

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: *INDIGENISMO AND ITS DISCONTENTS:  
BILININGUAL TEACHERS AND THE  
DEMOCRATIC OPENING IN THE MIXTECA ALTA  
OF OAXACA, MEXICO, 1954-1982*

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This dissertation examines the relationship between indigenous peoples and modernizing schemes in Mexico during the second half of the twentieth century. As such, it explores the relationship between indigeneity, educational and development policies, and Cold War politics. The study is grounded in a particular indigenous highland region of southern Mexico, the Mixteca Alta, while at the same time investigating indigenous-state relations as they were articulated on national and international levels. I examine policy debates, institutional reforms and labor struggles within indigenista agencies between 1954 and 1982. I ask how ideas about the value of indigenous language and culture shaped projects of incorporation and the struggles of meaning inherent in those processes. In other words, this dissertation is an investigation of the micropolitics of indigenous education and development efforts in the second half of the twentieth century. I argue that in the late 1970s a confluence of factors—including postwar development projects engaging indigenous brokers, transnational discourses of anti-colonialism, and grassroots struggle with an authoritarian regime-crystallized to shift official policy to the recognition and celebration of indigenous linguistic diversity.

The dissertation deepens our understanding of post-1940 Mexican political culture and the transformations it underwent. Specifically, it plots a new periodization for regions, such as the Mixteca Alta, which did not experience significant agrarian reform during the 1930s, by demonstrating how federal agencies (other than the military) only began to exert influence in the early 1950s. The period of liberalizing reforms known as the *apertura democrática*, or democratic opening, is frequently described as an effort to coopt government opponents. I argue against this cooptation narrative by demonstrating how President Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) employed tried and true tactics of negotiation with mobilized sectors to both concede to and control emerging aspirations. It is in this regard that the Mexican regime, earlier than most of its Latin American counterparts, employed the rhetoric of indigenous cultural and linguistic rights to reformulate its corporatist rule.

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1954-1982

by

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### ***Indigenismo and its Discontents***

During the early 1970s social movements advocating indigenous peoples' rights emerged throughout the Americas. These movements, mobilizing from Canada to Chile, challenged racist and discriminatory practices and demanded recognition of the unique cultural and historical experiences of First Peoples. The so-called "Indian problem" had its roots in the European conquest of the Americas, in which the diverse peoples and civilizations of the continent were lumped together as "Indians." The conflict among descendants of those original peoples, colonial states, and subsequent independent regimes remained one of the central cleavages in Latin America. Through the centuries, indigenous peoples navigated diverse strategies for their subordinated incorporation into post-conquest regimes. In some cases indigenous people fought to overthrow the colonial and postcolonial order. However, the general tendency was toward an attenuated citizenship.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation examines the relationship between indigenous peoples and state formation in Mexico during the second half of the twentieth century. As such, it explores the relationship between indigeneity, modernizing educational and development policies, and Cold War politics. The study is grounded in a particular indigenous highland region of southern Mexico, the Mixteca Alta, while at the same time investigating indigenous-state relations as they were articulated on national and international levels.

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<sup>1</sup> A sampling of examples of this process includes: Robert Charles Padden, "Cultural Change and Military Resistance in Araucanian Chile, 1550-1730," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13,

## ***Indigenismo in the Americas***

The states that emerged after Spanish rule frequently invoked the prehispanic past as a point of pride in their nationalist discourses. Nineteenth century policies varied by country, but national elites generally combined explicit racial categories and hierarchies with abstract celebrations of the dead Indian in their patriotic discourses.<sup>2</sup> National policies of indigenous incorporation and aesthetics eventually came to be termed *indigenismo*. As such, *indigenismo* celebrated aesthetic achievements while encouraging political participation and economic integration of the indigenous population.<sup>3</sup>

Indigenismo constituted both a prominent state ideology and practice in twentieth century Latin America. *Indigenista* politics were evidenced in national popular aesthetics, such as the works of the great Mexican muralists, in experimental indigenous education in Bolivia in the 1920s, and in the national and international indigenista congresses of the first half of the century.<sup>4</sup> In Mexico, in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1910, indigenista thinking combined with agrarian radicalism as an emerging state apparatus turned to its numerous indigenous groups to build a foundational myth for the nation.

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of both the variance and prevalence of nationalist invocations of the indigenous past, see Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 24-29.

<sup>3</sup> Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, "Other Americas: Transnationalism, Scholarship, and the Culture of Poverty in Mexico and the United States," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (2009): 610. Claudio Lomnitz-Adler offers another formulation of *indigenismo*, that of, "indigenizing modernity and... modernizing the Indians" in "Bordering on Anthropology: The Dialectics of a National Tradition in Mexico," *Revue de Synthèse* 121, no. 3-4 (July-Dec., 2000): 349.

<sup>4</sup> For education, see Brooke Larson's recent work on the Warista school, and for the 1945 Bolivian indigenous congress, see Laura Gotkowitz, *A Revolution for Our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880-1952* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), chap. 7.

Yet in 1976 the Mexican intellectual Héctor Díaz-Polanco denounced indigenismo as fundamentally a “proyecto capitalista de integración.”<sup>5</sup> In his sketching out of various positions on the so-called Indian and agrarian problems in Latin America, Díaz-Polanco derided indigenista policies, particularly those of a new generation of indigenistas, as nothing more than petty bourgeois populism.<sup>6</sup> In the heady debates of the Mexican left in the 1970s, this denunciation, which aimed at a kind of ideological unmasking, was sufficient to condemn indigenismo as a barrier to revolutionary change. Díaz-Polanco’s position also formed part of a broader coalescing of an existential critique of indigenista policy, with origins in the mid-1960s and one of whose clarion calls was the Mexican edited volume, *De eso que se llama la antropología Mexicana*, published in 1970. The authors denounced indigenista policy as folkloric, non-theoretical, and ultimately colonialist in facilitating state knowledge and abuse of indigenous peoples. This critique became the orthodox interpretation of indigenista policy in Latin America.

In his depiction of indigenismo as a project of integration, tied to capitalist modernity and state formation, Díaz-Polanco was correct. Whether deployed in the nineteenth century by liberal elites celebrating a heroic prehispanic past, or by twentieth century agrarian reformers, indigenista politics articulated indigeneity in relation to a state project. For the vast majority of indigenista experience, indigenous peoples were objects to be acted upon, rather than active subjects. Yet from a historical perspective the story does not end there but is rather the point of departure for a substantive analysis. Just as nineteenth century liberalism was more than merely a bourgeois land-grab of indigenous communal property, indigenismo, in all its various formulations, was more

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<sup>5</sup> “Capitalist project of integration.”

<sup>6</sup> Héctor Díaz-Polanco, “Indigenismo, Populismo y Marxismo,” *Nueva Antropología*, Año III, no. 9 (October 1978): 7-31.

than a program of state subjugation. The contested historical experience of indigenismo is the subject of this dissertation.

I explore this history through the experience of institutions, primarily education and development agencies. These include the Secretaria de Educación Pública (SEP), the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), and an indigenous research and development agency in the state of Oaxaca, the Instituto de Investigación y Integración Social del Estado de Oaxaca (IISEO). In the process, I examine policy debates, institutional reforms and labor struggles within indigenista agencies between 1954 and 1982. The prominent actors in this story include indigenous students, teachers, anthropologists and other social scientists employed by state agencies. I examine these institutions and actors to ask how ideas about the value of indigenous language and culture shaped projects of incorporation, i.e. modernization efforts, and the struggles of meaning inherent in that process. In other words, this dissertation is an investigation of the micropolitics of indigenous education and development efforts in the second half of the twentieth century.

In so doing, the dissertation deepens our understanding of post-1940 Mexican political culture and the transformations it underwent. Specifically, it plots a new periodization for regions, such as the Mixteca Alta, which did not experience significant agrarian reform during the 1930s, by demonstrating how federal agencies (other than the military) only began to exert influence in the early 1950s. In terms of Mexican education history, this research moves us beyond the postrevolutionary era by critically exploring midcentury national policy changes and debates over the utility and value of indigenous language instruction. In addition, whereas Mexican teacher union history has frequently been discussed in isolation from education practice, I examine how teacher union

struggles of the 1970s and early 1980s shaped possibilities for both indigenous educators and their classroom practice. The period of liberalizing reforms known as the *apertura democrática*, or democratic opening, is frequently described as an effort to coopt government opponents. I argue against this cooptation narrative by demonstrating how President Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) employed tried and true tactics of negotiation with mobilized sectors to both concede to and control emerging aspirations. It is in this regard that the Mexican regime, earlier than most of its Latin American counterparts, employed the rhetoric of indigenous cultural and linguistic rights to reformulate its corporatist rule. Finally, this research suggests that indigenous resurgence in Latin America has its origins in post World War II developmentalism that relied on indigenous brokers. This, in combination with the rise of anti-colonial politics, shaped generations of youth who went on to articulate specific rights as indigenous people and a place within Latin American nations.

The contradictions of indigenismo worked themselves out not as a binary process of domination and resistance but rather through economic, social, and political processes as they were perceived and managed by state elites and local native peoples. As a process of both meaning and power-making indigenismo was not an open-ended project but neither was it oppositional. Rather, ideology, economic and social processes, as well as political and cultural practices circumscribed indigenista practice.

The literature on indigenismo has largely focused on questions of race and the role of indigenous and non-indigenous intellectuals in government policy and indigenous organizations. In the case of Ecuador, Marc Becker has characterized the official indigenista agency, the Instituto Indigenista Ecuatoriano, of the 1940s as an



assimilationist project based mainly of middle class urban white men who remained disconnected from indigenous struggles in contrast to the Communist Party affiliated indigenous federations.<sup>7</sup> Becker identifies the Communist Party, developmentalist policies of the 1960s, and progressive religious groups as contributing to later ethnic resurgence and indigenous mobilization in Ecuador. In contrast, Laura Gotkowitz's work uncovering the indigenous roots of the 1952 Bolivian Revolution demonstrates substantive shifts in Bolivian indigenismo, depicting the assimilationist policies of the 1920s giving way to more egalitarian trends in the 1940s.<sup>8</sup> These trends helped organize a 1945 indigenous congress that preceded and contributed to the revolutionary activity of the early 1950s. Indigenista policy changed and evolved over the twentieth century and was marked by divergent national experiences.

National governments, different generations of intellectuals and indigenous communities themselves all marshaled indigenismo for distinct ends. Marisol de la Cadena has explored how indigenista politics were shaped by regional power configurations in the case of Cuzco, Peru. Echoing Díaz-Polanco's class analysis, others have framed indigenismo as primarily a middle class critique of landed elites.<sup>9</sup> While Peruvian indigenista thinking shifted in the 1940s toward more class-oriented politics, de la Cadena argues these shifts were superficial and racial othering continued to operate in these frameworks, albeit through "racialized notions of culture."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Marc Becker, *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 85.

<sup>8</sup> Gotkowitz, *A Revolution for Our Rights*.

<sup>9</sup> Earle, 186.

<sup>10</sup> Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 141.

