹ AAAR/C/12/E/51/Doc/6013, J. Martínez to GN, 29 Feb. 1936

¹⁴³² AGN-LC/559.1/67, Tomas de la Rosa Estrada to Pres., 30 Dec. 1934

¹⁴³³ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/7, Samuel Pérez to DEFJ, 20 Apr. 1935

¹⁴³⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38285/E/18, Federación de Maestros Feds. de Jal. to Gob.Jal., 15 Apr. 1935

¹⁴³⁵ J. M. Sánchez Martínez, *A contra corriente...* p.38

Bautista soon began to expel the mestizo colonists settled within San Sebastián's territory, who had been signatories to requests for 'dotación de ejidos.'¹⁴³⁶ Bautista also raided neighbouring Huichol communities (often targeting their 'santitos' as well as their cattle),¹⁴³⁷ as well as the Cora communities to the west and the mestizo pueblos to the north and east. He targeted Santa Catarina and its anexos particularly heavily, burning all of the community's *tukipa* and trying to lay hands on and destroy its land titles, which he saw as a way of ending its territorial dispute with San Sebastián.¹⁴³⁸

However, San Sebastián's traditional authorities were reluctant to back Bautista's new rebellion. Their participation in the first Cristiada had been costly, and the alliance they had formed with Inocencio Ramos gave them hope that, despite the machinations of local mestizo authorities and teachers like Apolonio González, cooperation with the state offered a solution to their agrarian problems. Even as Mezquitic's Defensa raided their community, the majority in San Sebastián remained reluctant to take up arms, and continued to appeal to the Federal government for protection, desperately petitioning President Cárdenas for 'garantías.'¹⁴³⁹ San Sebastián was thus seriously divided by Bautista's activities: an agronomist sent to the region two years later reported that the community had been completely abandoned because 'elementos fanáticos han influenciado con las armas en la mano para distanciar los [habitantes],

¹⁴³⁶ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.2/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, San Sebastián, Ing. Balderas, 'Informe,' 7 Nov. 1936

¹⁴³⁷ Salvador Sánchez; Jesús Mercado González

¹⁴³⁸ Emelia (Xuturima) Hernández García; Antonio Candelario; Julio Robles Robles

¹⁴³⁹ AGN-LC/559.1/67, Tomas de la Rosa Estrada to Pres., 30 Dec. 1934; AGN-LC/559.1/67, Sec. Gob. to Gob.Jal., 3 June 1935

que se encuentran actualmente divididas entre si.¹⁴⁴⁰ As a result, many of San Sebastián's 'pacíficos' fled their community and took refuge in pro-government Tuxpan.¹⁴⁴¹

The caciques of Santa Catarina were also resolutely anti-Cristero. They enjoyed personal links, forged during the first Cristiada, with military commanders like Anacleto López, and they remained confident that the revolutionary state would favourably resolve their territorial disputes. At the outbreak of 'la Segunda,' these disputes involved the old Cristero strongholds of San Sebastián and Tenzompa, both of which had raided Santa Catarina during the 1920s. Leaders like Agustín Carrillo and Pascual Ávila therefore declared for the government, and against Juan Bautista and other old enemies, to settle scores and forcibly reclaim territory – as well as cattle and other booty – with the aid of weapons supplied them by the Federal government.

Tuxpan also remained pro-government, despite the obstruction of the community's agrarian claims by Antonio Guzmán, municipal president of Bolaños and brother of regional pro-government military leader José Guzmán 'el Chico.'¹⁴⁴² Ultimately, Tuxpan's leaders continued to believe that an alliance with the Federal government would accord them protection, by means of both weapons and political support, from their mestizo enemies and from San Sebastián (with which Tuxpan had a troubled relationship). Furthermore, Federal troops and Defensa forces commanded by José Guzmán provided the guarantees necessary for agronomists to begin surveying

¹⁴⁴⁰ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.2/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Julio Vindiola to Dept. Agrario, 30 Sept. 1937

¹⁴⁴¹ AHSEP-78-79/C/38260/E/2, Ramos (now working for DAI) to DEI, 24 Oct. 1940

¹⁴⁴² AGN-LC/C/611/E/524/60, PM.Bolanos to Pres., 12 Feb. 1936

Tuxpan's lands in March 1935,¹⁴⁴³ after Inocencio Ramos had successfully promoted the community's request for 'restitución.' Thus the benefits of acquiescing in the local power of José Guzmán must have – at least for the moment – outweighed the threat that his brother Antonio posed to the community.

Unlike their caciques, the populations of Santa Catarina and Tuxpan lacked personal connections with mestizo military commanders, teachers, or other representatives of the state, and regarded the government schools in their communities with suspicion, or even downright hostility. Schools established in Tuxpan had never managed to attract more than a few pupils, while, despite the support of Santa Catarina's caciques for the government, the community's school was closed in April 1935, 'en virtud de la resistencia tenaz que los huicholes oponen a la obra cultural del Gobierno Nacional.'¹⁴⁴⁴ What is more, the risks associated with actively supporting the government were high, as Federal arms were few and the dispersed rancherías in which the majority of the population lived were easy targets for Cristero raids. Most people therefore preferred to claim neutrality in the new conflict.

The leaders of San Andrés similarly opted for neutrality, as did the majority of the community's inhabitants (just as they had during the first Cristiada). Few in San Andrés seem to have possessed sufficiently strong practical or ideological links to either the state or the rebels to declare for one or the other, while the community's territorial conflicts both involved the Cristero strongholds of San Sebastián, Tenzompa and San Juan Capistrano, and pro-government Santa Catarina, San Juan

¹⁴⁴³ AHSEP-78-79/C/38280/E/7, DEFJ to Samuel Pérez, 20 Apr. 1935

¹⁴⁴⁴ AHSEP-78-79/C/38268/E/18, DEFJ to Samuel Pérez, 4 Apr. 1935

Peyotán and Huajimic.¹⁴⁴⁵ San Andrés' leaders no doubt feared that a tacit alliance with one side would justify raiding by the other, further weakening their grip on their threatened landholdings.

The professed neutrality of the Huichol 'pacíficos' did nothing to guarantee their safety, and they were raided by Cristero rebels, Federal troops and Huichol, Cora and mestizo Defensa forces. Some were forced to take up arms themselves, while many more fled to the remote recesses of the Sierra Huichola, or joined the Huichols established in Nayarit since the revolution, a population described as 'viv[iendo] errantes, sin asiento fijo ni población defenida... no son queridos por los coras y esta animadversión hace que las razas no se mezclen.'¹⁴⁴⁶ Many of these Huichols eventually settled permanently in Nayarit, in such numbers that they fundamentally altered the state's ethnic composition.

The few documentary sources that deal with the initial conflict between pro-government forces and rebels in the Sierra Huichola, taken together with the stories still told by Huichol elders, make it clear that the region was quickly devastated by the violence of 'la Segunda.' By the time that President Cárdenas ordered Jalisco's state government to put a stop to the Mezquitic Defensa's attacks on San Sebastián,¹⁴⁴⁷ rebel forces under Bautista and Sánchez had succeeded in killing Griseldo Salazar. His replacement as Jefe de Defensa in Mezquitic complained that due to a shortage of

¹⁴⁴⁵ AGN-LC/C/567/E/503.11/259/San Andrés, Reps. to Dept. Agrario, 24 Nov. 1937; 25 Nov. 1938

¹⁴⁴⁶ AHSEP-84-85/C/38877/E/31, Durán Cárdenas to DEFN, 5 Aug. 1933

¹⁴⁴⁷ AGN-LC/E559.1/67, Sec. Gob. to Gob.Jal., 3 June 1935

men it was impossible to combat the rebels effectively, and asked that Federal reinforcements be sent to the region to allow his forces to take care of the harvest.¹⁴⁴⁸

Despite his victories, Bautista failed to rally San Sebastián as a whole to his cause. In July 1935 he requested Guadalupe Pedroza and his men, then occupying nearby Tenzompa, to come to San Sebastián to help him persuade local people to join the rebel forces.¹⁴⁴⁹ But even Pedroza's visit failed to inspire a mass Cristero uprising in San Sebastián, and he was unable even to 'presizar el número de gente con que cuenta por no haberse podido reunir todos, a causa de que viven aislados unos de otros y sus trabajos no les permitian ir tan pronto como los llamaban, no siendo suficientes 3 días para que se reunieran y no pudiendo yo permanecer más.'¹⁴⁵⁰

In September Mezquitic's Defensa, together with the municipal president and Federal troops under Zacatecas zone commander and revolutionary veteran Pánfilo Natera,¹⁴⁵¹ occupied San Sebastián, spending ten days 'en busca de los bandoleros y hac[iendo] demás investigaciones sobre el particular, sabiéndose que la mayor parte del tiempo la pasa el cabecilla José Sánchez y sus hombres en este pueblo.'¹⁴⁵² Mezquitic's municipal president added that San Sebastián

'siempre se ha distinguido por su desobediencia a todo orden de Gobierno ya que no respetan ninguna y en cualquier movimiento revolucionario que hay contra el Gobierno Constituido, son los primeros en secundarlo; por lo que para atraerlos a la civilización se necesita establecer cuando menos dos internados en los pueblos indígenas, con fuerzas federales permanentes que impusieran respeto...'¹⁴⁵³

¹⁴⁴⁸ AGN-LC/E/555/21, Aurelio Muñoz Vargas to Pres., 16 June 1935

¹⁴⁴⁹ AAAR/C/12/E/51/Doc/5994, Guadalupe Pedroza to GN, 18 July 1935

¹⁴⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵¹ A. Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, i, pp.220-1

¹⁴⁵² AHSEP-78-79/C/38281/E/5, PM.Mezquitic to Gob.Jal., 12 Sept. 1935

¹⁴⁵³ *ibid.*

The occupation did little to curb rebel attacks in the Sierra Huichola, which in early October prompted Santa Catarina's Defensa commanders, Agustín Carrillo Ávila and Pascual Ávila, to petition President Cárdenas for help, as they were 'escasos de recursos' and in need of 'su protección.'¹⁴⁵⁴ Support arrived a few weeks later in the form of General Salinas and a Federal regiment, who occupied Tenzompa and, according to 'Segundero' reports, 'saquearon la capilla llevándose un caliz y los mejores ornamentos y la alfombra. Las vestiduras de la venerada imagen 'Señor de Tensompa' las utilizaron en cosas inmundas.' Although Salinas set out on a campaign in the Sierra Huichola, his troops did little more than raid the region's rancherías, 'diciéndose rebeldes y robando cuanto estuvo a su alcance.'¹⁴⁵⁵

Despite widespread violence, the SEP was anxious to continue with its civilising mission in the region. Since it was impossible to establish schools in the devastated communal cabeceras, plans were made to set up an Internado for Huichol children in Bolaños, where José Guzmán's forces would provide 'garantías.' Once again, the SEP hoped to congregate the dispersed Huichol population around the school in order to better 'atraerlos a la cultura,' while its staff would 'pondrá especial atención en el aprovechamiento de las materias primas propias de la región... tomando en cuenta que siendo los indios huicholes especialmente cazadores, podrá contarse con los elementos necesarios para la fabricación de calzado.'¹⁴⁵⁶

¹⁴⁵⁴ AGN-LC/C/611/E/524/60, Agustín Carrillo Ávila, Pascual Ávila, to Pres., 1 Oct. 1935