In this regard, scholars have done well in critiquing indigenismo as a discursive operation, from the nineteenth century forward, in which a prehispanic past was celebrated while championing the modernization of contemporary indigenous peoples. Dominant theories have treated indigenismo as a “non-Indian construction of the Indian” and a process of “othering” aimed at the destruction of indigenous cultures, seen as obstacles to the fulfillment of *mestizaje*, an ideal of racial mixture and citizenship.<sup>11</sup> These arguments, while compelling in the abstract, fail to appreciate how those marked as indigenous used the rhetoric of indigenismo to challenge forms of social exclusion.

The emphasis on indigenismo’s discursive operations, the negation of one element over another, is a decidedly Althusserian mode of analysis, emphasizing ideology over lived experience. These authors stress an ideological project based on the maintenance and re-articulation of difference, that simultaneously upholds an always unreachable racial process of whitening.<sup>12</sup> I share much of this perspective. Yet there is a further tension in the history of indigenista policy and practice that must be added to this critique. While indigenismo’s universalism, or what Florencia Mallon has critiqued as “historicism,” involves an inevitable hostility to particularism and autonomy, there is also a tension between the integrationist and educational impulse within indigenista thinking

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<sup>11</sup> See, David Brading, “Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 7, no. 1 (1988): 75-89; Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940,” in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 71-102. The claims that indigenismo was fundamentally a process of othering or racialization are not limited to the Porfirian or early twentieth century experiences. Carlos García Mora argues that *indigenismo* “fue la forma mexicana del racismo en el siglo XX,” see “Los Proyectos Tarascos, Implicaciones Actuales” edited version of commentary presented at the Grupo Kw’aniskyyarhani de Estudios del Pueblo Purépecha, March 31, 2001, <http://www.tsimathu.com/> (accessed October, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Jorge Klor de Alva has elaborated this understanding of *mestizaje* as a fundamentally ideological project, see, “The Postcolonization of the (Latin) American Experience: A Reconsideration of ‘Colonialisms,’ ‘Postcolonialism,’ and ‘Mestizaje,’” in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 241-278.

and what Mallon describes as a “solidarity impulse,” the effort to sympathize and form solidarity with indigenous aspirations and modes of being.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the ambivalent space of indigenista practice was far from monolithic or predetermined. Just as modernizing efforts threatened indigenous particularism, indigenista agents also at times aimed to empower indigenous communities with tools to defend themselves. This research explores this ambiguous space primarily through the experience of indigenous education reform.

### **The Mexican Revolution and the Politics of Language**

In 1910, one of the great upheavals of the twentieth century erupted in Mexico when Francisco Madero led an uprising against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Madero’s revolt unleashed a wave of oppositional activity, in which masses of rural people challenged the legitimacy of the regime. Once Díaz was expelled, competing generals and their armies battled for control of regions and the central state. The armed phase of the revolution lasted from roughly 1910 to 1920, though the *Cristero* War lasted well into the 1920s. General Plutarco Calles, from the northern state of Sonora, centralized power in the 1920s and helped found the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) in 1929. Among the revolution’s accomplishments were the Constitution of 1917, which guaranteed social provisions for the country’s popular classes, the reversal of trends toward land concentration, and official rhetoric celebrated the popular participation of rural people. President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) oversaw the implementation of many of the reforms laid out in the Constitution of 1917. Out of this process emerged a national government whose strength derived from corporate

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<sup>13</sup> Florencia Mallon, ““La piedra en el zapato”: El pueblo Mapuche y el estado chileno, los pueblos indígenas y los estados en América Latina,” (paper presented in Karin Roseblatt’s graduate seminar, College Park, MD, April 24, 2011).

organizations and regional power blocks.<sup>14</sup> Scholars have debated nearly every aspect of the revolutionary process, with some even questioning its revolutionary character.<sup>15</sup> In the post-1968 era, a generation of intellectuals characterized the revolution as a fundamentally top-down process that built a strong, centralized state, yet in the 1980s, scholars began to question the homogeneity of the experience, using regional case studies to point to its diverse roots and local participation.<sup>16</sup>

The postrevolutionary state's Ministry of Education (SEP in its Spanish initials) forged a national culture and politics through the creation of curricula and activities superficially drawn from regional practices yet primarily conceived from a modernizing position.<sup>17</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s education officials viewed a modern, homogenized population speaking a national language as key to development. Mexico, a country with literally dozens of indigenous peoples and languages as well as regional political fiefdoms, had to be tied into one nation. Historians of Mexican education, Mary Kay Vaughan and Elsie Rockwell, have effectively shown how education policy facilitated this process of state formation.<sup>18</sup> These studies opened up theoretical ground to critique previous interpretations of indigenismo. Building on this literature, Alexander Dawson employs Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural distinction along with a model of

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<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey W. Rubin, "De-Centering the Regime: Culture and Regional Politics in Mexico," *Latin American Research Review* 31, no. 3 (1996): 85-126.

<sup>15</sup> For a classical review of literature on the Revolution, see Alan Knight, "The Mexican Revolution: Bourgeois, Nationalist or Just a 'Great Rebellion?'" *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 4, no. 2 (1985): 1-37.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Kay Vaughan, "Cultural Approaches to Peasant Politics in the Mexican Revolution," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (May 1999): 269-305.

<sup>17</sup> The clearest articulation of this process is found in Mary Kay Vaughan's, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> See, Vaughan, *Cultural Politics*; Elsie Rockwell, *Hacer Escuela, Hacer Estado: La educación posrevolucionaria vista desde Tlaxcala* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2007).

hegemony to frame indigenista practice as a system of both power and of negotiation, in which indigeneity served as cultural capital.<sup>19</sup> Dawson's theoretical framing moves us beyond the idea that indigenismo was solely a non-native construction of the Indian toward seeing indigenismo as part of a broader, contested process of meaning making and state formation. Indigenismo, like indigeneity itself, was contested and formulated for competing ends.

### **The letter enters with blood<sup>20</sup>**

As a key component of this process, language policy sought to create a unified nation of citizens and forge a national language. The mission of rural teachers was to *castellanizar* (teach the Spanish language to) a rural population often monolingual in indigenous languages.<sup>21</sup> Most famously, the Ministry of Education's Rafael Ramírez worried of federal rural teachers 'going native,' assimilating to local culture rather than integrating the indigenous into a national culture, and issued harsh warnings against any use of vernacular languages in the classroom.<sup>22</sup> Rural teachers, while attempting to uplift indigenous communities through agricultural, health, and hygiene reform, often came from without and employed corporal punishment to achieve Spanish language literacy.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 154.

<sup>20</sup> The phrase refers to the practice of corporal punishment in the classroom. While its origins are most likely in nineteenth century education literature, it became associated with the twentieth century drive for *castellanización* or Indian acculturation.

<sup>21</sup> The verb *castellanizar* does not lend itself to a simple translation. It most literally means to Spanish-ize. While in this case the focus was on language there were a host of other cultural assumptions that accompanied the idea.

<sup>22</sup> Rafael Ramírez's arguments against the use of indigenous language in classrooms have become ammunition for indigenous language activists today. He is the veritable punching bag for those who propose bilingual intercultural education. Yet during his time, Ramírez was a veritable radical, proposing education policy that would liberate indigenous peoples from their subordinated position. For a more balanced treatment, see Rockwell, 157.

<sup>23</sup> For descriptions of corporal punishment, see Elías Pérez Pérez, *La Crisis de la educación indígena en el área tzotzil: Los Altos de Chiapas* (México: UPN y Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2003),

The stories of such violence reveal a dynamic of racialized power that was a daily experience for indigenous students.<sup>24</sup> There were notable exceptions to this policy. In 1939, some SEP officials raised the possibility of instruction in native language, arguing that the use of indigenous languages facilitated Spanish language acquisition.<sup>25</sup> In particular the Proyecto Tarasco, spearheaded by US linguist Morris Swadesh in the state of Michoacán, experimented with indigenous language-use in the classroom, and promoted indigenous language magazines and cultural revival.<sup>26</sup> These experiences, along with more experimentation with bilingual education by the INI in the mid-1950s, constituted important precedents and demonstrate the pluralist potential of indigenista language practice.

### **Cold War Developmentalism**

In the first half of the twentieth century in Mexico, the Ministries of Education and Agrarian Reform were primarily responsible for carrying out federal policy towards indigenous populations. Yet in the post-war years, indigenous policy intersected with a new set of ideas concerning economic growth and national progress. Internationally, a school of thought (and subsequently policy) regarding so-called underdeveloped nations coalesced within international institutions formed by the victors of World War II. Termed developmentalism, this body of thought aimed to promote economic growth of developing nations on capitalist terms, with national governments (in collaboration with

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49; Marcos A. Cruz Bautista, interview by author, San Miguel el Grande, Oaxaca, November 11, 2009.

<sup>24</sup> The stories are not only of wooden switches but of the public shaming and punishments that involved placing indigenous children in stress positions for hours. Brett Gustafson has effectively used the Anibal Quijano's notion of coloniality of power to describe similar experiences in Bolivian education, see, Bret Gustafson, *New Languages of the State. Indigenous Resurgence and the Politics of Knowledge in Bolivia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 18-19.

<sup>25</sup> Dawson, 79.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 57.

international agencies) playing a directing role. Inextricably tied to the Cold War, developmentalism promised a linear progression toward “first world” status and capitalist modernity. Further, developmental policy identified rural, agricultural regions in the global south as traditional and lacking integration into modern economic production. As such, rural regions in Latin America, Asia and Africa were vulnerable to appeals by communist and radical forces and became in effect the “final frontier” of Cold War developmentalism, as Carlota McAllister has argued in the case of Guatemala.<sup>27</sup>

Mexico’s Cold War posture constituted a balancing act between its rhetorical support for the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and its political and economic alliances with its northern neighbor, the United States. Formed out of its own social revolution at the beginning of the century, the state’s Cold War posture differed from the more overtly violent and anti-communist regimes of the period. Developmentalism therefore intersected with traditions of agrarian reform and social justice, whose imprint on the Mexican regime and political culture was slow to fade, even under neoliberal reforms at the end of the century. During the post World War II years, developmentalism appeared to produce results in Mexico, with national economic indicators demonstrating strong growth, particularly in industry and commercial agriculture.<sup>28</sup> Part of this developmentalism was the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), established in 1948.

While the INI drew on previous government traditions to “uplift” indigenous peoples, it was guided by the developmentalist notion of promoting internal markets and

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<sup>27</sup> Carlota McAllister, “Rural Markets, Revolutionary Souls, and Rebellious Women in Cold War Guatemala,” in *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* ed. Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 352-535.

<sup>28</sup> This economic growth, emerging out the wartime economy, was later termed “Mexico’s miracle” or *desarrollo estabilizador*. It is widely understood by scholars that this growth exacerbated inequality and placed Mexico’s small-scale agricultural producers in an even more precarious position than previous decades.

integration, through a host of infrastructure and health projects. The INI targeted marginalized regions with road construction, electrification, potable water systems, education and literacy programs, health and hygiene reforms, as well as new agricultural and animal husbandry methods. To carry out such projects, the INI relied on local agents of development, termed promoters, and its organizational structure deliberately targeted perceived non-integrated regions, initiating coordinating centers throughout the republic, with its first centers located in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, and then in Oaxaca in 1954.<sup>29</sup> While clearly operating under similar assumptions, critics have generally considered the INI the caboose of the developmentalist train, lacking significant funding and resources.