¹⁴⁵⁵ AAAR/C/12/E/45/Doc/5627, 'Boletín de Zacatecas,' c.14 Oct. 1935

¹⁴⁵⁶ AHSEP-78-79/C/38286/E/5, clipping from 'Las Noticias,' 18 Sept. 1935

Bautista and Sánchez responded by attacking the teachers (and their Defensa escorts) sent to the Sierra to recruit Huichol children for the school.¹⁴⁵⁷ Despite this, the Internado opened its doors in late 1936, although it was soon moved from Bolaños to Mezquitic after the intervention of Mezquitic's municipal president, who sought to reinforce his claim to political authority over the Huichol communities, and by extension increase the influence of Mezquitic's mestizo elite over the Huichol population, 'para que los indígenas no pusieran obstáculos para la obra meritoria que se pretende implantar en provecho de propios y extraños.'¹⁴⁵⁸ That the Huichols themselves were less than enthusiastic about sending their children to the Internado is evident from the request of the school's director that Federal troops be sent to 'visitar los pueblos indígenas a fin de convencerlos para que presten contingente de alumnos para ese centro.'¹⁴⁵⁹

The violence that prevailed in the region obstructed further Federal activity in the Sierra Huichola. An agronomist was sent to Tuxpan in early 1936 to address the community's agrarian claims, but 'dadas las inseguridades con que se encontró en la región, asolada por aquellos días por grupos cristeros jefaturados por el cura Montoya y un nativo de San Sebastián llamado José Sánchez, [el ingeniero] no pudo emprender trabajos de campo con la corección requerida.'¹⁴⁶⁰ Land surveying near San Andrés and San Sebastián was similarly postponed due to the violence and non-cooperation of the population,¹⁴⁶¹ and Jalisco's director of Federal education also turned down the

¹⁴⁵⁷ AHSEP-78-79/C/38281/E/5, G. Ceja Torres to DEFJ, 15 Nov. 1935

¹⁴⁵⁸ AHJ-G-9-935/C/11183/E/53, Eliseo Robles to Gob.Jal, 28 Aug. 1935

¹⁴⁵⁹ AGN-LC/C/967/E/559.1/23, Ávila Vázquez to Pres., 29 Oct. 1935

¹⁴⁶⁰ AGA-D/276.1/137/leg.1/SRA/RTBC/Tuxpan, Ing. Llamas Quezada, 'Informe,' 15 Nov. 1944

¹⁴⁶¹ AGA-D/24/1680/leg.2/CCA/Restitución/San Sebastián, Ing. Balderas, 'Informe,' 7 Nov. 1936

requests of Francisco Montoya (a Huichol educated at the Casa del Estudiante Indígena), for schools to be established in Santa Catarina and San Andrés.¹⁴⁶² The Internado in Mezquitic was also affected by Cristero raids in February 1937, when near Santa Catarina

‘el rebelde Vidal quien acabada de ser indulto por el Gral. Manuel Ballesteros, asesinó a los indígenas Domingo Carrillo y Pablo Cosio, que conducían a sus niños para el Internado... habiéndoseles escapado Luis Carrillo y Pascual Pineda, quienes a la presente se encuentran huyendo por temor a correr a misma suerte que sus compañeros.’

The author of this report, a pro-government Huichol fighter-turned-teacher from Santa Catarina,¹⁴⁶³ dramatically added that ‘Los de mi raza, señor Presidente, son también mexicanos o mejor dicho son los verdaderos mexicanos, y su sangre reclama venganza. Hago usted algo por ellos y si mi vida en algo puede servir, gustoso la daré por el bienestar de los míos.’¹⁴⁶⁴

But the apparent failure of Santa Catarina’s Defensa to protect the community caused more disillusionment than thirst for vengeance. In December 1937 many inhabitants of the community’s outlying rancherías asked the President to send to the area ‘un destacamento que nos dé garantías, que no nos explote al igual de los alzados en armas, que ya nos acaban, éstos matan pacíficos, se roban nuestras vacas...’ They added that by accepting Federal arms themselves, the members of Santa Catarina’s Defensa

‘solo nos han comprometido... pues cuando estos vienen, gastan mucho lujo

¹⁴⁶² AHSEP-78-79/C/38260/E/5, Montoya to DEFJ, 2 Oct. 1936; Montoya to Pres., 2 Oct. 1936

¹⁴⁶³ AGN-LC/C/760, JOM Zac. to Gob.Jal., 19 Feb. 1936

¹⁴⁶⁴ AGN-LC/C/760, Antonio López Mendoza, 19 Feb. 1937

de fuerza y parque escandalizando mucho, y a los tiros ocurren los alzados o rebeldes a quebrantar con los pacíficos vecinos. Todos tenemos voluntad de servir al Gobierno, pero para tomar armas necesitamos que haya un destacamiento en nuestros pueblos y que las tomen la mayor parte de los vecinos, en esta forma, las tomaríamos...'¹⁴⁶⁵

The continued rebel activity in the Sierra Huichola also prompted the governor of Zacatecas, Félix Bañuelos, to echo previous proposals of SEP officials and ask Cárdenas to authorise the foundation of military colonies, in order to 'fomentar la ganadería en provecho de los colonos y... conseguir la completa pacificación de la zona litorfe de los Estados de Jalisco y Zacatecas.'¹⁴⁶⁶ In his reply, Cárdenas noted that 'el aumento de la ganadería y el fomento de la agricultura redundan siempre en beneficio de la región de que se trate y del país en general,' and agreed that military veterans would be a 'civilising' presence amongst the Huichols. But he turned the plan down as not yet sufficiently developed.¹⁴⁶⁷

By early 1938 the Internado in Mezquital had closed, due to ongoing regional violence and the opposition of Huichol parents to enrolling their children, particularly since the building was in terrible condition and a child had recently died there.¹⁴⁶⁸ In the eyes of pro-government Huichol leaders, the Internado's failure compounded the lasting problems caused by 'profesorado inepto e incomprensivo acerca de esos pobres que la inmensa mayoría no entiende.' They regarded the other representatives of the state sent to the region, such as the agronomists charged with bringing Huichol land claims to fruition, as having similarly failed in their duties, as '[ellos] nunca llegan al centro de la region, conformándose muchas veces con informes más o menos

¹⁴⁶⁵ AGN-LC/C/967/E/559.1/23, Montoya to Pres., 13 Dec. 1937

¹⁴⁶⁶ AGN-LC/C/567/E/503.11/259, Bañuelos to Pres., N.D. [mid-1937]

¹⁴⁶⁷ AGN-LC/C/567/E/503.11/259, Pres. to Bañuelos, 5 July 1937

¹⁴⁶⁸ cf. A. S. Dawson, *Indian and Nation...* p.48

fidedignos en los poblados circunvecinos habitados por mestizos sobre el estado que guardan “los indios.”” And while the rebels active in the region now numbered only ‘cuarenta a cincuenta hombres... es problema bastante pesado, máxime cuando han sucumbido... más de medio centenar de hombres indígenas; unos por ser adictos al gobierno y otros por considerárseles enemigos.’¹⁴⁶⁹

Cárdenas did not launch the ‘plan sin cuartel para el más pronto exterminio de esos alzados’ that his Huichol supporters begged him to. Nevertheless, the violence in the region began to subside by late 1938. Federal victories in other parts of Jalisco, as well as in Durango and Zacatecas, put increasing pressure on the Huichol rebels, while the Cora Defensas of Nayarit under Mayor Meza began to penetrate deep into the Sierra Huichola in search of Bautista and his dwindling forces.¹⁴⁷⁰ Meza also recruited Huichol refugees living in Nayarit into his forces, and surprised Bautista in Santa Catarina, although his men managed only to ‘tumbarle [su] sombrero debido a que su “caballo güero era veloz como un chuparrosa.”’¹⁴⁷¹

The increasing rapprochement between Church and State compounded ‘Segundero’ military defeats. Cárdenas had signalled his willingness to compromise with the Church in early 1936,¹⁴⁷² and by 1938 ‘the official thaw was evident everywhere.’¹⁴⁷³ In return for the relaxing of restrictions on the numbers of priests and their activities,¹⁴⁷⁴ the clergy renewed their condemnation of the ‘Segunderos,’ which caused civilian support for the rebels to dry up, together with supplies of weapons,

¹⁴⁶⁹ AGN-LC/C/567/E/503.11/259, Mijares Cossío to Pres., 26 July 1938

¹⁴⁷⁰ Salvador Sánchez; Rosalio Salvador Carrillo; Ramón Gamboa

¹⁴⁷¹ V. M. Téllez Lozano, ‘Lozadistas, revolucionarios y cristeros...’ p.239

¹⁴⁷² B. T. Smith, *The Roots...* p.247

¹⁴⁷³ D. C. Bailey, *Viva Cristo Rey...* p.297

¹⁴⁷⁴ B. T. Smith, *The Roots...* pp.247-9

ammunition, foodstuffs and new recruits.¹⁴⁷⁵ By late 1938 Pepe Sánchez had abandoned the ‘Segundero’ cause and retired to Guadalajara. According to oral sources, ‘no se cumplió aquello del “...que a hierro mata, a hierro muere.” No. Este Pepe Sánchez murió en su petate, vivito y coleando.’¹⁴⁷⁶ The oral and documentary evidence suggests that Sánchez’s old ally, Juan Bautista, was killed around this time. Although both Weigand and Meyer roughly date Bautista’s death to 1935,¹⁴⁷⁷ the last mention of Bautista in the documentary record concerns a raid carried in 1938, when he led an attack on Guadalupe Ocotán, ‘matando a 4 de nuestros hermanos de raza y robándonos en su totalidad el ganado vacuno.’¹⁴⁷⁸ Oral accounts of his death, which conclude the cycle of ‘la revolución’ as remembered in Tuxpan and San Sebastián, state that Bautista was killed by Tuxpan’s Defensa, who surprised him as he celebrated a ritual marking the end of the harvest in October or November.¹⁴⁷⁹

In late 1938, a year after announcing the redistribution of lands in the Yaqui Valley,¹⁴⁸⁰ President Cárdenas ordered the Departamento Agrario to fix the boundaries of all of Jalisco’s Huichol communities, which, it was hoped, would bring a definitive end to the territorial conflicts that had long wracked the region.¹⁴⁸¹ The news was optimistically received in Tuxpan, Santa Catarina and San Andrés. A representative of the latter explained to the Departamento Agrario that:

‘Antes no intentamos hacer reclamación alguna, porque comprendíamos que no se nos haría justicia, pero ahora que el Gobierno del Señor Gral. Cárdenas

¹⁴⁷⁵ AAAR/C/12/E/49/Doc/5891, Hector Martínez to GN, 19 Sept. 1938

¹⁴⁷⁶ E. Vela del Real, ‘Nuestra Tierra...’ in *Mi Pueblo*, Mar. 1996, p.13

¹⁴⁷⁷ P. C. Weigand, ‘Role of the Huichol...’ p. 171; J. Meyer, ‘La revolución en occidente...’ p.263

¹⁴⁷⁸ AGN-LC/C/567/E/503.11/259, Cristóbal Rodríguez et al., to Pres., 7 Apr. 1939

¹⁴⁷⁹ Salvador Sánchez; Raul Vázquez; Jesús Mercado González

¹⁴⁸⁰ A. Bantjes, *As if Jesus...* pp.134-7

¹⁴⁸¹ AGN-LC/C/567/E/503.11/259, Pres. to Dept. Agrario, 14 Sept. 1938

se ha preocupado por liberar a las tribus indígenas de la República, nos hemos dirigido a usted para hacerle presente esta súplica, esperando sea muy servido de atenderla, para que se nos devuelvan esos terrenos a que hacemos mención.¹⁴⁸²

But rather than mark out the Huichol communal territories in line with their colonial land titles, agronomists sent to the region instead concluded that ‘el deslinde no vendría a resolver los problemas de los indios, ya que estos no son de tierra, sino económicos, racial y de ambiente,’ and reiterated the earlier proposals of SEP officials and Governor Bañuelos of Zacatecas that, in order to ‘mejorar los aspectos fatales señalados anteriormente... deberían provocarse corrientes migratorias en ambos sentidos, es decir, hacer una colonización en terrenos huicholes y atraer grandes grupos de estos a los centros de mayor población.’ The Departamento Agrario thus decided to split the Sierra Huichola into three zones: in the first, ‘los colonos ensañaran a los indios a sembrar, haciéndoles notar las ventajas que para ellos reportaría la agricultura,’ while in the second, the settlers would teach the Huichols modern logging techniques, and in the third, to raise cattle.¹⁴⁸³