Modernization theory versions of developmentalism did not go unchallenged for long. By the early 1960s, social scientists in Latin America, influenced by their own nationalist traditions and various currents of Marxism, began to articulate a counter-explanation to modernization theory's conceptualization of unequal economic development. Rather than positing a deficitory explanation, the alleged lack of integration into modern economic activity, these intellectuals argued so-called developing economies were deeply integrated into the world economy and modernity, some claimed since the colonial period forward, but that this integration was on fundamentally unequal terms. In other words, the economies of Europe and North America were wealthy precisely because other regions were poor. Further, many of these authors rejected the traditional-modern dichotomy posited by modernization theory, pointing out that modern economic

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<sup>29</sup> See Steven Lewis, "Mexico's National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951-1954," *Ethnohistory* 55, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 609-632. Lewis' careful study reveals what many critics of developmentalism argue, namely that the INI, rather than confronting structures of inequality, in this case unequal land tenure and labor relations, ultimately focused on modifying the behavior of the indigenous population.



activity had often relied on pre-capitalist forms of subsistence production.<sup>30</sup> Dependency theorists, or *dependentistas* as they became known, variously argued for large-scale state intervention to protect and support national economic production, paralleling previous efforts of Import-Substitution-Industrialization, or a wholesale rejection of the international economic system and supported efforts for radical social transformation.

Components of dependency theory influenced Latin American development policy in the 1970s, in countries such as Cuba and Chile but also international agencies such as the Economic Commission for Latin America, the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development, the International Labour Office and the World Bank, which for a moment focused on economic inequality itself as a barrier to further economic growth. Mexico too engaged in state-led development efforts to combat inequality, particularly rural poverty in this period. After witnessing a postwar economic boom in urban centers and northern manufacturing, President Echeverría marshaled state resources to spur rural development and agrarian reform.<sup>31</sup>

### **Postdevelopment**

Toward the end of the twentieth century, scholars began to historicize developmentalism as a political and discursive project. The developmentalist experience has to be judged according to a number of different registers. On a macro level, where much of the postdevelopment literature operates, development projects, even those informed by notions of anti-colonialism, dependency theory, or indigenous and

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<sup>30</sup> See María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's discussion of Rodolfo Stavenhagen, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 50.

<sup>31</sup> See, Alan Knight, "Cárdenas and Echeverría: Two "Populist" Presidents Compared," in *Populism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, ed. Amelia Kiddle and Maria L.O. Muñoz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 15-37.

*campesino* liberation, were ultimately universalizing projects whose very nature was hostile to local particularism, indigenous alterity and failed even on their own terms.<sup>32</sup> In this view, indigenista efforts combined the economic expansionism of capitalist modernity with a racial othering that more often than not failed to empower actors marked as indigenous and at their best relegated them to peripheral modes of production.

Yet to emphasize only this level of analysis would be a vulgarization of the historical experience of indigenismo. In this sense, postdevelopment scholars who stress incorporation as subjugation share a great deal with critiques of nineteenth century liberalism or twentieth century national popular regimes that stress only their circumscribing dynamics. This line of analysis, while compelling in its indictment of the persistence of social hierarchies, fails to account for the struggles of meaning inherent in projects of incorporation. Indeed entire literatures have developed reevaluating the experience of liberalism and national-popular regimes that stress the radical and popular currents within projects that ultimately resulted in the empowerment of elite classes.<sup>33</sup> While the physical and epistemic violence of indigenismo cannot be ignored, nor should its discursive importance, which was far from a tightly controlled hegemonic project. Just

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<sup>32</sup> See, Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash, "Beyond development, what?" *Development in Practice* 8, no. 3 (August 1998); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Saldaña-Portillo, 2002.

<sup>33</sup> For nineteenth century liberalism see; Peter Guardino, *The Time of Liberty: Popular Political Culture in Oaxaca, 1750-1850* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Marixa Lasso, "Race War and Nation in Caribbean Gran Colombia, Cartagena, 1810-1832," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 2 (April 2006): 336-361; Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). For national-popular regimes see, Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class 1943 - 1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Vaughan, "Cultural Approaches to Peasant Politics in the Mexican Revolution;" Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*; Karin Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

as government officials and institutions used indigenista rhetoric to further their integrationist aims, so too could others reformulate it for different ends, particularly as that project increasingly involved indigenous brokers to implement local efforts. I examine this contradiction in chapter four, “Indigenismo Occupied.”

For example, the anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, a central figure in the third, or critical generation of indigenistas, gained fame with his 1987 volume, *México Profundo: Una Civilización Negada*, in which he critiqued 500 years of colonial rule and the negation of an indigenous past and called for a radical multiculturalism.<sup>34</sup> Yet as early as 1968, in his contribution to the sixth Inter-American Indigenista Congress, Bonfil articulated similar ideas. One could read this as laying the groundwork for late twentieth century official multiculturalism in Latin America. And indeed, many of the ideas appear to anticipate just that. But the temptation to read this history as a tight, homogenizing experience, which only reformulated forms of hierarchy, has to be guarded against. Further, the act of reading the historical outcome onto experiences of the past risks eliminating historical contingency.

The anthropologists and social scientists of the early 1970s were operating in a particular context and their ideas regarding alternate modes of development and pluralist approaches to indigenous alterity did not have the finality they now seem to have. In other words, in a world that seemed radically primed for change, they put forward these notions with the hopes that other possibilities would be put forward, that these alternate models might create more space for self-determination and empowerment. In other words, to chalk up the entire experience of indigenista developmentalism to a malicious

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<sup>34</sup> Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo: Una Civilización Negada* (Mexico: Random House Mondadori, 2008), 232.

universalizing principle is inadequate in the attempt to comprehend the complexity of the historical moment.<sup>35</sup> And this particular historical moment was one where social change appeared not only possible but also seemingly inevitable. Within the broad developmentalist experience, different social forces, the balance of class forces, and ideologies shaped the way development was experienced. In this sense, the developmentalism pushed by economic elites who favored urbanization and industrialization versus development models that attempted to mollify the effects of such processes through state intervention and attention to materially impoverished regions such as the Mixteca Alta cannot be dismissed as just more of the same. It is in this sense that the efforts of educators and development workers in the Mixteca during this period are historically significant.

### **1968 and the Nature of *Apertura Democrática***

As Mexico's postwar economy boomed and the population grew exponentially, the political alliances forged in the 1930s under the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) and institutionalized under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), began to fray. Corporate organizations such as the Confederación Nacional de Campesinos (CNC) and trade unions that had served as integrative units within the PRI system, increasingly could not contain the conflicts engendered by demographic growth and the attendant social and political ambitions of the population. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw increasing dissent among educated youth in urban areas as well as significant

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<sup>35</sup> Saldaña, 23. Among Postdevelopment scholars, Saldaña has offered a more compelling critique, as she argues "Developments' discursive emergence was thus, paradoxically, *both* a liberatory strategy for decolonizing the world *and* a "neutral" rearticulation of racialized colonial categories as national difference. Development rendered formal colonialism obsolete, but it also gave imperial knowledge production a new lease on life."

regional oppositional movements in provincial Mexico (the Jaramillistas in the state of Morelos for example). This political and generational cleavage came to a head in 1968 in Mexico City, as a conglomeration of factors, not least of which was the influence of the Cuban Revolution, brought educated youth into conflict with educational and political authorities. October 2, 1968 Tlaltelolco square, the now iconic symbol of government repression of the student movement in anticipation of the upcoming Olympic games, has become a *parteaguas* or watershed moment in Mexican history and collective memory. Subsequent generations of intellectuals and historians have viewed 1968 as a moment when the Mexican regime was unmasked, revealing its authoritarian character to Mexican and international audiences alike.

1968 in Mexico formed part of a broader conflict between generations and political systems. The Cuban Revolution and other anti-colonial movements such as the U.S. war in Vietnam inspired global unrest as youth imagined alternatives to the Cold War polarization. During this same period, a critical mass of indigenous actors and allies formed a new, transnational politics of indigenous resurgence. This resurgence emerged out of the diverse experiences of the American Indian Movement in the United States, indigenous people such as the Xavante of Brazil who had only recently experienced sustained contact with the Brazilian state, to countries such as Bolivia or Guatemala where indigenous peoples enjoyed a numerical majority despite continued subjugation to a white minority. Indigenous activists engaged the United Nations, progressive church organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and new discourses of human rights and anti-racism, to make claims for rights on the basis of ethnicity and originalism.

In Mexico, this process developed in tandem what was termed the *apertura democrática*, or democratic opening under the presidency of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976). In the wake of the repression of the dissident youth, the Mexican regime reformulated its rule through a host of reforms in the educational, political and economic sectors, the legacies of which are still being debated by contemporary observers.

Yet for this research project, the significance of the democratic opening lies in its particular attention to indigenous education and development policy. As previous organs of political rule in rural Mexico lost legitimacy, the regime in effect reformulated its rule along increasingly multicultural and pluralist lines. Promoting a host of indigenous educational reform and development programs, along with initiating and organizing councils of Mexico's diverse indigenous peoples, the federal government aimed to get ahead of indigenous aspirations and direct oppositional activity into containable ethnic organizing. This is not to dismiss the real achievements of indigenous youth and activists campaigning for improved schools or government attention but rather to draw attention to the ways in which the PRI regime effectively marshaled the rhetoric of indigenous rights for its ongoing authoritarian political project. Models of resistance and integration do not fully account for this political and social exchange in which degrees of incorporation within state structures were often precisely what people struggled over.

It is in this regard that this dissertation contributes to our understanding of the broad shift from the class-based politics of the first half of the twentieth century toward a politics of indigenous representation and mobilization. The Mexican regime was not alone in its use of indigenous rhetoric to reformulate its rule but it was at the forefront of this approach in Latin America. While some scholars have framed the *sexenio* of

President Echeverría as a “return” to a populist political style associated with Lázaro Cárdenas, this ignores the historical continuity that existed throughout mid-century Mexico, from President Cárdenas to President Echeverría, in which actors within and outside the state negotiated forms of rule.<sup>36</sup> While the style of the president may have shifted, the fundamental relations of rule remained consistent. The experience of Oaxacan educators and their negotiations with federal authorities in the second half of the 1970s demonstrates this point.

### **Approaches to Indigenous Education & Development**

Scholars have characterized contemporary processes of indigenous organization and mobilization as ethnic resurgence. Beginning in the early 1970s but accelerating in the 1980s and early 1990s in Central America and elsewhere, movements based on notions of indigenous revindication proliferated. These movements were diverse in their manifestations; some developing out of the context of military dictatorships and civil wars, others out of less intense political contexts. Yet nearly all these social formations coincided with neoliberal reforms that had particularly drastic effects on rural indigenous peoples’ agriculture subsistence. An extensive literature employs concepts such as ethnic identity or ethnic resurgence to analyze these movements and as such forms part of a larger academic literature on identity-based movements. Contemporary studies that employ the concept of ethnic resurgence are almost universally constructivist in nature and reject static notions of indigenous identity.<sup>37</sup> In the case of Guatemala, a Pan-Maya

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<sup>36</sup> See, María Muñoz and Amelia Kiddle, “Introduction: Men of the People: Lázaro Cárdenas, Luis Echeverría, and Revolutionary Populism,” in *Populism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, ed. Kiddle and Munoz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 1-14.

<sup>37</sup> See Seth Garfield, *Indigenous Struggle at the Heart of Brazil: State Policy, Frontier Expansion, and the Xavante Indians, 1937-1988* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 15. For

movement developed in the aftermath of the most violent phase of the Guatemalan civil war (1975-1985) and made cultural claims to reaffirm Maya communities' place in the nation.<sup>38</sup>

In the case of Zapotec region of Juchitán, Oaxaca, the political mobilization that occurred there, beginning in the late 1960s and achieving its height in the early 1980s, based itself around a notion of being Zapotec that stressed ideas of unconquerability and the struggle for social justice. Howard Campbell portrays this resurgence as deriving from a historically rooted project of Zapotec empowerment; an internal struggle against local elites, and intellectuals and students who had traveled outside the isthmus and in that context developed a radical, dissident politics based on a particular notion of being Zapotec.<sup>39</sup> In neither case are these movements portrayed as backward looking in nature, rather, as Campbell and Warren both stress, they are engaged in a project of creating new forms of cultural meaning useful for particular political projects of inclusion of previously marginalized groups.<sup>40</sup>

While I employ the concept of ethnic resurgence, I prefer to use the concept of political subjectivity in exploring the experience of bilingual teachers in the Mixteca

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example, Garfield states: "ethnic cultures, born out of resistance and adaptation to domination, must be seen as transformative and relational rather than timeless, capsulized essences."

<sup>38</sup> Kay Warren, *Indigenous Movements and their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 87.

<sup>39</sup> Howard Campbell, *Zapotec Renaissance: Ethnic Politics and Cultural Revivalism in Southern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994). For a comparative work on Juchitán see, Jeffrey Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>40</sup> Just as it is useful to analyze notions of indigenous identity employed by grassroots political movements as fluid and constructed, these self-identifications are often attached to struggles over very intransigent forms of political and economic power. In the case of Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, Lynn Stephen has interrogated the internal dynamics of Zapotec ethnic identity, examining the difference between its external representations and internal manifestations, demonstrating how notions of being Zapotec are deeply tied to questions of class and politics, see Stephen, "The Creation and Re-Creation of Ethnicity: Lessons from the Zapotec and Mixtec of Oaxaca," *Latin American Perspectives* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 34.



Alta. I use subjectivity to denote a set of inherently political beliefs about oneself and one's relation to the broader world. Whereas much of the literature on ethnic identity is at pains to stress its fluid and constructed nature, I find the term too associated with notions of fixity. Political subjectivity allows one to move away from debates over the nature of ethnic identity and toward an approach that reckons with self-identifications as they are mobilized in specific struggles and contestation.<sup>41</sup>

This theoretical position is informed by Fredrick Cooper and Brubaker's sweeping critique of the use of identity as a category of analysis in academic literature. Cooper and Brubaker offer the distinction between a "category of practice" and a "category of analysis."<sup>42</sup> I find this distinction useful in studying bilingual teachers and activists who, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, employed notions of indigeneity in their political mobilization and pedagogical training. While indigenous identity was a "category of practice" it is not necessarily the most helpful category of analysis. My project is concerned, not with a unitary indigenous identity but rather a political subjectivity that emphasized both a shared indigenous past and also a diverse indigenous present with diverse languages and cultures. This project was employed in confrontation with local political elites, in reaction to development programs, and processes of neoliberal reforms and was therefore a political subjectivity regarding indigenous peoples' place in the nation.

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<sup>41</sup> I borrow the concept of subjectivity from Saldaña-Portillo's chapter on Sandinista agricultural policy in *The Revolutionary Imagination*, 109-147.

<sup>42</sup> Brubaker and Cooper, 4-5. The authors go on to propose more precise categories of analysis such as identification, categorization, and commonality, connectedness or groupness. J.L. Comaroff explores this same question of subject of analysis vs. explanatory principle in, "Of Totemism and Ethnicity: Consciousness, Practice and the Signs of Inequality," in *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. Originally published in *Ethnos* 52, no. 3-4 (1987): 301-323.

Paige Raibmon has offered a similarly useful conceptualization of indigenous tradition as a way of making the past speak to the present that illustrates both its fluid nature in the modern context and its deep social significance.<sup>43</sup> What Raibmon as well as Dawson's work points to is the double-edged nature of indigenous politics and representation, which can both empower but also circumscribe indigenous agency at given historical moments. Indigenous subjectivities are themselves terrains of struggle which are not to be judged normatively as net positives or negatives but rather as historically produced and also productive themselves. In Kay Warren's work on Maya activists in Guatemala she has usefully framed this process as the "rolling distinctiveness" of being Maya.<sup>44</sup> This project deals with the specific relationship between indigeneity and processes of development, modernization and Cold War politics.

### **Methodologies**

My methodological approach combines oral histories with archival research. To evaluate the experience of indigenismo I conducted approximately two dozen interviews with indigenous educators, indigenista bureaucrats, and grassroots activists, the majority of whom worked and lived in the state of Oaxaca. As Alessandro Portelli has pointed out, oral history is valuable to historians in its ability to access, however mediated, the lived experience of historical events.<sup>45</sup> A large literature on the methodology and practice of oral history has critically examined problems that confront oral historians.<sup>46</sup> This

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<sup>43</sup> Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 206.

<sup>44</sup> Warren, 12.

<sup>45</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 67.

<sup>46</sup> For perhaps the most introspective book in this literature, in which the author interrogates the relationship between the interviewer and subject, see Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000). An eloquent

literature has questioned the nature of memory, the role of the historian as a veiled mediator, and the overall historical accuracy of oral or testimonial narratives. One of the tasks of oral history has been to acknowledge the challenges inherent in the methodology without allowing those complications to overpower the historical narrative. My approach to oral history has been to treat the oral narratives I collected as forms of memory and self-narrative that are, as are all historical sources, inherently partial and subjective yet necessarily part of the dialogue of making the past speak to the present.

Indigenous teachers and communities' lived experiences are not fully accessible through trade union or other institutional archives and therefore individual profiles and interviews are key to exploring the meaning of broader political and policy shifts. Furthermore, oral histories of former students, some of whom went on to become indigenous teachers themselves, and their families provide insight into what bilingual education meant for the students and make concrete the debates among family members as to the utility of native language instruction (many of whom favored Spanish language instruction). Equally as important, formal shifts in policy were rarely consistently applied in local contexts and therefore oral interviews allow one to explore the gap between official policy and the quotidian practice of indigenous education.

Educational archives, didactic materials and policy papers form another body of evidence. Periodical accounts helped piece together the narrative for the post-1940 period in which the archival record was often difficult to access and lacking substantive organization. In addition, given the attraction of Oaxaca's indigenous communities and market systems to twentieth century anthropologists and other social scientists,

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counterexample is Peter Winn's work on textile workers in Chile, see, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

contemporary field studies of the Mixteca in particular and the state of Oaxaca more generally provided invaluable demographic and statistical information for this study.

The politically charged nature of indigenous education and development policy in Mexico has meant that state security archives provide a wealth of information on the struggles within indigenista reform. State agents collected detailed accounts of labor disputes, political mobilizations, and the daily operations of indigenista bureaucrats. As such, the analytical focus on indigenista policy and reform, privileges a state project. This constitutes a limitation of the project, as it ultimately privileges the state's point of view. The oral histories, along with a critical reading of surveillance documents, serve to broaden our understanding of the experience of this particular state project, yet the state as such remains a central actor.

## **Chapter Organization**

As a project of state integration, I explore indigenista politics through a range of experiential levels. I begin by examining the ideological operations implicit in indigenista thinking on a particular highland indigenous region, the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca. I then examine 1950s indigenista educational reform in the region through an experimental radio school program and the youth contracted to implement that project. Stepping back from the local experience of indigenista practice, I discuss the 1968 Inter-American Indigenista Congress as window into a rupture in indigenista thinking, as notions of dependent development and internal colonialism came to contend with modernization theory-inspired approaches. Returning to Oaxaca, I examine the formation of a generation of bilingual teachers trained by the dissident indigenistas of 1968, as they struggled for collective bargaining rights and their professionalization. I conclude by

examining the contradictions within the institutionalization of indigenous education reform in the late 1970s. These multiple levels of analysis provide an accounting of the experiences of indigenismo from the level of state intellectuals, a particular region that became the focus of indigenista attention, international policy debates, indigenous youth employed by indigenista agencies, and national-level policy reform.

In chapter one, I examine social scientific constructions of the Mixteca Alta in the mid-twentieth century and the human geography identified as barriers to the development of the region. A highland region in the Sierra Madre del Sur, the Mixteca Alta was a region of extreme linguistic diversity with multiple variants of the dominant Mixtec competing with other languages groups such as Triqui and Chocholteco. The anthropologists and economists commissioned by the federal government to study the Mixteca in the 1950s drew intellectual inspiration from development models that presumed regional barriers to modernization and integration into the nation state. These models drew on a social scientific tradition of national character studies and had particularly troubling implications for regions marked as indigenous. As geographer Matthew Farish has pointed out:

The imaginative location of the primitive—the inversion of the national—is also the terminus of the national character thesis, where the veneer of cultural difference can hardly disguise a proximity to biological theories of race. Yet these primitive geographies—and the philosophies, rich in moralistic tenor, that create them—are not empty fantasy or the stuff of innocent academic curiosity. The performative discourses of national character, which are “simultaneously descriptive and normative,” should be considered as part of a larger, powerful apparatus.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Matthew Farish, *The Contours of America's Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 79.

In the case of the Mixteca, indigenista thinkers identified language practices as a prime marker of the primitive or indigeneity. While these thinkers were inspired by visions of social justice associated with agrarianism of the Revolution and Cárdenista reforms, they nevertheless contributed to a racialization of the region, whose very indigeneity was to be overcome. These studies were commissioned as a prelude to the arrival of federal indigenista efforts in 1954 and as such this chapter examines the individual actors that constitute a state project.

Chapter two turns to a pilot bilingual radio school program implemented by the INI in the Mixteca Alta in 1958. Part and parcel of the INI's efforts to "integrate" indigenous regions into the nation state, the INI developed an experimental radio project to broadcast educational programming to remote Mixtec communities lacking trained teachers. Combining short-wave radio technology with an emphasis on bilingual instruction, the use of both Spanish and Mixtec in its broadcasts, the program aimed to facilitate literacy, math and civics instruction for Mixtec-speaking children (subsequently Triqui children as well). During this period a minority of indigenista officials supported the use of indigenous languages in primary education and the pilot radio program was part of this renewed interest. In navigating the reality of local conditions, INI officials were forced to contend with regional elites wary of federal interference and hostile Catholic officials who viewed the INI's efforts through the lens of anti-communism. The radio school experience, which lasted from 1958 to 1965, demonstrates the significant challenges federal officials faced in implementing bilingual instruction, even with the sufficient institutional backing, in a region of extreme linguistic diversity.