The loyalty of Santa Catarina’s leaders to the state was then insulted by a presidential resolution that awarded the community title to a paltry 15,837 hectares of land.¹⁴⁸⁴

This was around one fifth of what it would eventually receive, two decades later, in a second presidential resolution.¹⁴⁸⁵ The redistribution of ex-hacienda lands near

¹⁴⁸² AGA-D/23/242/leg.1/CCA/Dotación/San Andrés, Juan Antonio Carrillo to Dept. Agrario, 25 Nov.1938

¹⁴⁸³ AGA-D/276.1/36/leg.1/CCA/RTBC/Tuxpan, Alonso Guerrero Z. to Jefe del Dept., 13 Apr. 1940

¹⁴⁸⁴ AGA-D/276.1/98/leg.11/SRA/Trabajos Tecnicos Informativos/Sta. Catarina, Res. Pres., 17 July 1940

¹⁴⁸⁵ AGA-D/276.1/98/leg.11/SRA/Trabajos Tecnicos Informativos/Sta. Catarina, Res. Pres., 9 Aug 1960: Adolfo Lopez Mateos approved 76,720 hectares, which is still regarded by the community as far smaller than the territory outlined in its colonial-era title

Camotlán, in Nayarit, also threatened Tuxpan, whose authorities ‘temen que la repartición se extienda hasta sus terrenos... como los vecinos de la citada hacienda siempre lo han tenido interés a las tierras de su comunidad.’¹⁴⁸⁶ A dispute then arose between Jalisco and Nayarit, which both claimed jurisdiction over Camotlán.¹⁴⁸⁷ This stoked fears in Tuxpan that lands they had long claimed as their own would be transferred to Nayarit, which would fragment their communal territory and put it at the mercy of Huajimic’s caciques, whose encroachments on Tuxpan’s territory enjoyed the support of Nayarit’s state government.

The situation was still worse in San Sebastián, which was invaded *en masse* by the mestizo cattlemen of Huajimic and Mezquitic, ‘which indeed nearly ended Huichol control over San Sebastián.’¹⁴⁸⁸ Meanwhile the conflict had left the cabeceras of both San Andrés and its anexo Guadalupe Ocotán ‘muy destrozados [y] los juzgados ya cayendose,’ and its much of its population in exile in Nayarit and Durango. The community’s authorities complained that these refugees

‘Illa no quieren venirse as sus pueblos aunque les agamos cita no quisen. Bemos a las demas tribus como a los Coras y Tepeguanes, que siempre viven en sus terrenos y se ve que están en mejoras que nosotros. Por que; por que no an dejado sus terenos que el Supremo Gobierno les dio así como a nosotros ya sabemos.’¹⁴⁸⁹

The community’s lands had also been dismembered by the caciques of Huajimic, who had taken control of Guadalupe Ocotán on behalf of Nayarit’s state government.¹⁴⁹⁰

San Andrés regarded this annexation as an existential threat, and protested that

¹⁴⁸⁶ AGN-LC/C/611/E/524/60, PM.Bolaños to Pres., 24 Nov. 1938

¹⁴⁸⁷ AGN-DGIPS/C/109/E/18, ‘Informe: Puente de Camotlán,’ 3 Nov. 1938

¹⁴⁸⁸ P. C. Weigand, ‘Differential Acculturation...’ p.14

¹⁴⁸⁹ AGN-LC/C/567/E/503.11/259, José María de la Cruz to Pres., 18 Mar. 1939

¹⁴⁹⁰ V. M. Téllez Lozano, ‘Lozadistas, revolucionarios y cristeros...’ p.239

Guadalupe Ocotán's lands were within Jalisco's state boundaries. They begged the president to order

‘el deslinde de nuestros terrenos comunales, conforme al título de propiedad comunal que obra en nuestro poder, toda vez que elementos mestizos, entre los que se encuentra el actual Presidente Municipal de La Yesca, nos han despojado de una parte de nuestros terrenos.’

However, lacking the funds to pursue such a complex legal case without the Federal government's support,¹⁴⁹¹ Guadalupe Ocotán remained, *de facto*, within Nayarit, its inhabitants adding to the numbers of Huichols now living permanently in that state.

Much of this Huichol population was in hiding in the mountains near Huaynamota.¹⁴⁹² Nayarit state governor Juventino Espinosa lent his official support to the SEP's attempts to permanently settle these Huichol refugees,¹⁴⁹³ whom SEP officials regarded as ‘como menores de edad necesitados de tutela para entrar a la vida social y poder ser tenidos en cuenta como ciudadanos.’¹⁴⁹⁴ Today, Huichol colonies at Huaynamota and Zoquipan, and other Huichol ejidos (rather than traditional ‘communities’) further to the south and west, have their roots in the SEP-administered resettlement plans formulated in the late 1930s.

Meanwhile, those who had remained in, or returned to, their home communities, whether they had fought as Cristeros or as members of pro-government Defensas, or had waited out the conflict in the caves and canyons of the Sierra, saw the new threats to their landholdings created by the acceleration of state-managed agrarian reform as

¹⁴⁹¹ AGA-D/23/242/leg.1/CCA/Dotación/San Andrés, Juan Antonio Carrillo to Dept. Agrario, 14 Oct. 1939

¹⁴⁹² AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/19, Felipe Madera to DEFN, 12 Mar. 1938

¹⁴⁹³ AHSEP-84-85/C/38861/E/19, Espinosa to DEFN, 18 Mar. 1938

¹⁴⁹⁴ AHSEP-84-85/CC/38887/E/3, Madera, ‘Informe,’ 24 Jan. 1940

irrefutable evidence of the determination of local mestizos and the Departamento Agrario to destroy their communities. This perception prompted a change in tactics on the part of many formerly pro-government leaders, who became increasingly combative in their dealings with the SEP, the Departamento Agrario, and other state agencies.¹⁴⁹⁵ Popular discontent with both these caciques and the state also led to the emergence of a new generation of leaders who, like many of those that had emerged during the Revolution, were able to serve as bridges between their communities and the emergent *priista* regime.¹⁴⁹⁶ Some would continue to see cooperation and negotiation with the state as the best way to protect their communities (and increase their own influence); but others borrowed from the militant tactics of the revolutionary leaders, and from official discourses of ‘patriotism,’ in order to protect what they saw as their own, Huichol patrimony in the cultural, political and territorial autonomy of their communities, obstructing the government’s continued efforts to incorporate them into the nation-state.

Durango: the Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros

In the Sierra Tepehuana, Trinidad Mora attempted to legitimise his uprising, primarily launched for motives of self-preservation, by linking it ideologically to similar ‘Segundero’ uprisings that had broken out across the country.¹⁴⁹⁷ Despite facing the explicit condemnation of most of the Church hierarchy,¹⁴⁹⁸ he vowed to defend the

¹⁴⁹⁵ AGA-D/276.1/36/leg.1/CCA/RTBC/San Sebastián, Reps. to Dept. Agrario, 21 Feb. 1944

¹⁴⁹⁶ see Weigand, ‘El papel de los indios huicholes...’; J. J. Torres Contreras, *Relaciones de frontera...* F. Benítez, *Los indios...* ii

¹⁴⁹⁷ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, pp.73-6; J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* p.132

¹⁴⁹⁸ AAAR/C/12/E/46/Doc/5662, Bishop of Zacatecas to Catholics, 31 May 1932

Church against the renewed anti-clericalism of the state,¹⁴⁹⁹ and also declared that he and his men had risen against the ‘educación socialista’ that threatened the nation’s children.¹⁵⁰⁰ Unsurprisingly, despite the previously close connection between Estrada, Sifuentes and the government Internado in Santa María Ocotán, the first action of Durango’s ‘Segunderos,’ on 20 November, was an attack on this school, which Mora now described as ‘un internado de niños y jóvenes que tenía el gobierno para echarles a la perdición.’¹⁵⁰¹ After levelling the building,¹⁵⁰² the rebels kidnapped Héctor Méndez, agriculture teacher at the school and the son of Ramón Méndez, head of Durango’s Federal Education department, ‘amenazándosele de muerte para “escarmiento de los maestros por la Enseñanza Socialista,” y con imposición de fuerte rescate a cambio de su vida.’¹⁵⁰³ The rebels, together with their fighters and families, then headed off into the Sierra Tepehuana to recruit and organise.

Of the four peoples of the Gran Nayar, the Tepehuanos seem to have been the most receptive to the ‘Segunederero’ recruitment drive. Much of the population of Yonora appear to have pledged allegiance to Trinidad Mora in early November,¹⁵⁰⁴ led by Macario and Ireneo Váldez, veterans of the first Cristiada who had also served as members of Yonora’s Defensa under Dámaso Barraza during the Revolution.¹⁵⁰⁵ Similarly, the faction led by the Soto clan and its allies in Santa María Ocotán supported the rebellion from its beginning, as did others who felt threatened by the state government’s involvement in the recent ‘despojo’ of the ‘Predio de la Montaña,’

¹⁴⁹⁹ AAAR/C/12/E/44/Doc/5562, ‘Acta levantada en Cerrito Gordo,’ 22 Nov. 1934

¹⁵⁰⁰ AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5775, Mora to GN, N.D. [c. Dec. 1934]

¹⁵⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰² Trinidad Morales Rodríguez; Arturo Soto Reyes

¹⁵⁰³ AHSEP-68-69/C/37438 E/14, Prof. Filemon Alvarado to DERICI, 9 Jan 1935

¹⁵⁰⁴ AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5775, Mora to GN, ND [c. Dec. 1934]

¹⁵⁰⁵ AHED-M/C/3/E/151, ‘Cuerpo Rural de Barraza,’ 6 Oct. 1918; AGN-LC/C/972/E/559.4.1

which constituted a large portion of the community's territory. Local support for the rebels rose further after their destruction of the community's unpopular Internado. From their base at Cerro Gordo, the rebel leaders took on more Tepehuano (and, although we lack much hard evidence, probably Mexicanero) fighters from across the region.

Tepehuano support for the 'Segunderos' was largely generated by the same motives that had earlier led many to join the Cristeros, as well as by personal connections forged with rebel leaders during the earlier conflict. For example, although Mora presented his destruction of the Internado as a 'Catholic' attack on socialist education, Soto declared that the attack had been in defense of *costumbre*, which was welcomed by many in Santa María.¹⁵⁰⁶ In the other communities of the region, support for the rebels reflected similar fears over mestizo land-grabs and threats to *costumbre*, conflicts arising from the inter-linked phenomenons of *caciquismo* and factionalism, forced recruitment by the Cristeros, and the opportunities for winning revenge and booty that participation in the new uprising presented.