This period of indigenista experimentation was eclipsed by the subsequent growth of indigenista development agencies, the number of INI coordinating centers nationally grew exponentially in the 1960s, along with its staff, and the SEP began its national service of bilingual promoters in 1964. This expansion of the indigenista bureaucracy went hand in hand with the expansion of primary education after the post war population boom. This process also gave rise to a generational break in indigenista thought by mid-1960s.

Chapter three explores this political and generational rupture in indigenista thinking through the experience of the 1968 Inter-American Indigenista Congress, which took place in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán. Part of the post-1959 Cuban Revolution and anti-colonial political milieu, ideas of dependent development and internal colonialism inspired young anthropologists and indigenista thinkers to critique the previous generation's practice and theoretical frameworks. April 1968 was a moment of change in Mexico, just prior to the eruption of the student movement in Mexico City and its subsequent repression and prior to President Echeverría's democratic opening that would re-engage many of the youth at the congress. The debates at the congress demonstrate the increasing instability of the indigenista project, the beginnings of a reformulation of paradigms of incorporation, and a turn toward a more robust cultural pluralism. Indigenista politics in this regard also served as professional field for which educated youth positioned themselves as professionals.

This shifting indigenista intellectual terrain had significant ramifications for educational policy and practice. In 1969, an up and coming PRI couple in the state of Oaxaca, Víctor and Gloria Bravo Ahuja, converted a school for *mejoradoras del hogar*

rural into an institution for indigenous development and research. Upon becoming the state governor, Victor Bravo Ahuja appointed his wife, a Colegio de México-trained linguist, as director of the new institute, in which the couple marshaled their substantial business and political connections to build an innovative research and rural development institution that would train indigenous youth as development and educational brokers. Yet Bravo Ahuja relied on individuals associated with the dissident-wing of indigenismo, such as Margarita Nolasco, to lead the institute and train the indigenous youth. The youth and their instructors engaged alternative ideas of community development and indigenous liberation, reading widely in Marxist and other radical literature. The youth, termed *promotores*, also dialogued with a growing dissident university student movement in Oaxaca City. This experience demonstrates the changing social spaces in which indigenous youth came of age, in this case under a new generation of indigenista thinkers. The youth eventually succeeded in winning permanent positions within the Ministry of Education as well as guarantees of their professionalization. As such, their experience is representative both of a weakened juncture in the PRI political project, in which its corporate organs were strained and ineffective, as well as beginnings of a reformulation of PRI rule.

The final and fifth chapter pairs the experience of Oaxacan educators with the institutionalization of indigenous education reform in the late 1970s. Part of broader reform policies under the presidencies of Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo, the institutionalization of a new indigenous education agency came in response to the denunciations of indigenista intellectuals and a growing cohort of bilingual teachers of ethnocide and racism on the part of government institutions and programs. This chapter



analyzes Dirección General de Educación Indígena (DGEI) curricula and core programs, teacher training and the creation of didactic materials in indigenous languages. It grounds these national changes in the experience of Oaxacan educators and the dissident trade union movement that emerged at the end of the decade. While federal policy had made a substantial turn toward instruction in indigenous languages, Oaxacan educational practice revealed the tension between education as promoting social mobility through de-indianization and a politics of cultural authenticity.

The dissertation concludes with an examination of classroom experience at the beginning of the 1980s and the gap between educational policy that instructed indigenous educators to maintain and valorize vernacular languages and the educators' own practice. This local experience is framed within a discussion of the indigenista policy from the mid-1950s until 1982, the year in which the Mexican state defaulted on its external debt. This period roughly marks the beginning and end of Mexico's authoritarian developmentalist state as the post-1982 state turned away from a state-centered model of economic growth and modernization.

## Chapter One

### **The Mixteca Alta in the *Indigenista* Imagination: Prehispanic Glory and the Tragic Present**

*Of all state simplifications, then, the imposition of a single, official language may be the most powerful, and it is the precondition of many other simplifications—James Scott*

*Los mixtecos actuales—mas de medio millón--, permanecen congelados, no precisamente en su antiguo paisaje, sino en las condiciones peculiares creadas por la Conquista—Fernando Benítez<sup>48</sup>*

The state of Oaxaca is a land of contrasts, a place of arid mountain ranges and tropical coasts, with diverse peoples, languages and plant life. The Mixteca Alta, located in the western half of the state of Oaxaca, is no exception. High in the Sierra Madre mountain range, the Mixteca Alta consists of arid highlands, moon-like in their soil erosion and desertification, along with lush green mountains filled with coffee *fincas* facing the Pacific coast. It is a place that has attracted outsiders of all stripes: the Mexica Empire's emissaries during the precolonial period, the Spaniards and their mercantile interests, and liberal armies of the nineteenth century. Whether they were seventeenth century Dominican friars, nineteenth century foreign explorers or twentieth century anthropologists and evangelizing missionaries, outsiders depicted the region as one of harsh living and a hostile geography.<sup>49</sup> A topography so imposing, they said, that it

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<sup>48</sup> James Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 72; Fernando Benítez, Libro III "En el país de los nubes," *Los indios de México* (Mexico: Biblioteca Era, 1967), 280: "Today's Mixtecs—more than half a million—remain frozen in time, not necessarily in the ancient past but rather in the particular conditions created by the conquest."

<sup>49</sup> See, Frederick Starr's journey through the Mixteca, *In Indian Mexico: A Narrative of Travel and Labor* (Chicago: Forbes & Company, 1908); also, Benítez, Libro III "En el país de los nubes."

imbued its inhabitants with innate characteristics, be it a cherished ability to endure hardship or a derided insularity and backwardness.

In the early twenty-first century, travelers to the Mixteca Alta might arrive from Mexico City, Puebla, or Oaxaca City, usually via bus or “suburban,” a small van that carries a dozen or so passengers. From Oaxaca City, these suburbans travel northwest along the Pan-American Highway, until reaching the town of Nochixtlán, making the eighty-kilometer trip in roughly an hour. If one is headed to Tlaxiaco, a district capital high in the Mixteca Alta, the vans veer left or west, through the valley between Nochixtlán, Yanhuítlán and Teposcolula, where massive seventeenth century Dominican churches stare down onto communities emptied by migration. The dissonance between the impressive baroque structures and the seemingly depopulated towns is palpable.

Like most of these outsiders, I arrived to the Mixteca Alta with little prior knowledge of the place or the people. Having witnessed a dramatic teacher-led uprising against government authoritarianism in 2006, I stumbled upon the role of indigenous bilingual teachers in that political struggle. Counseled by Oaxacan intellectuals, I began to explore the history of indigenous education and looked for an opportunity to learn an indigenous language. Given the opportunity to study Mixtec during an intensive summer seminar, I landed in the Mixteca somewhat unexpectedly. I soon realized that the Mixteca and its communities were key actors in the history of twentieth century Mexican indigenous education and development policy. The region’s prehispanic past had inspired early twentieth century *indigenista* thinkers, such as Alfonso Caso, and the region in turn became a focus of *indigenista* developmentalism by mid-century. As such, the region was key to the creation of intellectual frameworks for understanding indigenous peoples.

These constructions elucidate how notions of race, language and space were implicitly linked in the post World War II context. Disparate intellectuals employed language practices as a barometer for the region's ethnic make-up and its potential for modernizing reforms.

This chapter explores how mid-century intellectuals, in their majority employed by the federal government, imagined and constructed the Mixteca. It asks how the region was intellectually constructed and defined as a particular unit of analysis, a region. For these thinkers, the Mixteca was not only a discrete region but a region in need of integration, defined primarily as economic insertion into modern national and international markets. Specifically, I focus on the Mixteca Alta and the governmental ex-district of Tlaxiaco. The Alta was understood in relation to other parts of the Mixteca, particularly the Pacific coast. Rather than examining geographic studies of cartography or topography, the chapter focuses instead on the intellectual maps created by government economists and anthropologists.<sup>50</sup> These maps marshaled social scientific data, particularly language practices, to construct the region in particular ways. Specifically, these thinkers identified the region's human geography as a barrier to modernizing reforms.

In the post-World War II era, the explicit categories of race social scientists and others had previously employed fell out of favor. Despite the 1910 Revolution's blow against explicit official racism, early twentieth century Mexico witnessed numerous "scientific" studies of indigenous peoples that today would be understood as eugenicist.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cartography as such is examined in detail by Raymond Craib, see, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> See, Alexandra Minna Stern's "From Mestizophilia to Biotypology: Racialization and Science in Mexico, 1920-1960," in *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America*, ed. Karin Roseblatt, Anne

Yet as historians Karin Roseblatt, Anne Macpherson, and Nancy Appelbaum have pointed out, this post-World War II change in language did not necessarily eliminate the “the assumptions that underlay racial thinking.”<sup>52</sup> Others have described the innumerable ways this dynamic continued in different contexts, such as the use of the terms ethnicity and even culture as signifiers for persistent notions of racial difference. In this chapter, I am interested in how social scientists in the post-World War II era, in an effort to avoid the use of racial categories, employed language and language practice as prime markers of indigeneity and regional underdevelopment.

Language has a long history as a marker of indigeneity in Mexico, indeed the modern census consistently used language practices to calculate the state’s indigenous population. And efforts to create a homogenous nation, unified in one national language were certainly not new in the 1950s. Yet in the postrevolutionary context, combined with postwar developmentalism, social scientists empowered by the state identified language practices as a key barrier to “national integration.” According to these thinkers, it was through language-change that social uplift and national unification would be achieved. At the same time Mexico’s long indigenista tradition invoked indigenous culture as a point of national pride. How to reconcile these two impulses, these seemingly contradictory projects? Some argue there was little contradiction here, that despite *indigenismo*’s celebration of indigenous aesthetics, it was ultimately a project of mestizaje, racial mixture, which itself was a process of whitening.<sup>53</sup> Yet the contradictions were not

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Macpherson, and Nancy Appelbaum (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 187-210.

<sup>52</sup> See, “Racial Nations,” Introduction to *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America*, 8.

<sup>53</sup> See, David Brading, “Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 7, no. 1 (1988): 75-89; Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo:

insignificant. While the state, through its intellectuals constructed the region as culturally backward and un-integrated, its invocation and praise of the indigenous past were a double edged sword, contributing to both a sense of degenerated population but also a legacy of oppression and resilience.

### **Region and Historical Context: Colonial Rule and the Nineteenth Century**

The Alta forms part of the broader Mixteca region, which consists of much of present-day western Oaxaca, part of eastern Guerrero and sections of southern Puebla.<sup>54</sup> The Mixteca is most often divided into three main sub regions, the Mixteca Baja, the Mixteca Alta, and Mixteca Costa. The Baja spans southern Puebla and the low-lying region of northern Oaxaca. The high mountainous region in the western center of Oaxaca forms the Alta. Moving down from the mountains towards the Pacific Ocean is the Mixteca Costa, also known as the Costa Chica, which consists of a tropical climate of coastal plains. While these sub regions vary substantially in terms of geography and economy and are often isolated from one another due to difficult terrain, they share a common language, Mixtec, which itself includes many variants, and a predominantly Mixtec indigenous population along with relatively smaller indigenous groups including Triqui and Amuzgo peoples, among others.

After the Spanish conquest, the Mixteca experienced a dramatic population decline, attributed mainly to disease. Estimates for the Mixteca Alta alone cite a

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Mexico, 1910-1940” in *the Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 71-102.

<sup>54</sup>For an in depth discussion of the etymology of the word Mixtec, see Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Ñudzahui History, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 318-319. The civilization that dominated the pre-conquest Mixteca was referred to as Mixtec yet the words Mixtec and Mixteca are in fact Nahuatl terms referring to the people of the clouds, used first by the Aztecs and then appropriated by the Spanish. In their own language, the people of the Mixteca refer to themselves as *tay ñudzahui* or the people of the rain.

population of 530,000 in 1532 declining to 42,000 by 1720.<sup>55</sup> Colonial rule in the Mixteca Alta left the indigenous elite largely intact, with Spanish merchants relying on indigenous production of livestock and agriculture.<sup>56</sup> Oaxaca, then called Antequera, became one of the most prosperous provinces of New Spain, due to the introduction of silk and most importantly cochineal, a crimson colored dye.<sup>57</sup> Whereas other regions of colonial Spanish America experienced large-scale decline in indigenous social organization due to the intense labor demands placed on indigenous populations, Oaxaca prospered because the sources of Spanish wealth, namely cochineal and silk industries, were largely compatible with indigenous social and economic organization.<sup>58</sup> Yet the decline of those trades at the end of the eighteenth century and the eventual incorporation of the Mixteca Alta into national markets through the construction of roads at the beginning of the twentieth century, would lead to similar outcomes: rising poverty and outmigration. As José Maria Caballero has pointed out in the case of the Andes, “...what

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<sup>55</sup> William Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 67, cited in Francie Chassen de López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca: The View from the South, Mexico 1867-1911* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 85. Kevin Terraciano offers similar figures, Terraciano, 3.

<sup>56</sup> The work of Maria de los Angeles Romero Frizzi contributes most to this understanding of the colonial period. See, *Economía y vida de los españoles en la Mixteca Alta: 1519-1720* (Oaxaca: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia and Gobierno del Estado de Oaxaca, 1990).

<sup>57</sup> Oaxaca had a virtual monopoly on the cochineal trade yet toward independence it experienced a decline in the industry due in part to competition from Guatemala and ultimately to the development of synthetic dyes. See, Jeremy Baskes, *Indian, Merchants, and Markets: A Reinterpretation of the Repartimiento and Spanish-Indian Economic Relations in Colonial Oaxaca, 1750-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 185.

<sup>58</sup> Ronald Spores, *Ñuu Ñudzahui: la Mixteca de Oaxaca. La evolución de la cultura mixteca desde los primeros pueblos hasta la Independencia* (Oaxaca, México: Fondo Editorial, IEEPO, 2007). A counter example is the experience of the Inca and the Andes, see Karen Spalding, *Huarochiri: An Andean Society under Inca and Spanish Rule* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984); Steve Stern's *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1982).

had once been an advantage became a liability.”<sup>59</sup> In other words, the distinct soil types and climates that buoyed Mixtec civilization in pre-colonial times and in part through the colonial period became obstacles to material subsistence with the growth of modern capitalism.

### **Nineteenth Century: The Rise of Paris Chiquito**

With independence from Spain came the destruction of the repúblicas de indios system, a form of colonial rule that allowed a measure of autonomy for indigenous communities through *usos y costumbres* or rule by traditional ways. The subsequent municipalization of indigenous towns meant that relatively large towns became municipios, directly connected to the state, while smaller communities were reduced to municipal agencies. The result was a transfer of power to mestizos in large towns along with an increase in taxes on indigenous communities.<sup>60</sup> One such town that experienced a dramatic transformation in the nineteenth century was Tlaxiaco. Located high in the Mixteca Alta (2,000 meters above sea-level) Tlaxiaco became an increasingly powerful regional center of trade and commerce at mid-century, gaining *cabecera* or head town status in 1859 from the neighboring town of Teposcolula.<sup>61</sup> It was at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1892, that the Ferrocarril del Sur rail line was completed between Mexico City and Oaxaca City, whose route connected the eastern edge of the Mixteca to national commerce. Tlaxiaco served as a hub of commerce between the coast and the highlands, as well as the areas north toward Mexico City and south toward Oaxaca. This

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<sup>59</sup> José Maria Caballero, *Agricultura, reforma agraria, y pobreza campesina* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1980), 113.

<sup>60</sup> Leticia Reina, “Los Mixtecos Contra Los Caciques, 1845,” *Las Rebeliones Campesinas en México (1819-1906)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1984): 235-237. See also, Chassen-López, 302. One such tax, the *capitación* or head tax sparked a series of tax revolts beginning in 1843 in which communities refused payment.

<sup>61</sup> Alejandro Marroquín, *La Ciudad Mercado (Tlaxiaco)* (Mexico: UNAM, 1957), 23.



position allowed for the growth of a mestizo elite that constructed itself as a cultured, European community and Tlaxiaco came to be known as Paris Chiquito, or little Paris. Paintings from the period depict a white elite strolling the town center in top hats and flowing gowns.

Due to indigenous retention of communal lands in the Mixteca, agrarianism did not take hold in the way it did in states such as Morelos.<sup>62</sup> This has led some scholars to portray Oaxaca as a relative backwater during the Mexican Revolution, involving neither mass participation nor ideological affinity with the officially proclaimed goals of the revolution. In 1915 Oaxacan Governor José Inés Dávila organized an elite-led movement opposed to the centralization of constitutionalism. Dávila set up his headquarters in Tlaxiaco from which he led a military defense against the forces of President Venustiano Carranza.<sup>63</sup> What became known as the Sovereignty Movement is depicted by Paul Garner as continuity with a nineteenth century politics, in which sierra *caudillos* mobilized *campesinos* through kinship and clientelism.<sup>64</sup> Yet Garner is careful to demonstrate popular participation in the Sovereignty Movement, noting *campesino* grievances were mainly directed at taxes, not agrarian concerns.<sup>65</sup>

While Alta communities retained legally recognized communal land in the postrevolutionary period, the ratio of people to land was so poor that one might not even

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<sup>62</sup> See, Ronald Waterbury, "Non-Revolutionary Peasants: Oaxaca Compared to Morelos in the Mexican Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 4 (October 1975): 410-442.

<sup>63</sup> Margarita Dalton, *Breve Historia de Oaxaca* (Mexico: El Colegio de México y Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), 228.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Garner, "Oaxaca: The Rise and Fall of State Sovereignty," in *Provinces of the Revolution: Essays on Regional Mexican History, 1910-1929*, ed. Tomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 163-183.

<sup>65</sup> In this regard Garner remains faithful to Alan Knight's concept of "*serrano* revolts," see Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 115-117.

be able to sustain a family, let alone produce for the market.<sup>66</sup> Infrequent rainfall and poor soil quality due to long-term erosion meant that very little land was agriculturally profitable. What resulted from communal land holding in the Mixteca Alta was thus a sharing of poverty, not collective empowerment. Corn was a precious commodity in the region, sold in *cajones* a unit of roughly five liters. In this context, communities in the mountains often turned to producing *carbón* and *leña*, charcoal and firewood, to earn cash for food. Bringing their goods down to the Tlaxiaco market, these communities faced exploitation by local “delegados forestales,” forestry officials who stole the communities’ goods or unjustly fined them.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, there was a growing commercial exploitation of timber.<sup>68</sup>

The roots of the Mixteca’s agricultural and environmental dilemmas lay both in its colonial heritage as well as the modern Mexican state’s capitalist development model. The green revolution, a global movement that advanced commercial agriculture, the use of pesticides and large-scale monoculture production, shaped the Mixteca indirectly but profoundly.<sup>69</sup> The development of commercial agriculture in northern Mexico benefited

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<sup>66</sup> Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 47. To give just one example of the agrarian problem, in San Agustín Atenango in the 1940s the communal land holding broke down to roughly two hectares per male head of household. Even in the early 1970s weekday markets could still be observed because the majority of the population was engaged in small-scale agriculture, see John Warner, “Survey of the Market System in the Nochixtlán Valley and the Mixteca Alta,” in *Markets in Oaxaca*, ed. Scott Cook and Martin Diskin (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 126.

<sup>67</sup> Marroquín, 96.

<sup>68</sup> Marroquín, 98. Two companies involved in timber production were one owned by *señores* Velasco y Holalde, which replaced the *Compañía Aserradora del Yucunino* that sold wood to Ferrocarriles Nacionales. See also, Benjamin Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 307.

<sup>69</sup> The green revolution’s proponents claim it was key to meeting the food needs of a rising global population, yet critics argue it produced adverse effects such as decreased biodiversity, pesticide

from the continued underdevelopment of the Mixteca Alta. Migratory labor began as a survival strategy of local communities, which government agencies in large part encouraged, and developed into a tradition that would profoundly shape local identity.<sup>70</sup> Initially labor recruiters lured bilingual communities to migratory agricultural work but eventually even monolingual communities migrated. Large-scale migration began in earnest in the 1940s and 1950s with the development of commercial agriculture in northern Mexico and the United States. As renewed federal attention arrived in the Mixteca at mid-century, local rural residents had already identified migration, seasonal or permanent, as a solution to their dilemmas.<sup>71</sup>

### **Moisés de la Peña and the Creation of State Problems**

A team led by Moisés de la Peña, an economist trained at the national university (UNAM), conducted one of the first regional studies of the Mixteca in 1949. De la Peña, whose 1936 economics thesis dealt with the national agrarian problem, had, by the mid-1940s, led a series of teams in regional assessments of Mexico.<sup>72</sup> The study reflected a high degree of confidence in the state's ability to transform the region. Much like James Scott's definition of high-modernist ideology, the de la Peña study aimed to make regions

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pollution, and export-led production. See, Angus Wright, *The Death of Ramón González: The Modern Agricultural Dilemma* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

<sup>70</sup>It has been through the more recent migration experience that broader notions of Mixtec identity developed. See Jorge Hernández-Díaz, *Reclamos de La Identidad: La Formación de las Organizaciones Indígenas en Oaxaca* (Mexico: Miguel Angel Porrúa Grupo Editorial, 2001), 253. The existing literature on Mixtec identity is therefore almost exclusively focused on Mixtecos outside of the Mixteca itself, see Lynn Stephen, "The Creation and Re-creation of Ethnicity: Lessons from the Zapotec and Mixtec of Oaxaca," *Latin American Perspectives* 23, no. 2 (1996): 17-37; Michael Kearney, "Mixtec Political Consciousness: From Passive to Active Resistance," in *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics*, ed. Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 134-146.

<sup>71</sup> José López Alavés's famous 1918 ballad "Canción Mixteca," depicts the longing of local migrants for home, "Que lejos estoy del suelo donde he nacido."