However, contemporary documentary sources and more recent oral accounts suggest that local support for the rebels was significantly less than that accorded to the original Cristeros. Just as in the rest of the Gran Nayar, the inhabitants of the Sierra Tepehuana had lived through thirty years of conflict. They were tired of fighting, and wanted a return to their old lives as agriculturalists, upon which depended, according to *costumbre*, the health of individuals, the well-being of the community, and indeed

¹⁵⁰⁶ Trinidad Morales Rodríguez; Arturo Soto Reyes

the continued existence of the world.¹⁵⁰⁷ Furthermore, many Tepehuano communities now harboured influential pro-government factions. In April 1934, for example, the amnestied Zacatecan Cristero leader Francisco Sánchez – who retired to the ‘safety’ of Taxicoringa after ‘los arreglos’ – was killed, along with ‘su esposa, su hermana y sus padres,’ by ‘los propios vecinos que antes dieron servicio al Movimiento Cristero y luego estuvieron al mando del Callismo.’¹⁵⁰⁸ In Xoconoxtle, both the traditional authorities and Defensa were dominated by the pro-government Flores and Aguilar families,¹⁵⁰⁹ while in Santa María, a close relative of pro-government cacique Sixto Mendía was elected traditional governor for 1935.¹⁵¹⁰ Even Santa María’s ex-Cristero faction did not join the ‘Segundero’ rebels *en masse*, and Juan Andrés Soto’s former lieutenant José María Gurrola was recommended to the local military authorities by Governor Real in April 1935, for having ‘cooperado con esta Administración en la batida de cristeros que se ha llevado a cabo en el Estado.’¹⁵¹¹ In Teneraca, too, pro-government Defensa leader Simón Enríquez replaced former Cristero leader José Gallardo Aguilar as governor in 1935, suggesting that a pro-government faction now dominated the community’s Consejo de Ancianos.¹⁵¹²

The ‘Segunderos’ still posed a serious threat to the success of the incipient revolutionary project in the Sierra. Despite the availability of aeroplanes, which had been used against the Yaqui in 1927¹⁵¹³ and the Escobaristas in 1929,¹⁵¹⁴ Federal

¹⁵⁰⁷ A. Reyes Valdez, ‘The Perpetual Return...’ p.26

¹⁵⁰⁸ ‘Francisco Sánchez...’ in *David*, 22 Aug. 1956, p.16

¹⁵⁰⁹ AHED-M/C/13/E/6, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 1 Jan. 1935

¹⁵¹⁰ AHED-M/C/13/E/6, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 25 Jan 1935

¹⁵¹¹ AHED-M/C/13/E/119, Gob.Dgo. to José María Gurrola, 29 Apr. 1935

¹⁵¹² AHED-M/C/13/E/6, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 19 Jan. 1935

¹⁵¹³ T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* p.25; J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* 311-2

¹⁵¹⁴ J. Meyer, *La cristiada*, i, p.157; J. W. F. Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico...* p.454

forces initially failed to penetrate the western Sierra Tepehuana, due to ‘la topografía del terreno, formado por una sucesión de grandes mazisos que vienen ciendo las estribaciones de “Cerro Gordo”... elevándose grandes montañas de donde se desprenden profundos barrancos... [y] cubierto de monte maderero por lo que en ciertos lugares no es visible a la aviación.’¹⁵¹⁵ Untroubled by Federal attacks, the rebels leaders recruited and organised a force of more than two hundred men,¹⁵¹⁶ while their families, hiding out nearby, could also ‘ocultan sus provisiones... [en] las cuevas y barrancos... considerándose éste lugar como base de aprovisionamiento de boca.’¹⁵¹⁷ In December, the one Federal column that finally ventured into the Sierra was ambushed near Cerro Gordo by Federico Vázquez.¹⁵¹⁸ According to rather over-enthusiastic rebel sources, the column lost its commander and some four hundred men.¹⁵¹⁹ After this defeat the region’s Federal forces instead concentrated on ‘trayendo todo el ganado y maíz... que se encuentran en la región de Bayacora,’ near the city of Durango.¹⁵²⁰ In January 1935 Saturnino Cedillo warned President Cárdenas that

‘el actual Comandante de Zona, General Anacleto López... llevó mala táctica en la campaña cristera en 1929, pues lejos de tener contentos a los pueblos, hizo cristeros también a una gran parte de ganado. Esto es doloroso decirlo, pero es necesario y yo creo que si se dejara más tiempo, en estos momentos de descontento, al General López, se corre el riesgo de que continúen los brotes rebeldes en dicho Estado.’

While to begin with Federal forces did little to combat the ‘Segunderos,’ the pro-government Tepehuano Defensas tried desperately to resist their old enemies. In

¹⁵¹⁵ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Gral. Cortés Ortiz to Pres., 20 Mar. 1935

¹⁵¹⁶ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Unknown to Pres., ND 1935

¹⁵¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹⁸ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* pp.305-306

¹⁵¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵²⁰ *ibid.*

February, Cosme Solís and one hundred men from the Defensas of Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle dispersed fifty rebels near Porfirio Mayorquín's old stronghold of Jacalitos.¹⁵²¹ A week later Trinidad Mora, Federico Vázquez and Macario and Ireneo Valdez led around three hundred rebels in an attack on Mezquital, killing new municipal president Félix Vázquez,¹⁵²² together with a Federal officer and various members of the local Defensa.¹⁵²³ Fierce fighting continued throughout March, during which two hundred rebels were pushed back from Mezquital towards Santa María Ocotán.¹⁵²⁴

By now much of the population of the Sierra Tepehuana had fled their homes to avoid the renewed fighting. Federal military commanders regarded this as evidence of their collaboration with the rebels. In March 1935, Brigadier General José Cortés Ortiz reported to the president that in Valente Acevedo's stronghold of Llano Grande, 'en la actualidad no existe una sola casa, pues las familias que existieron se encuentran con los rebeldes viviendo por las barrancas,' and he accused the inhabitants of nearby San Bernadino of 'haciendo causa común con el bandolerismo,' by fleeing to '[las] cuevas y barrancas.' He added that Teneraca, '[el] único poblado de casas bien construidas en la basta extención por donde merodea el enemigo... está totalmente quemado, [y] los moradores de éste lugar habitan por barrancas y cuevas.' Similarly, in Taxicoringa, 'fueron quemados varios jacales por una columna federal destacada por esta Zona Militar,' while San Francisco de Lajas was 'completamente deshabitada.'¹⁵²⁵ While

¹⁵²¹ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Cortés Ortiz to Pres., 4 Mar. 1935

¹⁵²² AHED-M/C/12/E/88, Angél Guzmán to Gob.Dgo., 30 Apr. 1934

¹⁵²³ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Gral. Diaz González to Pres., 3 Mar. 1935

¹⁵²⁴ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Gral. Matías Ramos to Pres., 26 Mar. 1935

¹⁵²⁵ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Cortés Ortiz to Pres., 20 Mar. 1935

the armed bands of the region ‘mataban vacas y chivas para comer carne y tenían suficiente agua,’ the Tepehuano refugees faced great hardship,

‘sufriendo mucha hambre, sed, frío y calor, ellos sólo comían piel de animal cruda, raíces de algunas plantas, así como limones silvestres, panales y kiote de maguey crudo. A veces ponían lumbre a las doce o una de la tarde, para comer algo para sobrevivir, porque en esas horas no hace tanto humo, porque si la gente mala veía el humo, de inmediato se dirigiría a dicho lugar para matar a las personas.’¹⁵²⁶

As violence ravaged the region, and Federal losses began to mount (to say nothing of rebel, Defensa, and civilian casualties), the military shifted its strategy, and attempts were made to negotiate the surrender of the rebel leaders. Saturnino Cedillo’s complaints about General López may have encouraged this shift. Cedillo had asked the president to replace López with Mariano Arrieta, who had served under Cedillo in San Luis Potosí, and who, Cedillo assured Cárdenas, would ‘hacer magnífica labor en Durango.’¹⁵²⁷ Cárdenas was not yet secure enough in his position to replace López (a close ally of Calles who from his base in Durango was building up a ‘brass cacicazgo’¹⁵²⁸ in neighbouring Zacatecas),¹⁵²⁹ but did authorise Arrieta to travel to Durango. There, both he and López made offers of amnesty to the ‘Segunderos.’ Mora, however, replied to Arrieta that

‘es doloroso que personas como usted se presten en alguna forma a obedecer órdenes del tirano. Seguramente está usted enterado... que mi actitud no se debe, en ninguna manera, a ambiciones de poder o medro personal, sino que, ciudadano consciente de mis derechos, al ver estos conculcados en la forma más soez, por un grupo constituido en gobierno, por la fuerza de las bayonetas, la simple dignidad humana, me he visto precisado a defender también, con la misma fuerza, aquello que los tiranos tratar de arrebatár.’

¹⁵²⁶ E. U. Cervantes Cervantes, ‘Una escalofriante matanza...’ pp.20-21

¹⁵²⁷ AGN-LC/C/958/E/556.4/219, Cedillo to Pres., 13 Jan. 1935

¹⁵²⁸ B. Fallaw, Terry Rugeley, ‘Redrafting History...’ p.15

¹⁵²⁹ T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* p.103

Mora went on to condemn Calles and Cárdenas for ‘derrumbando los templos en los que alabo a Dios, o convirtiéndolos en cabaret prostíbulos,’ and for introducing ‘la educación socialista,’ and he invited Arrieta to join ‘a nuestra causa juntamente con todos aquellos hombres que tengan siquiera un dejo de patriotismo.’¹⁵³⁰

Valente Acevedo, whom Mora had earlier described as ‘de los más omisos para unirse,’¹⁵³¹ did accept an amnesty. Although a Cristero report claimed that Acevedo’s men refused to lay down their arms and instead joined ‘a las fuerzas de Federico, retirándose Valente sólo y medio loco... en medio de la sierra,’¹⁵³² some of his group must have accompanied him, since in August General López induced Cárdenas to pay Acevedo three hundred pesos, with fifty more for ‘cada uno de sus acompañantes.’¹⁵³³ Further amnesties were granted to members of Macario Valdez’s group,¹⁵³⁴ and Federico Vázquez himself accepted a Federal amnesty in August.¹⁵³⁵

Federal offers of amnesty angered the local pro-government forces. The authorities in Mezquital complained that the inhabitants of Yonora – their enemies since the era of Barraza – had committed many murders, and asked that if an amnesty were granted them, they be made to settle outside the state. They further urged that Yonora’s communal lands be given to their own Tepehuano allies in Santa María and Xoconoxtle, who ‘siempre han dado pruebas de ser adictos al Gobierno, como actualmente han demostrado con hechos combatiendo a esos trastornadores del orden

¹⁵³⁰ AAAR/C/16/E/72/Doc/9328, Mora to Arrieta, 22 Apr. 1935

¹⁵³¹ AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5775, Mora to GN, ND [c.Dec. 1935]

¹⁵³² AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5847, Unknown to GN, 18 June 1935

¹⁵³³ AGN-LC/E/120/1458, Lopez to Gral. Castro, 5 Aug. 1935; Pres. to Castro, 19 Nov. 1935

¹⁵³⁴ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.318

¹⁵³⁵ *ibid.*

y han sabido sufrir con resignación las funestas consecuencias.’¹⁵³⁶ Ultimately, the suspicions of the Defensas were substantiated, as Vázquez’s surrender turned out to be a feint; he used the 3,000 pesos that General Jesús Agustín Castro, Durango’s newly-appointed zone commander, raised in donations from the state’s ‘Cámara de Comercio,’ to buy arms and ammunition, rather than fund the peaceful return of his men to their homes.¹⁵³⁷ During the brief pause in the fighting his campesino forces were also able to tend to their harvests, after which they launched a new campaign in the Sierra Tepehuana.