<sup>72</sup> He had worked in such states as Chihuahua, Veracruz and Campache. His son, Sergio de la Peña, later became a respected economic historian of Mexico.

knowable and quantifiable and thereby productive and modern in the state's view. Whereas the Mixteca's integration into "modern" economic activity had been almost exclusively as migrant labor to other parts of the republic, the de la Peña study aimed to modernize the region itself. In this sense de la Peña was the archetypical high modernist intellectual, touring the Mexican republic to make legible seemingly un-integrated regions for state planners. Just as Scott has pointed out, this was not merely a project of economic development in the narrow sense but rather was inspired by ideas of social uplift, in this case an agrarianism derived from the Mexican Revolution itself. This is evidenced in de la Peña's focus on the region's large landholders and wealthy families, who he named and whose assets he identified.<sup>73</sup> And while he compiled the requisite statistics on local mineral wealth and mining potential he was at pains to explain how this industry would provide little direct benefit to the local population unless it was placed under national control.<sup>74</sup> De la Peña's intellectual formation reflected prevailing trends in Mexico at the time as his research focused on the deleterious effects of land concentration.<sup>75</sup>

De la Peña divided his study into three sections, one dealing with the environment and infrastructure, another on economic activity, particularly agriculture, and a third dealing with so-called social life. In the modernization and technical mode of analysis, the study's general assessment was that the region suffered from isolation and lack of integration with national markets. The analytical focus relied, to a large degree, on

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<sup>73</sup> Moisés T. de la Peña, *Problemas Sociales y Económicos de Las Mixtecas* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1950), 47.

<sup>74</sup> de la Peña, 95.

<sup>75</sup> Published by the INI in 1950, the study was conducted by a team of six researchers, including economists, anthropologists and engineers during the months of October and November of 1949. While published by the INI under Alfonso Caso's leadership, the team received cooperation from the Oaxacan state government, whose governor at the time was Eduardo Vasconcelos,

inventorying the human and natural “resources.” The main contrast drawn was between an overpopulated, resource-poor Mixteca Alta and an under-populated, resource-rich Mixteca Costa.<sup>76</sup> This contrast justified his main policy proposal: the planned, directed migration of the Mixteca Alta population to the coast, a project that ultimately failed.<sup>77</sup> Among the region’s broader population, the Alta’s population was singled out for its “atraso cultural” or cultural backwardness and de la Peña emphasized the population was not merely indigenous but “la mas pobre población indígena, cultural y económicamente considerada.”<sup>78</sup>

Whereas previous studies focused on entire states, i.e. Campache or Guerrero, de la Peña’s study of the Mixteca focused on an indigenous region that overlapped three neighboring states.<sup>79</sup> The author was therefore compelled to spend some time explaining what exactly constituted “the Indian.” He defined the region largely through ethnographic and language-use criteria. While he insisted the Indian was defined by “cultural characteristics,” he also insisted on describing these characteristics as part of a cultural backwardness that dated from the Spanish conquest. As he put it, “lo indio es transitorio; es lo no redimido, lo culturalmente mas atrasado y lo económica y políticamente mas oprimido.”<sup>80</sup> The most distinctive of these cultural characteristics, according to the author, was “la del uso, siquiera sea hogareño, de su lengua indígena materna, aun

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<sup>76</sup> de la Peña, 10: “the most economically and culturally poor indigenous population.”

<sup>77</sup> See Xicohtencatl Gerardo Luna Ruiz, *Un Estudio de Caso de Colonización Dirigida desde La Mixteca Alta hacia la Costa Oaxaqueña: Indigenismo, Contacto Comercial, Conflicto Agrario y Reorganización Comunitaria* (master’s thesis, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> de la Peña, 10.

<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that the team’s work focused almost exclusively on the Oaxacan portions of the Mixteca.

<sup>80</sup> de la Peña, 124: “The Indian is the transitional, the irredeemable, the culturally most backward and the most economically and culturally oppressed.”

cuando también hable el castellano.”<sup>81</sup> Along these simplistic lines of argument de la Peña equated uplift of the Indian with ceasing to Indian, choosing not to speak one’s native language. This was an *indigenista* politics with little romanticism for indigenous language or culture.<sup>82</sup>

In contrast, what could be saved or redeemed for de la Peña were pre-conquest agricultural practices. The modern dilemma of land productivity and agriculture concerned all *indigenista* writers on the Mixteca and de la Peña singled out the terraced agriculture of the Nochixtlán valley for its ability to halt soil erosion and preserve the irregular rainfall.<sup>83</sup> This was a practice he believed could be revived and expanded to increase agricultural productivity throughout the region.

The Salvadoran anthropologist Alejandro Marroquín, commissioned to conduct a study of the Tlaxiaco market in 1953, also felt compelled to weigh in on the agricultural dilemmas facing the region.<sup>84</sup> While Marroquín identified language practices as essential to the nature of the region, depicting declining indigenous language monolingualism, he devoted substantial attention to the questions of agriculture and land tenure. The question of land had two major intellectual trajectories. One, the agrarianism of the Mexican Revolution and subsequent Cardenista reformism of the 1930s, and two, the anthropological interest in peasants or *campesino*’s relationship to the land. In the Mixteca, Marroquín argued, land was plentiful during the colonial period and land

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<sup>81</sup> de la Peña, 124: “the use of, if only in the home, the maternal tongue. Even while one also speaks Spanish.”

<sup>82</sup> de la Peña, 125. He defended his definition of “the Indian,” by arguing it was in line with Alfonso Caso’s own definition.

<sup>83</sup> de la Peña, 109.

<sup>84</sup> Marroquín conducted the study in July and August of 1953 with the help of three anthropology students. The study, subsequently published in 1957, was divided into two sections, one on the general economic context of the region and the other an ethnographic study of the Tlaxiaco market economy.

concentration only began in earnest toward the end of Spanish rule. Marroquín pointed out that the agrarianism of the Mexican Revolution had little effect on Tlaxiaco's agriculture, noting that by 1950 only nine percent of land was classified as ejidal.<sup>85</sup> While Marroquín maintained the position that the Alta was overpopulated, he developed a host of recommendations to improve Mixtec agriculture. Once again, he noted there was not enough land for the population and that existing land holdings were too small even for subsistence agriculture. Despite retention of certain communal lands, he argued, unequal land distribution was a significant problem and the land held by communities and smallholders was of poor quality compared to larger holdings.<sup>86</sup>

Marroquín was also interested in local peoples' understanding of the land. Cutting against the notion that indigenous people lacked an understanding of private property, Marroquín argued Mixteca campesinos clearly had their own conceptions of private property. Among the more common forms of land tenure was la aparecería, a form of renting out parcels of land. In la aparecería or medianería, as it was also called, landless campesinos had access to the land and in return gave half of the harvest to the landholder.<sup>87</sup> In terms of cultivation most corn was planted in February and March and harvested in September and October. While there was a small amount of irrigated crops, the most common form of cultivation, termed *siembra de picado*, consisted of a stick and hole method. Marroquín's recommendations concerning regional agriculture consisted of

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<sup>85</sup> Marroquín, 55.

<sup>86</sup> Marroquín, 63. To demonstrate this concentration of land Marroquín presented data for 1950 in which 92% of the region's private property was held in parcels of 5 hectares or less. These smallholders he described as minifundio. He employed the term parvifundio, which constituted 4% of private property but still characterized as smallholders. Finally, the .5% of private property held in lots of 50 hectares or more was considered cuasi-latifundio.

<sup>87</sup> Marroquín, 67. Marroquín described this as a mutually beneficial relationship between friends and not as an antagonistic form of sharecropping.

both the mundane as well as the eccentric. Along with the common tropes of suggesting improved agricultural techniques, the use of fertilizer, agricultural credit, and irrigation, Marroquín suggested switching crop production away from corn to crops more suitable to the land, which he identified as fruit, grapes and olive trees. These, he argued, could generate corresponding industries such as olive oil production.<sup>88</sup>

One major motor of economic growth in the Mixteca at mid-century was an antimony mine located in the town of Tejocotes, south west of Tlaxiaco and part of the municipality of San Juan Mixtepec. Begun in 1935, the mine's production surged during World War II as antimony was an important alloy in the production of lead munitions.<sup>89</sup> The company in charge of the mine, la Compañía Minera de la Mixteca, S. A., had both Mexican and North American (USA) financing.<sup>90</sup> The antimony was extracted through a *cielo abierto* or open-pit method and at its height employed over 800 male workers.<sup>91</sup> The mine attracted workers from across the Mixteca Alta and Marroquín reported that during World War II it grew exponentially, employing a little over 1,500 people. Miners' wages could be up to eight to ten pesos a day, a stark contrast to daily minimum of two or two and half pesos, but miners often could not handle more than a month of the arduous labor. This created massive consumer demand in Tlaxiaco due to the miners' spending power, yet with the end of the war there was a subsequent collapse of commerce in Tlaxiaco. In 1950, de la Peña reported that only 105 workers were employed at the mine at a wage of

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<sup>88</sup> Marroquín, 232.

<sup>89</sup> A toxic substance found in the earth as the sulfide mineral stibnite, it also had uses in the production of lead-acid batteries.

<sup>90</sup> Marroquín, 102-103. The company controlled mines in Tejocotes along with lead and Zinc mines in el llamado barrio Séptimo (Guadalupe Hidalgo). The Tlaxiaco mines were on private lands while others were on communal lands. Due to drop in global price of lead, it had suspended its activities by time of Marroquín publication.

<sup>91</sup> de la Peña, 94.



3.50 pesos a day and critiqued the industry as essentially extractive. In his words, mining in the Mixteca was “una actividad de acentuada características colonialistas.”<sup>92</sup> A number of authors pointed to the mine as a motor of the modernization of the indigenous population. Aguirre Beltrán, for example, in his introduction to the Marroquín volume, singled out the mine along with the construction of the Pan-American Highway as two primary factors in the alleged demographic decline of the region’s indigenous population.<sup>93</sup>

### **A “Commercial Emporium”: Tlaxiaco and the Problem of the Regional Market**

By the 1950s the commercial role of Tlaxiaco, while not necessarily diminished, had undergone significant changes. The violent conflicts of the Revolution and Sovereignty movement disrupted commercial activity and left the city center’s inhabitants with a feeling of decline. The provincial capital was one of the few towns in Mexico to build a monument to the dictator Porfirio Díaz, reflecting the provincial elite’s nostalgia for a lost past. With the growing nationalization of the regional economy, through roads for example, local light industries such as soda and candle production suffered from national competition. Tlaxiaco church leaders were by and large trained by the conservative seminary in nearby Huajuapán and professed support for the Cristeros, a Catholic movement opposed to government secularism and education. Limited electricity became available in Tlaxiaco in 1951, with the purchase of a used generator.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> de la Peña, 95: “an activity with particularly colonial characteristics.” According to Marroquín the company suspended activities on April 20, 1953 (or) 1957, employing a skeleton staff of twelve people.

<sup>93</sup> Introduction to Marroquín’s *La Ciudad Mercado (Tlaxiaco)*, 14-15.

<sup>94</sup> Through combined financing, Tlaxiaco residents of Mexico City, state and municipal governments acquired a used, 150 horsepower generator, which began operating by mid-1951. Marroquín claimed the generator was purchased from a yacht previously owned by US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Marroquín, 138.

Despite the in-roads of commercial products produced in Mexico City or Puebla and the boom and bust mining economy, the town's market continued to be the hub of the region's economy, with outlying communities descending to the Saturday *tianguis* or market. Indigenous communities brought with them a host of products, ranging from flowers, fruits and vegetables, clay pottery and furniture, to *leña* or firewood. With the proceeds from their sales families bought corn, sugar, and liquor, among other products. Regional trade continued to rely on mule trains that connected Tlaxiaco's market with goods coming north from the coast.