Fighting between Federal troops, pro-government Defensas and the region’s Cristeros thus continued throughout late 1935,¹⁵³⁸ and in November, Vázquez repelled a joint Federal-Defensa attack on his forces near Mezquital, and reported that after a series of counter-attacks, the enemy lost 130 men, at the cost of only three members of his own forces killed, and four lightly wounded.¹⁵³⁹ Vázquez launched a further campaign into Nayarit in February, defeating Defensa forces at Picachos, La Estrella and La Providencia (near San Andrés Milpillas), and carrying away cattle, horses, goats, corn, guns, ammunition and explosives. According to – surely exaggerated – Cristero reports, two hundred of his men then returned to camps near Taxicaringa, while others, including Vázquez himself, traveled to Bayacora to await the delivery of more ammunition.¹⁵⁴⁰ Florencio Estrada meanwhile seized food and ammunition from haciendas on the Durango-Zacatecas border, after which, bolstered by new recruits

¹⁵³⁶ AGN-LC/C/972/E/559.4.1, PM.Mezquital to Pres., 30 Mar. 1935

¹⁵³⁷ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.318

¹⁵³⁸ AAAR/C/12/E/51/Doc/6007, Pedroza to GN, 9 Oct. 1935

¹⁵³⁹ AAAR/C/12/E/48/Doc/5852, R. de León to GN, 13 Nov. 1935

¹⁵⁴⁰ AAAR/C/12/E/49/Doc/5885, R. de León to GN, 9 Feb. 1936

from that area, his forces linked up with those of Trinidad Mora to attack Mezquital.¹⁵⁴¹

As in the Sierra Huichola, the Federal government did its best to consolidate its alliances with the Tepehuano communities, recognising that their support was essential if the ‘Segundero’ rebellion was to be defeated. The surveying of the communal territories of Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle – whose caciques were the most important local allies of the government – had been set to begin in June 1935. Given the threat posed by rebel groups, and the cost of sending five engineers, twenty assistants, and a fifty-man military escort to the region for five months,¹⁵⁴² the project was postponed until December, when national and local politics meshed together and Tepehuano land titles suddenly became a matter of political significance to Cárdenas.

Since May 1935, ‘Jefe Máximo’ Calles had become increasingly outspoken in his criticism of Cárdenas’ radical reforms. Fearing that Calles would try to unseat him, in late 1935 Cárdenas launched a purge of Calles’ most important political allies, including the Callista state governors of Durango, Sonora, Sinaloa and Guanajuato, paving the way for the arrest and exile of Calles himself in April 1936. In Durango, Cárdenas secured the aid of Governor Real’s old enemy Terrones Benítez, who used Real’s involvement in the sale of the disputed ‘Predio de la Montaña’ to accuse him of orchestrating ‘el despojo que sufrió el poblado de Xoconostle en sus terrenos y

¹⁵⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴² AGN-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, Gabino Vázquez, ‘Informe,’ 20 July 1935

bosques a favor de capitalistas enemigos de la revolución.’¹⁵⁴³ Cosme Solís, who journeyed to Mexico City for an audience with President Cárdenas in November, backed up Terrones Benítez’s accusations, complaining that, far from helping Santa María in its battle with the hacienda of San Juan Capistrano, Real had stolen more of the community’s territory.

‘Con el despojo de que hemos sido objeto, quedamos en la miseria, tanto los vecinos de Sta. María Ocotán, como los de Xoconoste y Llano Grande, pues no tenemos derecho a disponer de maderas para la construcción de nuestros jacales, ni mucho menos tabletas para nuestro beneficio. Desde muchos años, que nosotros venimos sosteniendo al Gobierno constituido, combatiendo a los reaccionarios y cristeros como podemos comprobarlo, con muchos Jefes de Operaciones que han estado en Durango... prestando tambien nuestro contingente para la construcción de un campo de Aterrizaje que se construyó a iniciativa del Gral. Díaz Gonzalez, en los llanos de la Guajalota.’¹⁵⁴⁴

Governor Real was removed from power by presidential decree in December 1935. General Castro immediately secured the governor’s offices and took over temporary control of the state government, and a Cardenista candidate, Enrique Calderón, was elected constitutional governor soon after.¹⁵⁴⁵

In December Cárdenas also ordered the immediate, joint ‘restitución’ of Santa María Ocotán and Xoconoxtle’s communal territories. Though each still maintained its own traditional government, the resolution fused the two communities (which had been growing progressively closer since the revolution, as a result of their caciques’ joint pursuit of agrarian claims). While the fusion of Santa María and Xoconoxtle was accepted by each community’s caciques (who immediately took control of the newly-established agrarian council that now exercised jurisdiction over both communities),

¹⁵⁴³ P. Navarro Valdez, *El cardenismo*... p.104

¹⁵⁴⁴ AGN-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, Pres. to Gob.Dgo., 3 Jan. 1936

¹⁵⁴⁵ P. Navarro Valdez, *El cardenismo*... pp.104

they launched an ‘amparo’ against the resolution as it failed to assign them the “Predio de la Montaña,¹⁵⁴⁶ and a few months later Cárdenas ordered the immediate and full return of all 421,139 hectares outlined in Gregorio Aguilar’s February 1919 agrarian petition.¹⁵⁴⁷ Cárdenas also sent his best wishes to ‘todos los vecinos del lugar, así como de los pueblos inmediatos, manifestandoles que tengo el propósito de ir a visitar esa región en los primeros meses del año entrante.’

Along with this title, Santa María also acquired a ‘radio telefónico,’¹⁵⁴⁸ a ‘campo de aterrizaje de emergencia,’¹⁵⁴⁹ and a Federal garrison.¹⁵⁵⁰ Santa María’s transformation into the most important Federal base in the Sierra spelled disaster for the region’s Cristeros. Frumencio Estrada tried to raid the community in May, but was defeated, pursued and killed by Santa María’s Defensa.¹⁵⁵¹ His brother Florencio still claimed to lead ‘muchos poblanos,’ along with 170 men on the Durango-Zacatecas border under Trini Castañon and Román Alvarez.¹⁵⁵² But on 7 June 1936, Florencio himself was ambushed and killed by a group of Federal troops and Cora and Tepehuano auxiliaries while eating lunch near San Juan Capistrano.¹⁵⁵³

In the wake of these blows, Macario and Irineo Valdez and their forty-three men accepted a government amnesty. General Agustín Castro reported that he would use these former rebels as guides, adding rather optimistically that

¹⁵⁴⁶ AGN-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, Gabino Vázquez to Pres., 23 Jan. 1936

¹⁵⁴⁷ AGN-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, Pres. to Hilario Mendía et. al., 31 July 1936

¹⁵⁴⁸ AGN-LC/C/606.3/E/62, Military report, 20 May 1936

¹⁵⁴⁹ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.332

¹⁵⁵⁰ AGN-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, Pres. to Hilario Mendía et. al., 31 July 1936

¹⁵⁵¹ Eulogio Ciriano Flores

¹⁵⁵² AAAR/C/13/E/54/Doc/6262, Estrada to GN, ND [mid-1936]

¹⁵⁵³ AAAR/C/12/E/51/Doc/6026, Pedroza to GN, 30 June 1936; Nabor Castañeda Lemús; Eulogio Ciriano Flores

‘Con esta rendición puedo asegurar a usted que ha quedado pacificado el Estado, toda vez que Federico Vazquez, ha perdido sus mejores elementos y según informes de los amnistiados saldrá de la región o ellos se encargarán de su captura. Permítome felicitarlo porque con esto doy por terminada la campaña en todo el Estado de Durango.’¹⁵⁵⁴

On the back of these Federal successes, Lieutenant Colonel Juan Fabre Álvarez flew to Santa María Ocotán in early November, to organise a Federal advance on San Francisco de Lajas, backed by local Tepehuano Defensa forces and surveillance aeroplanes (the use of which gradually undermined the natural advantage that the rebel guerrillas had previously enjoyed in the rough terrain of the Sierra).¹⁵⁵⁵ However, Vázquez and his men, backed by Cristero forces recently arrived from the Zacatecas-Jalisco borderlands under Ignacio Roldán, Florencio Estrada’s younger brother Jesús, and Pepe Sánchez, ambushed the Federals near Lajas on 15 November,

‘a inmediaciones del arroyo Los Zarcillos lugar sumamente estrecho y con posiciones ventajosisimas para los asaltantes... Los rebeldes usaron regular cantidad de dinamita que utilizaron para dinamitar el terreno y cerros que forman el estrecho cañon, haciendo explotar estos elementos cuando estaban dentro del cañon la vanguardia en grueso columna, produciendo a continuación fuerte tiroteo sobre nuestros efectivos desde sus ventajosas posiciones, lanzando también bombas de mano de construcción rudimentaria forro de piel de res...y los fuertes desprendimientos de grandes piedras.’¹⁵⁵⁶

Despite using up over 5,000 cartridges in their desperate defence, the Federals lost twenty-five men. Durango’s zone commander, General Miguel Henríquez, blamed this ‘lamentable hecho’ on

‘la confianza que sobre la inferioridad de los bandoleros tenía el Teniente Coronel González Cuéllar... no obstante que en reiteradas ocasiones personalmente le habían recomendado usara en todo tiempo precauciones,

¹⁵⁵⁴ AGN-LC/C/606.3/62, Gral. Castro to Pres., 12 Aug. 1936,

¹⁵⁵⁵ AGN-LC/C/606.3/62, Álvarez to Pres., 21 Nov. 1936

¹⁵⁵⁶ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Henríquez Guzmán to Pres., 27 Nov. 1936

tomando en consideración la topografía del terreno que es en extremo ventajosa para los trastornadores pues les permite cazar a nuestro elementos facil e impunamente y máxime cuando emplean el procedimiento de rollar desde las alturas gran cantidad de piedras.’

Santa María’s Defensa, under Cosme Solís, was evidently better suited to guerrilla fighting than the Federals, and also enjoyed a growing advantage over their ‘Segundero’ enemies in terms of ammunition, and killed three of the rebels in a counter-attack.¹⁵⁵⁷ Chon Aguilar killed Juan Andrés Soto soon afterwards, finally avenging his father’s death and striking a further symbolic blow against the rebels.¹⁵⁵⁸

In December 1936, General Henríquez launched an all-out campaign against the rebels, sending four Federal columns toward San Andrés Milpillas, which ‘no había sido tocada por nuestros efectivos y siempre ha sido refugio de prófugos de la justicia a quienes en esta vez confio liquidarles su actuación.’ The 500 soldiers were accompanied by surveillance aeroplanes and eighty cargo mules, had been supplied with Mendoza automatic rifles and portable radios, and could count on ‘puntos donde ya se encuentran provisiones para su atención,’¹⁵⁵⁹ showing just how determined the government now was to put a definitive end to the rebellion, and how it sought to use the increasing mechanisation of the Federal army to its advantage. In the face of overwhelming pressure, various local rebel groups allied to Federico Vazquez surrendered.¹⁵⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵⁷ *ibid*

¹⁵⁵⁸ Eulogio Ciriano Flores; Arturo Soto Reyes; Saturnino Solís Mendoza

¹⁵⁵⁹ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Henríquez Guzmán to Pres., 27 Nov. 1936

¹⁵⁶⁰ AGN-LC/C/606.3/62, Alvarez to Pres., 30 Nov. 1936

In the same month, Federal forces also tracked down and killed Trinidad Mora, who had been secretly living in Durango for the past two months, recovering from an injury and attempting to secure supplies.¹⁵⁶¹ In a manifesto released shortly afterward, Federico Vázquez was declared Mora's successor as commander-in-chief of Durango's Cristeros. This document, authored by the GN's new Durango delegate, Jesús Sanz Cerrada (who used the alias 'Héctor Martínez de los Ríos'), further announced that

‘en todos sentidos y en cualquier forma, lucharemos en contra de la nefasta educación socialista que, obedeciendo a la Rusia Judía, se está implantando en nuestro país, pues queremos que nuestros hijos sean educados según los dictados de nuestras conciencias, y no conforme al criterio filosófico venido de lejanas tierras... No somos rebeldes, ni salteadores, ni asesinos sino que, como libertadores de nuestra Patria, tratamos de salvarla del comunismo en que ahora se debate...’¹⁵⁶²

Such rhetoric was by now typical of the 'Segundero' ideologues, some of whom would later become Panistas,¹⁵⁶³ Almazanistas, or Sinarquistas.¹⁵⁶⁴ But references to Russia, communism and 'the Jews' probably meant little to the Huichol, Tepehuano and mestizo campesinos who formed the vast majority of the Gran Nayar's 'Segunderos,' and suggests a growing disconnect between the rebels on the ground and the movement's political arm in Mexico City, even as Federal campaigns continued to take their toll on the numbers and morale of the Gran Nayar's active rebel forces.

¹⁵⁶¹ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo*... pp.345-7

¹⁵⁶² 'Martínez,' 'Manifiesto al pueblo de Durango,' in Avitia Hernández, pp.349-50

¹⁵⁶³ F. Brondo to J. Meyer, in J. Meyer, *Pro domo mea*... p.30

¹⁵⁶⁴ A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo*... p.359-61

By early 1937, the clergy had withdrawn even their tacit support for the ‘Segundero’ cause, which Sanz Cerrada described as ‘un golpe más que nos dan, pues nos nulifican a los poquísimos sacerdotes simpatizadores y nos desmoralizarán por completo a los civiles que en alguna forma nos ayudaban.’¹⁵⁶⁵ Vázquez laid low, and rather than carry out new attacks concentrated on organising his reserve forces and planning the assassination of his ex-compadre, the amnestied Valente Acevedo, who had been accompanying General Henríquez ‘en sus frecuentes raids aéreas para que indicara las madrigueras y campamentos de los alzados.’ In time honoured Mexican tradition,¹⁵⁶⁶ Vázquez lured Acevedo to a secret meeting in the Sierra to discuss a possible amnesty, and instead captured and shot him, ‘pagando así con su vida una larga e interminable lista de traiciones.’¹⁵⁶⁷

Meanwhile, given Vázquez’s lack of activity, many Tepehuanos who had been forced to flee the fighting now sought the government’s help in returning to their homes. The inhabitants of San Bernadino, most of whom had been housed in temporary camps near Llano Grande by Federal forces, complained that they lacked food, and petitioned the state government and local military officials to give them ‘permiso para ir a las quebradas a hacer recolección de plátanos, único esquilmo del que pueden disponer para sus necesidades diarios.’¹⁵⁶⁸ General Henríquez insisted to the contrary that rations were generous,¹⁵⁶⁹ and the refugees were forced to wait at least another year before they were allowed to return to their homes.¹⁵⁷⁰

¹⁵⁶⁵ AAAR/C/12/E/49/Doc/5886, ‘Martínez’ to GN, Apr. 1937

¹⁵⁶⁶ cf. S. Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata...* pp.224-5

¹⁵⁶⁷ AAAR/C/12/E/49/Doc/5886, ‘Martínez’ to GN, Apr. 1937

¹⁵⁶⁸ AHED-FR/C/2/E/271, Luis Ramírez de Arellano to Henríquez Guzmán, 18 Mar. 1937

¹⁵⁶⁹ AHED-FR/C/2/E/271, Henríquez Guzmán to Ramírez de Arellano, 19 Mar. 1937

¹⁵⁷⁰ AGN-LC/C/555/E/21, PM.Mezquital to Pres., 13 Dec. 1937

Teneraca's pro-government leader Simón Enríquez, who had fled to Tamazole (an anexo of San Andrés Milpillas in Nayarit) together with much of the community's population, similarly complained to Governor Enrique Calderón that he and the other exiles were living in 'condiciones lamentables, por estar en lugares donde no es posible dedicarse al trabajo y no en el clima venigno para nuestras familias.' They requested that a Federal detachment be assigned to Teneraca, which would allow them to return to their community and begin preparing their lands for planting.¹⁵⁷¹ In turn, planting would allow them to return the practice of their *costumbre*, which, as Enríquez had by now been traditional governor for three years, had obviously been seriously interrupted by the conflict.¹⁵⁷² General Enríquez offered them land near Santa María Ocotán, 'escogido por reunir condiciones de facil subsistencia para ellos y además proveer a su seguridad las fuerzas dependientes de esta Zona Militar que se encuentran en dicha región.'¹⁵⁷³ Teneraca's exiles eventually agreed to gather near Santa María, and from there begin their return home, as apparently 'el bandolero Vázquez... se encuentra por ahora retirada de Teneraca y remontado en la parte alta de la Sierra Madre.'¹⁵⁷⁴ The exiles were given 'unas cuantas armas viejas y unos cuantos cartuchos para que defendieran,' and were assured that 'los rebeldes son unos diez o quince y que andan mal armados.'¹⁵⁷⁵

However, according to Cristero reports, Vázquez's 50-man force was 'de lo mejor,'¹⁵⁷⁶ and well armed with pistols, semi-automatic rifles and ammunition.¹⁵⁷⁷

¹⁵⁷¹ AHED-FR/C/2/Sin Expediente, Enríquez, to Gob.Dgo., 28 Feb. 1937

¹⁵⁷² AHED-M/C/16/E/114, Gob.Dgo. to PM.Mezquital, 26 Nov. 1937

¹⁵⁷³ AHED-FR/C/2/Sin Expediente, Henriquez Guzmán to Ramírez Arellano, 20 Mar. 1937

¹⁵⁷⁴ AHED-FR/C/2/Sin Expediente, A. Heredia to Gob.Dgo., 22 June 1937

¹⁵⁷⁵ AGN/-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, Antonio Heredia to Gob.Dgo., 15 Aug. 1937

¹⁵⁷⁶ AAAR/C/12/E/51/Doc/6040, Froylan Diéguez to GN, 2 June 1937

They also had plenty of food, which although described as ‘ayuda... recibido [en] la región por donde operan,’ had in fact been seized from Tepehuano rancherías. Furthermore, while few of Vázquez’s men were willing to leave their home territory, they were still eager to attack local targets, and promptly raided Teneraca, killing thirty members of the newly-constituted Defensa and fifteen Federal troops and seizing clothes and cattle.¹⁵⁷⁸ A few weeks later Vázquez’s band attacked their former allies in Temoaya (whom they now referred to as ‘agraristas’), killing three and taking rifles and still more cattle.¹⁵⁷⁹ In response 200 Federal troops set out from Santa María Ocotán to hunt them down, while printed amnesty offers were also dropped across the Sierra from aeroplanes. However, Sanz Cerrada reported that ‘la mas elocuente respuesta a esa invitación han sido los dos golpes que las fuerzas del Gral Vázquez ha dado a los federales, hechos que naturalmente se han callado tanto los periódicos locales como las radiodifusoras.’¹⁵⁸⁰ In August Antonio Heredia, now Mezquital’s municipal president, complained that ‘estos bandoleros en lugar de exterminarse van prosperando día a día y como ya le digo: con grave perjuicio de los pobres campesinos que con frecuencia están sufriendo asaltos, robos y asesinatos.’¹⁵⁸¹ In October he requested Federal reinforcements, claiming that the number of rebels under Vázquez had by now risen to three hundred.¹⁵⁸²

Throughout 1938, a low-intensity war raged across the region, as Vázquez raided Tepehuano rancherías to obtain the cattle, grain and ammunition that his men needed

¹⁵⁷⁷ AAAR/C/12/E/49/Doc/5887, ‘Martínez,’ ‘Informe,’ 2 July 1937

¹⁵⁷⁸ AAAR/C/12/E/49/Doc/5888, ‘Martínez,’ ‘Informe,’ June 1937

¹⁵⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸¹ AGN-LC/C/207/E/404.1/177, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 15 Aug. 1937

¹⁵⁸² AHED-FR/C/2/Sin Expediente, Ramírez de Arellano to JOM Dgo., 8 Oct. 1937

to survive.¹⁵⁸³ A shortage of ammunition caused Vázquez serious problems, ‘al grado de que de ciento cincuenta hombres que son los que actualmente operan, cerca de la tercera parte no tienen absolutamente nada de municiones.’¹⁵⁸⁴ Sanz Cerrada later wrote that the situation was still more difficult

‘por tener que atender a dos campamentos, el formado por los luchadores y el integrado por sus familiares, esposas e hijos, que no podían permanecer en sus lugares de origen por la recia persecución de que eran víctimas. Siempre anduvimos huyendo, nuestros correos eran asesinados, [y] no podía presentar batallas importantes por carecer de parque...’¹⁵⁸⁵

Demoralised and desperate, some of the rebels deserted, and later gave away information that led to Federal forces locating and executing four of Vázquez’s couriers. Vázquez’s second-in-command, Magdaleno Noriega, was killed in battle in November; Durango’s zone commander, General Matías Ramos, triumphantly sent President Cárdenas photographs of the dead rebel and added that he was now sure that ‘los pocos grupos que quedan en el Estado se van a disolver o amnistiarse, porque Noriega fué el mentor de Vázquez. Además ha ordenado se intensifique se persecución hasta lograr su exterminio...’¹⁵⁸⁶

Further setbacks to the rebels followed, including a ‘traición’ in Durango that forced Sanz Cerrada himself to go underground.¹⁵⁸⁷ He advised Vázquez that ‘ya que no había caso de seguir una lucha estéril en medio de tanto enemigo, especialmente de los mismos nuestros,’¹⁵⁸⁸ and retired to Ciudad Juárez soon after. This deprived

¹⁵⁸³ AAAR/C/12/E/49/Doc/5890, Martínez, ‘Informe,’ 11 Apr. 1938

¹⁵⁸⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁵ F. Brondo to J. Meyer, in J. Meyer, *Pro domo mea...* p.30

¹⁵⁸⁶ AGN-LC/C/959/E/556.7/11, Gral. Matías Ramos to Pres., 12 Nov. 1938

¹⁵⁸⁷ AAAR/C/12/E/49/Doc/5891, Martínez to GN, 19 Sept. 1938

¹⁵⁸⁸ F. Brondo to J. Meyer, in J. Meyer, *Pro domo mea...* p.30

Vázquez not only of the scanty supplies that Sanz Cerrada had previously secured him, but also of his most reliable connection to the GN political command.¹⁵⁸⁹

By 1939, the Sierra Tepehuana was generally peaceful enough for Federal agrarian reform to be stepped up, with the most consistently pro-government communities and their leaders enjoying the government's particular patronage. Chon Aguilar – the self-proclaimed 'agrarista' who had shown himself a reliable ally of both the Federal army and Mezquital's elite – was elected a member of the municipal government,¹⁵⁹⁰ and played a key role in the reparto. After the state government announced that the inhabitants of Temoaya, who had fled their community due first to Federal and then Cristero attacks, were free to return to their homes, along with anyone else interested in colonising the community's lands, it was Chon Aguilar who, at the head of twenty-nine families from his own native Xoconoxtle, 'tomó posesión oficialmente del Pueblo de Temoaya... que se encontraba completamente abandonado, por haber sido allí el lugar donde tenían su Cuartel los rebeldes.'¹⁵⁹¹ Meanwhile, Cosme Solís and his allies continued to dominate the traditional government¹⁵⁹² and the Defensa forces of Santa María Ocotán.¹⁵⁹³ The SEP also returned to the region, and Durango's Director of Federal Education began to plan the establishment of new schools in the Sierra, noting that previous efforts had been 'notoriamente insuficientes para los 7000 habitantes de la citada región,' and that,

'como se trata de un grupo indígena casi entregado a su propio suerte y nosotros tenemos empeño en rehabilitarlo por medio de la educación, de la

¹⁵⁸⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹⁰ AHED-M/C/17/E/4, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 1 Jan. 1939

¹⁵⁹¹ AHED-M/C/18/E/54, PM.Mezquital to Gob.Dgo., 23 Aug. 1939

¹⁵⁹² AHED-M/C/18/E/54, Ángel Hernández to Go.Dgo., 20 Apr. 1939

¹⁵⁹³ AHED-M/C/18/E/7, Cosme Solís to Gob.Dgo., 22 Mar. 1939; AHED-M/C/18/E/54, Gob.Dgo. to Ángel Hernández, 28 Apr. 1939

manera más atenta suplicamos a usted sea bien servido en concedernos desde luego 10 plazas de profesores, con el objeto de fundar otras tantas escuelas que sean agentes de cultura en los lugares más densamente poblados por los indígenas.¹⁵⁹⁴

Although Federico Vázquez remained a disruptive presence in the region, he was increasingly short of supplies, ammunition and men. In February 1939 he launched his last major attack, leading forty rebels in a raid on Mezquital, ‘donde hubieron entrado si no llega el auxilio a los callistas que en número de 600 logran hacer que los nuestros se retiren.’¹⁵⁹⁵ A few months later, President Cárdenas authorised a local Villista veterans’ organisation to negotiate the surrender of Vázquez’s men.¹⁵⁹⁶ General Lorenzo Ávalos, Secretary General of the Legión de Veteranos de la Revolución (Division del Norte), reached out to the rebels, who offered to accept a government amnesty in exchange for the return of their lands.¹⁵⁹⁷ Vázquez passed over his own destruction of rancherías and villages across the Sierra Tepehuana and declared that

‘el motivo de haber hecho armas en contra el Gobierno; fué por habersé nos arrebatado nuestras tierras para entregarlas a el Ejido, sabiendo que es una pequeña propiedad que posemos para obtener el pan de nuestros hijos, derrumbando nuestros pueblos como lo son Santiago Bayacora Temohaya Tajicaringa y Teneraca, que razón tubo tambien el Gobierno para hacer esa destrucción. Solo por el hecho de que hicimos reclamación de lo que es nuestro, y más perseguir a nuestras familias matando a nuestros hijos, sin ser ellos culpables de nuestra actitud.’¹⁵⁹⁸

¹⁵⁹⁴ AHSEP-68-69/C/37487 E/25, DEFD to DEI, 24 Aug. 1939

¹⁵⁹⁵ AAAR/C/12/E/51/Doc/6075, Unknown to GN, 22 Feb. 1939

¹⁵⁹⁶ In an effort to counter the opposition to his rule by the right-wing UNVR veterans’ organisation (cf. Frans. J. Schreyer, *The Rancheros...* p.95), Cárdenas had cultivated ties with left-wing veterans’ groups, and also began ‘a first tentative reconciliation with organised groups of Villista veterans.’ In Durango, Cardenista Governor Enrique Calderón also emphasised his government’s ties with Villismo, to win over both agraristas and conservative Villistas for whom Villa remained a hero. The leader of the latter faction, ex-Villista General (and Terrones Benítez’s former rival to the state governorship) Máximo García, obtained one of two posts for state senator in 1940 (T. G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization...* p.158)

¹⁵⁹⁷ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Ávalos to Pres., 8 Apr. 1939

¹⁵⁹⁸ AGN-LC/C/606.3/62, Ávalos to Pres., 1 May 1939

Although the language now used by Vázquez contrasted dramatically with the messianic anti-communist message of former Cristero ideologues such as Sanz Cerrada, his emphasis on the right to private property has something in common with the rhetoric of the nascent sinarquista movement,¹⁵⁹⁹ and was probably also designed to prevent his being labelled an agent of the reactionary clergy. Instead, by railing against injustice in the countryside, he presented his movement – accurately, to an extent – as one made up of campesinos, which in the context of the radicalism of the Cárdenas period, meant he could perhaps hope for a measure of political sympathy. At the same time, however, Vázquez’s new emphasis on agrarian issues was also a late admission of the fact that the rebellion of many of his men (as of Juan Bautista in the Sierra Huichola), had been in part an attempt to defend the physical integrity of their communities against local authorities and state governments which supported the ‘despojo’ of their lands.

Vázquez additionally demanded that the lives of his remaining 150 men be guaranteed, that all operations against them be suspended, that they be given food, ‘a fin de no vernos obligados a asaltar poblados,’ and that ‘se nos ayuden para la reconstrucción de los poblados a que hago mención.’¹⁶⁰⁰ A month later a group of rebels handed over their weapons to General Matías Ramos. Avalos reported that ‘confiamos proximately presentarse totalidad rebeldes pues hemos los convencido no tener ninguna razón estar substraídos patriótico gobierno usted que ha

¹⁵⁹⁹ cf J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* pp.193-4; By now, Sanz Cerrada had himself become a propagandist for the Sinarquistas (A. Avitia Hernández, *El Caudillo...* p.359), and would later become a PAN deputy in Chihuahua (F. Brondo to J. Meyer, in J. Meyer, *Pro domo mea...* p.30)

¹⁶⁰⁰ AGN-LC/C/606.3/62, Ávalos to Pres., 1 May 1939

distinguidose como verdadero apostol redención nuestro pueblo.’¹⁶⁰¹ But Vázquez and a hard core of followers only finally laid down their weapons after an employee of the Cooper Lumber Company was commissioned by Durango’s Governor Elpidio Velázquez to meet with the last of the rebels in the Sierra in late 1940:

‘En la noche, ya muy noche, llegaron los cristeros y Federico Vázquez, todos con sus armas listas y desconfiados. Iban muy mal; sucios, enfermos y cansados. Ya hicieron la junta y yo apunté todo. Ellos pedían ayuda económica, alimentación y granos, medicinas, educación para sus niños, escuelas, troncos para sembrar con animales, y que les dieran los terrenos de Taxicaringa (centro ceremonial tepehuán) pero lo que más les importaba era que les respetaran su vida.’¹⁶⁰²

Terms almost identical to those that had secured the surrender of Vázquez’s former commander Trinidad Mora more than a decade earlier were agreed: the safety of Vazquez and his men was guaranteed, and Vázquez himself was appointed southern Durango’s ‘jefe forestal.’¹⁶⁰³

The return of peace did not mean an instant return of the Tepehuano population to their homes, however.¹⁶⁰⁴ In 1942, many of Teneraca’s refugees were still asking for the government’s help to return to their community and for money to buy ‘palos, cemento, etc.’ with which to rebuild their homes.¹⁶⁰⁵ Many never returned from exile in Tamazole or San Andrés Milpillás; just as other Tepehuanos from Santa María and San Francisco Ocotán, who had attempted to escape from the violence of ‘la Segunda’ by settling in San Pedro Xicoras and San Agustín Buenaventura, stayed in their new

¹⁶⁰¹ AGN-LC/C/58/E/120/558, Ávalos, Gral. Nicolás Fernández, to Pres., 27 May 1939

¹⁶⁰² Walter Bishop, in A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.362

¹⁶⁰³ F. Campos, in *ibid.*, p.368

¹⁶⁰⁴ C. Cramausel, ‘Historia del poblamiento...’ p.27

¹⁶⁰⁵ AHED-AY/C/1/E/119, Gustavo Flores Daguerre, to Gob.Dgo., 2 Feb. 1942

homes, thus permanently changing the ethnic composition and social structures of these previously Mexicanero communities.

The end of 'la Segunda' paved the way for the Cooper Lumber Company, and its rival, the Thomas Brooke Company, to begin finally logging in the Sierra Tepehuana. However, logging provoked the outbreak of new violence. While Chon Aguilar, now Mezquital's municipal president, favoured one company, his former ally José Flores, at this point an unspecified 'autoridad comunal,'¹⁶⁰⁶ favoured the other, and both leaders were killed during the violent conflict that resulted.¹⁶⁰⁷ Federico Vázquez was assassinated in a separate dispute over logging rights a few years later.¹⁶⁰⁸ The perceived threats to costumbre and communal autonomy posed by logging, and the mestizo immigration that came with it, also generated widespread Tepehuano opposition.¹⁶⁰⁹ The inhabitants of Teneraca, for example, rejected government schools, logging contracts, and even held a special *xiothalh* to ask that a new road planned by the state government not reach them.¹⁶¹⁰ In other communities, conservative factions strengthened and legitimised their opposition to the influence of the state through their participation in religious revivals prompted by visions of the Virgin Mary,¹⁶¹¹ who informed local people that the world would soon end unless they renewed the practice of a 'pure' form of costumbre, purged their communities of mestizo-produced goods, and sold their corn only at cost, "because it is life."¹⁶¹²

¹⁶⁰⁶ AGA-BC/276.1/411/leg.1/Comunal/Restitución/Santa María Ocotán y Xoconoxtle, INI report

¹⁶⁰⁷ Interestingly, both leaders are buried in the space in front of Santa María Ocotán's church reserved for communal 'ancestors,' and appear to be recipients of ritual offerings.

¹⁶⁰⁸ F. Campos, in A. Avitia Hernández, *El caudillo...* p.368

¹⁶⁰⁹ C. L. Riley and J. Hobgood, 'A Recent Nativistic Movement...' p.356

¹⁶¹⁰ A. Reyes Valdez, personal communication, 2 Apr. 1014

¹⁶¹¹ C. L. Riley and J. Hobgood, 'A Recent Nativistic Movement...' p.357

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Conclusions

Between 1934 and 1940, rebel violence and radical reform had constituted a reciprocal phenomenon in the Gran Nayar, the dynamics of which varied in accordance with the idiosyncracies of the four peoples of the region, and the vagaries of ammunition and food supplies, factional alliances and conflicts, and the interventions of the ‘santitos’ and shamans of each community.¹⁶¹³ The violence of ‘la Segunda’ – a result of local resistance to state policies – had temporarily disrupted the SEP’s school-building programme, and thus blocked the application of the more radical aspects of the ‘anti-fanaticism’ campaign that threatened local *costumbre*. And at the same time, to secure the allegiance of the Gran Nayar’s pro-government factions, the state had also been forced to finally push forward with the application of the agrarian reform that many communities had been demanding since the before the Revolution. Thus the Coras, Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros were able to continue to defy the expectations of the late nineteenth century anthropologists who had predicted that they would ‘soon disappear by fusion with the great nation to whom they belong.’¹⁶¹⁴

In the long-term, however, the State’s enactment of agrarian reform in many cases enabled local mestizos to continue or indeed extend their claims to Indian communal landholdings, regardless of whether the community in question had chosen to resist or accommodate the growing power of the revolutionary regime. Furthermore, the alliance between the State and local pro-government caciques, and the continued efforts of a widening cast of municipal, state and Federal actors to integrate the Gran

¹⁶¹³ cf. A. Bantjes, *As if Jesus...* p.75

¹⁶¹⁴ C. S. Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico...* i., xvi

Nayar socially, politically and economically into the Mexican nation, continued to create, or exacerbate, internal communal conflicts. By 1940, the combination of rebel raids, Federal and Defensa counter-attacks, and increasingly violent intra- and inter-community conflicts, had left the Gran Nayar's communities in ruins, its inhabitants exhausted, and their *costumbre* in crisis. And within a few years, the nature of the post-revolutionary settlement in the region, which had failed to meet the hopes of the majority of the Cora, Huichol, Tepehuano and Mexicanero population – and had even managed to disillusion many of the region's most reliably pro-government caciques – resulted in renewed local opposition to the government's state-building project, and in the murders of many of the politico-military leaders who had come to power in the context of, and managed to survive, the upheaval of the Revolution and the *Cristiada*.

The ultimate failure of attempts to 'incorporate' the Gran Nayar into the Mexican nation-state, and the way in which the post-revolutionary settlement in the region at once failed to satisfy the Federal government, local mestizo elites, and rival 'conservative' and 'cosmopolitan' communal factions, was a product of the fundamentally incompatible, and uncompromising, aims of each. At the same time, the fact that at the end of thirty years of resistance and accommodation, rebellion and state-building, and conflicts between *caciquismo* and *costumbre*, the post-revolutionary settlement in the Gran Nayar *was* an unsatisfactory compromise, is testament to the widespread participation of local people in the Revolution.

Contrary to the idea of the Gran Nayar as remote and isolated, and its inhabitants as somehow cut off from the world around them, or, particularly in the case of the Huichols, as 'timid,' 'passive,' or 'peaceful,' this thesis has shown that the Coras,

Huichols, Tepehuanos and Mexicaneros all participated actively in the armed phase of the revolution. At first, local people joined armed groups on an individual basis, in order to gain weapons and food in the context of the violence and disruption to the agricultural cycle caused by the initial outbreak of the rebellion against Díaz. Later, as the break-up of the Villista army into guerrilla bands – or bandit gangs – threatened whole communities, local leaders obtained weapons from Carrancista troops, which they used to defend themselves, their property, and the physical integrity of their communities.

As opposed to the Jefes de Defensa in some other parts of Mexico, who became mercenaries at the service of local landowners,¹⁶¹⁵ the Defensas of the Gran Nayar remained largely autonomous, and their commanders, like their equivalents in Namiquipa,¹⁶¹⁶ became local power-brokers, using their arms to pursue communal, factional and personal interests. However, while they were able to stave off Villista and bandit raids, contributed to regional Carrancista ‘pacification’ campaigns, and in many cases scored important victories against local enemies (such as mestizo settlers), the inherent tensions between their power and that of the traditional communal authorities gave rise to intra- and inter-communal conflicts that both prompted, and defined, the even more intense involvement of local people in the later, national-level conflict between Church and State, over the course of the two Cristero rebellions.

Neither were the inhabitants of the Gran Nayar passive observers of the revolutionary State’s attempts to impose itself on the region. The factional divisions that had arisen

¹⁶¹⁵ M. Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs...* p.53; J. Purnell, *Popular Movements...* p.150

¹⁶¹⁶ cf. D. Nugent, *Spent Cartridges...* pp.83-5

in many communities as a result of Defensa-led caciquismo were deepened by the divergent responses of local people to SEP school-building and 'defanatización' campaigns, and to the government's alternate promotion of, or failure to implement, agrarian reform. Communal leaders alternately portrayed themselves as 'timid,' 'loyal,' or 'radical,' as 'agraristas' or 'los indígenas mexicanos más puros,' as the victims of Porfirian abuses or as the first line of the defenders of state pride against interlopers from elsewhere, in order to win the backing of Federal or state authorities for personal, factional or communal goals. And at the same time, many local people resisted, through the use of violence or 'weapons of the weak,' the threats to their political, cultural and territorial autonomy that emanated from these same outside forces and their local allies, whether SEP teachers, mestizo settlers, Federal military commanders or Indian Jefes de Defensa.

Contrary to the view that the first Cristero rebellion was an elite conflict, a mestizo phenomenon, or a mass rebellion motivated for the most part by Catholic religiosity, this thesis has also shown that caciques of the Gran Nayar played an active part in the rebellion in order to advance similar factional or communal goals. Meanwhile, the population as a whole tended to employ the same mixture of resistance and accommodation in their relations with the Cristero rebels as they did with the representatives of the state that the rebels sought to overthrow (at least in those cases where local people did not physically remove themselves from the theatre of combat in order to escape involvement in this 'foreign' conflict). Pro-Cristero caciques were able to use the violence of the Cristiada to dramatically invert the normal power relations between themselves and the mestizo municipal elites that claimed authority over the autonomous Indian communities, and through superficial accommodation to

Quintanar's attempt to build a Cristero 'shadow-state,' were able to preserve, or even increase, their own power, as Spanish-speakers able to serve as the link-men between their communities and the mestizo rebel command. Pro-government leaders were able to do the same *vis-à-vis* the Federal government and the army.

However, despite the Sonoran regime's *de facto* victory over the rebels in 1929, the surviving leaders of both pro- *and* anti-Cristero factions emerged from the Cristiada triumphant, thanks in part to strange alliances of convenience formed between state governments and amnestied Cristeros in the wake of Calles' anti-agrarista shift. In the Sierra Tepehuana, amnestied Cristeros were even charged by the State with the promotion of 'socialist education,' while Callista Defensa forces led the resistance to the Internado Indígena established in Santa María Ocotán. In other communities, however, the same 'conservative' groups that had earlier backed the Cristero rebels once again opposed the compulsory education of their children in government schools, the imposition of revolutionary or nationalist symbols in spaces that represented their political and cultural autonomy, the state's attempts to turn the *costumbre* that defined their lives into meaningless 'folklore,' the colonisation of their lands by mestizo settlers, and the support of local caciques for all of these threats.

Tensions rooted in local participation in the Revolution, and exacerbated by SEP programmes, agrarista agitation, and Federal military crack-downs, eventually led to the outbreak of new inter-communal disputes in regions, such as the Cora Baja, that had previously enjoyed a relative tranquility in terms of agrarian conflicts, and to the renewed participation of local people in 'la Segunda' as rebels or Federal auxiliaries. The end of that conflict – and with it, of the Revolution in the Gran Nayar – finally set

the stage for the demise of the Defensas, and, in some communities, for the revival of traditional power structures; and in others, for the rise of newly created agrarian authorities. In all of the communities of the Gran Nayar, the post-revolutionary years also saw the emergence of new leaders, often ‘bicultural’ in the same way as the earlier Jefes de Defensa-turned-caciques had been, who continued, and continue, to employ the strategies used by their forebears throughout the Revolution – subversion, accommodation, evasion, and active, sometimes violent resistance – to keep hold of their lands, their political autonomy, and their communal, if not always ‘ethnic,’ identities.

Glossary

Cora Alta – The higher, eastern part of Nayarit’s Sierra, directly bordering the states of Durango, Zacatecas and Jalisco. Encompasses the whole of the municipality of El Nayar (previously the ‘Subprefectura de la Sierra’), and the Cora communities of Jesús María, San Francisco, La Mesa del Nayar, Santa Teresa, and Dolores, and the mestizo community of San Juan Peyotán.

Cora Baja – The lower, western part of Nayarit’s Sierra, bordering the Cora Alta to the east and the sub-tropical coastal region of the state to the west. Encompasses parts of the municipalities of Ruíz, Rosamorada, Santiago Ixcuintla, and Acaponeta, and the Cora communities of San Pedro Ixcatán, San Juan Corapan, Rosarito, San Blasito and Saycota, as well as the Mexicanero community of Santa Cruz de Guajalota.

Cepo – stocks, which were introduced by Catholic missionaries during Colonial era, and which in many communities remain a key element of local judicial practice to this day.

Communal cabecera – the politico-religious centre of the rancherías that together constitute each of the Gran Nayar’s communities. Each has a church (usually dating back to the Colonial era), one or several sites at which communal mitotes are celebrated, and the ‘Casa Real’ or ‘courthouse’ that serves as the headquarters of each community’s traditional authorities. Communal cabeceras also usually featured a few houses, in which these authorities and their families lived during their terms in office,

together with a jail, a communal kitchen, and an area set aside for the authorities to grow corn in.

Consejo de Ancianos – a communal advisory council made up of ritual specialists, and the community’s most important politico-religious authority. In addition to leading communal mitotes and the descent-group practices of each community’s most influential rancherías (or tukipa), most members of the Consejo had also worked their way up through the gobierno tradicional’s hierarchy of offices, and thus commanded influence at both descent-group and communal level. They were usually appointed members of the Consejo for life, but as they also tended to be extremely elderly by the time they were appointed, the makeup of the Consejo changed frequently. In most communities, they were responsible for nominating the candidates for the communal ‘Gobierno Tradicional,’ whom they also advised during their terms of office.

Costumbre – a ceremonial institution, formed of a complex of religious beliefs, political practices, and the celebration of mitotes, church-based fiestas, and the agricultural cycle, that governed the lives of the people of the Gran Nayar.

Gobierno Tradicional – the politico-religious cargo-holders chosen to govern the community each year. They were (and continue to be) responsible for maintaining the integrity of the community’s landholdings, keeping local order, resolving conflicts, taking care of the community’s ‘santitos’ and their cults, and helping to oversee communal mitotes and church-based fiestas. Offices included ‘gobernadores,’ who headed the gobiernos, ‘mayordomos,’ in charge of the santitos, ‘alguaciles’ or

‘topiles,’ who acted as messengers and enforcers of the gobierno’s rulings, and a number of other officers that varied depending on the community in question.

Judea – the Cora Easter week festival (also celebrated by the Huichols of San Andrés). A mix of Catholic passion play, burlesque of Catholic ceremonialism, and pre-hispanic solar worship, featuring armies of young men symbolically transformed into ‘devils’ or ‘Jews,’ and led by ‘Moros’ and ‘Centurions,’ hunting for Jesus Christ/Our Father Sun, who is eventually caught and killed, before being resurrected and ascending to heaven, killing the devils in the process and enabling them to return to normal life. The communal traditional authorities, associated with Christ and the sun, are deposed for the duration of this anarchic festival, which serves to emphasise the essential role they normally play in the regulation of communal life, thus helping to legitimise their power.

Mitote – a ritual that forms the centre of the practice of costumbre in the Gran Nayar. Mitotes are practiced both by individual descent-groups, in the context of which they mark life-cycle progression and the different stages of the agricultural cycle, and by whole communities, in which case they serve to emphasise the unity of the community’s inhabitants, the integrity of the community’s territory, and the eternal conflict between light (the solar deities and the ‘pure’ ancestors, including the resurrected Christ and the morning star), and dark (the deities of fertility, the evening star, the ‘dead’ Christ, the Pacific Ocean, and the underworld). Mitotes often revolve around long sessions of ritual dancing (usually at night, around a sacred fire), shamanic chanting/singing/recitation of prayers, the depositing of votive objects at sacred sites, and the gathering of water both from springs located at the boundaries

of communal territory, and from further afield (the Pacific coast, Lake Chapala, and the region around Real de Catorce, in San Luis Potosí). The celebration of mitotes is held to be essential for ensuring the health of local people and the community as a whole, plentiful rains and a successful harvest, and the continued existence of the world itself, which, if not constantly recreated through ritual, would cease to exist – or, in fact, would never have existed.

Peyote - *Lophophora williamsii*, a small, spineless cactus which contains a number of psychoactive compounds, including mescaline, a hallucinogenic alkaloid. The gathering and consumption of peyote are central to Huichol religious and medicinal practice. Peyote is also eaten by the Coras in the context of a few, special descent-group mitotes, normally celebrated once every five years. Peyote is also widely consumed in small doses by both Coras and Huichols to fight fatigue and suppress thirst and appetite, especially on long journeys.

Pinole – ground, roasted corn, an important food in the Gran Nayar, also frequently used in rituals.

Poblano – word used by local mestizos to refer to local Indians, particularly Tepehuanos.

Ranchería – a small settlement, usually inhabited by members of the same extended family. Each ranchería controls the territory immediately surrounding it, which is used for planting the crops on which the ranchería's population subsists. Each ranchería is thus a political unit, and is usually represented politically and religiously

at community-level by an elder, who is responsible for leading the descent-group rituals carried out at the *ranchería*.

Santito – icon (or, sometimes, image) of a Catholic saint. In Cora, Huichol Tepehuano and Mexicanero culture, their identity is generally conflated with one (or even several) of the large pantheon of pre-hispanic deities who are also worshipped in the region (but whose cult, in its ‘non-Catholic’ form, tends to be centred around caves, rock formations, springs, lakes and, in the case of the Huichols, *tukipa*). The *santitos* are held to have miraculous powers, and are often regarded as eponymous founders of a community or *ranchería*.

Tuki (plural, *Tukipa*) – Huichol temple: a large, round structure with a conical thatched roof, normally consecrated to a particular Huichol deity (or deities). *Tukipa* serve as the politico-religious centres of the surrounding *rancherías*, and each Huichol community is thus sub-divided into a number of districts corresponding to the number of *tukipa* within the community’s territory.

Vecino – word commonly used in the region as a synonym for ‘mestizo.’

Xiotalh – the Tepehuano ‘mitote.’

Xiriki (plural, *xirikite*) – a Huichol shrine, usually consecrated to a single deity or ancestor, which often serves as the centre of *ranchería* or kinship-group level religious practice.

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