In the 1950s federal government policy focused on what it perceived as conservative provincial elites who impeded economic growth and the concomitant modernization and secularization of the nation. As such, Marroquín's study examined Tlaxiaco's regional market or *tianguis*. Describing Tlaxiaco as a "commercial emporium" he and his researchers provided an ethnographic description of the Saturday market. His conclusions on the regional economic structure were straightforward: capital accumulation in Tlaxiaco was possible only through commerce, that agriculture and industrial production were not profitable activities, and the Tlaxiaco economy was "parasitic" in nature, exploiting indigenous "mano de obra."<sup>95</sup> To make this argument, Marroquín insisted that the infamous *regateo* or bargaining at the market was ultimately aimed at the exploitation of the indigenous population, providing examples of indigenous consumers exploited through commercial transactions. He recommended regulation to control price speculation on commodities, particularly corn, the establishment of consumer cooperatives to eliminate intermediaries, the suppression of bargaining, limits on alcohol production (seen as unsanitary and lethal) and the prohibition of sale of

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<sup>95</sup> Marroquín, 240.

adulterated alcohol.<sup>96</sup> Aguirre Beltrán wrote a laudatory introduction to the study, and it framed the INI's subsequent work in the region.

The INI's Centro Coordinador de Integración (CCI) officially opened its doors in Tlaxiaco on May 4, 1954. Part of the identification of regional impediments to modernization, the INI relied on a two-pronged strategy involving the creation of centers in the Mixteca Alta and the Mixteca Costa. A sister-coordinating center was developed in Jamiltepec, on the Oaxacan coast. This strategy's animating focus was the institutional assessment that postulated an over-populated Mixteca Alta with a materially abundant and under-populated Mixteca Costa. The INI set up its first office in Tlaxiaco just off the main plaza, renting a Porfirian mansion across from the Hotel Colón (which had previously served as the mining company's headquarters).<sup>97</sup> The first INI coordinating center had been established in Chiapas in 1951, and many of the federal staff brought to Tlaxiaco to start the new CCI had visited and trained at the CCI in Chiapas.<sup>98</sup> The INI began its official work in the Mixteca by quickly sending out its anthropologists to assess local conditions and devise a strategy for the INI's development agenda.

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<sup>96</sup> Marroquín, 245.

<sup>97</sup> Benítez, 364.

<sup>98</sup> For a description of the Chiapas experience, see Stephen Lewis, "Mexico's National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951-1954," *Ethnohistory* 55, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 609-632. For Tlaxiaco experience, see also, Ramón Hernández López, interview by author, San Agustín Tlacotepec, August 27, 2010.

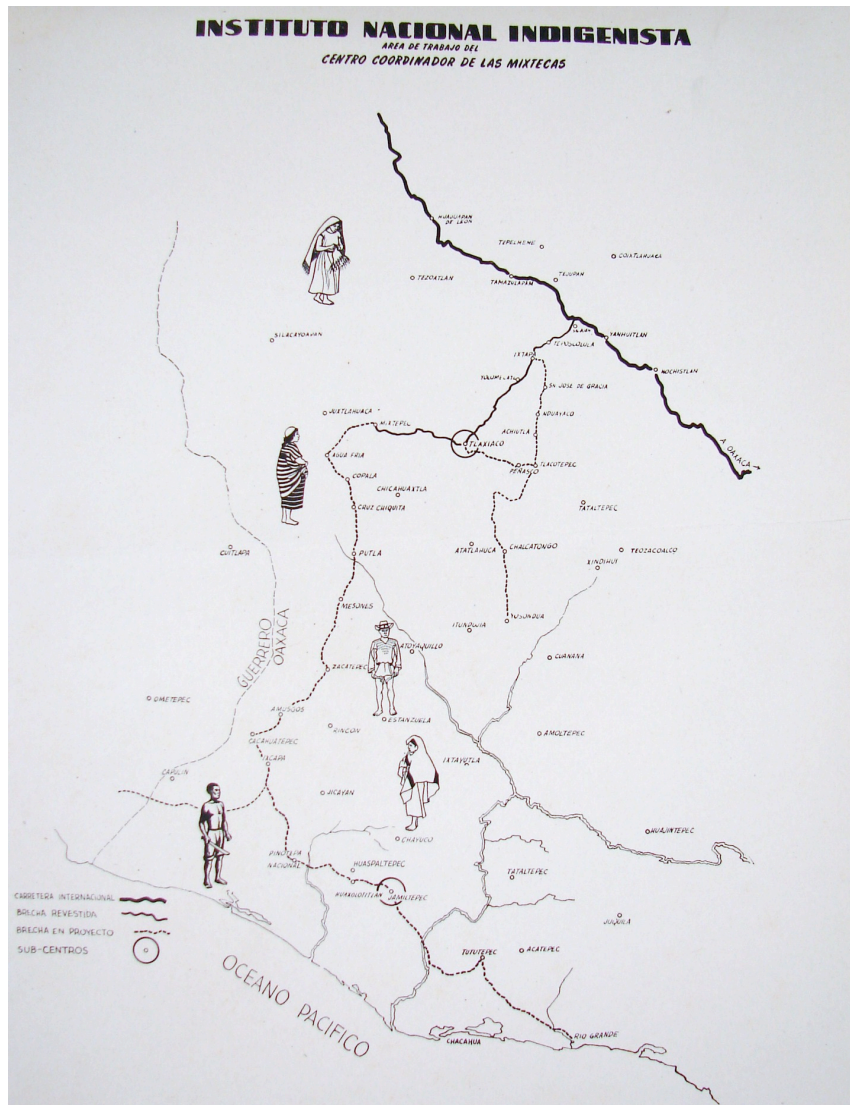


Image 1: The INI's two coordinating centers in Tlaxiaco and Jamiltepec, along with road projects under construction (Source: Archivo Histórico del Centro Coordinador Indigenista de la Mixteca Alta, Tlaxiaco)

### **Santo Tomás Ocotepec, August 6, 1954: Colonial Visita Redux**

The town authorities of Santo Tomás Ocotepec, a Mixtec community twenty-five kilometers south of Tlaxiaco, heard they were coming.<sup>99</sup> The INI health delegation, which included the first director of the Centro Coordinador de las Mixtecas, anthropologist Pablo Velásquez, the doctor Rafael Torres, and two assistants, had gotten stuck near el Vergel. The delegation's jeep could not cross a rising river and they had sent for help. While Doctor Torres and his assistants went ahead toward Ocotepec on two of the INI's horses, the town sent mules and another horse to transport the director and his supplies, including over 70 kilograms of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, popularly known as DDT, and other medical equipment. Once in Ocotepec, doctor Torres explained to the town authorities the delegation's mission, to continue with vaccinations begun by a state health delegation and to combat a lice infestation. While waiting for the director to arrive, Torres proceeded to identify and vaccinate those in the community without vaccinations.

For these indigenista professionals, economic development was understood as a totalizing process, in which agricultural improvement, in the form of land tenure reform and the introduction of modern techniques, was intimately tied to personal health and hygiene. Regional integration not only depended on the construction of infrastructure and improvements in communication to overcome the forbidding topography but also required the transformation of the population itself. It is in this way that *indigenista* developmentalism, with all of its attention to local conditions and culture, nonetheless

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<sup>99</sup> The town was visited in June by state government health officials focused on a vaccination campaign throughout the district.

equated the human geography of the region with other barriers to modernization, another problem to be overcome.

By mid-afternoon, Pablo Velásquez arrived along with the mules carrying his equipment. As Velásquez dismounted, the town band welcomed him with a series of musical scores.<sup>100</sup> While the band played, people of the town and surrounding rancherías were lined up and health authorities sprayed individuals one by one with the insecticide DDT. The DDTización, as health officials termed it, was aimed at eliminating lice infestations, which officials estimated affected ninety percent of the population.<sup>101</sup> The delegation sprayed the insecticide on the population, their clothes and their homes, creating respective tallies for each.

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<sup>100</sup> Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Biblioteca Juan Rulfo, Fondo Documental (hereafter CDI-FD), Rafael Torres Márquez, “Health Report,” in Informe del Centro Coordinador de las Mixtecas, 1954, 2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 2.



Image 2: “DDTización,” Ocotepc, ca. 1955<sup>102</sup>

The visit to Ocotepc was part of a nineteen-day trip throughout the southern half of the district of Tlaxiaco, which included visits to Ocotepc, Nuyoo, Yucuhiti and surrounding communities. Yet the details of the visit to Ocotepc speak to the nature of indigenous-state relations in mid-twentieth century Mexico. The image of health authorities in white coats spraying indigenous children with DDT underlines the often lethal interaction between indigenous communities and state-led modernizing efforts. Yet the fact that the town band and authorities were assembled to greet the delegation and

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<sup>102</sup> Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Biblioteca Juan Rulfo, Fototeca Nacho López, Carpeta Tlaxiaco, 1. Our contemporary understanding of the carcinogenic effects of DDT gives the image a lethal valence yet DDT was understood as an effective against lice, malaria, yellow fever and a host of other health threats and thought to improve the quality of life of indigenous communities.

played while children were sprayed with the insecticide also calls to mind the long history of colonial relations in the region, in which indigenous self-government was achieved through near deferential power to outside authorities. The colonial *visita*, in which local authorities would assemble their populations and show deference to visiting peninsular officials, had its parallel in the experience of twentieth century social scientists and modernizing programs.<sup>103</sup> The relationship between applied anthropologists, often trained abroad and with cosmopolitan sensibilities, and indigenous communities had clear colonial overtones.

Yet the Centro Coordinador's first director, Pablo Velásquez Gallardo, no doubt referred to as "Don Pablo Velásquez" or "licenciado" while visiting the region's communities, did not fit a simple indigenous/non-indigenous dichotomy. Velásquez, trained in anthropology at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología y Historia (ENAH), was himself from a Purépecha community in the state of Michoacán and bilingual in his native language. Born in 1920, Velásquez participated as a youth in Morris Swadesh's Proyecto Tarasco, where he served as a guide to foreign researchers.<sup>104</sup> Through his connections with US researchers, Velásquez visited Berkeley, California in 1943.<sup>105</sup> After that experience Velásquez pursued an education in Mexico City, studying first at the

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<sup>103</sup> Kenneth R Mills, William B. Taylor, Sandra Lauderdale Graham, "54, America Nursing Spanish Noble Boys, Peru (ca. 1770s)," in *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002): 395-396.

<sup>104</sup> Carlos García Mora, "Un antropólogo purépecha. Entre el estudio del y por el pueblo mexicano y la mexicanística estadounidense," in *Ciencia en los Márgenes: ensayos de historia de las ciencias en México* ed. Mechthild Rutsch and Carlos Serrano (Mexico: UNAM, 1997), 57.

<sup>105</sup> Alvin and Darley Gordon, *Our Son Pablo* (McGraw-Hill, 1946).



Instituto Politécnico Nacional before attending the ENAH, where he defended his thesis in 1950, just a few years before his assignment in the Mixteca.<sup>106</sup>

Velásquez framed and understood the Mixteca as part of a broader hemispheric constellation of native practices and dilemmas. The INI commissioned Velásquez and the Peruvian anthropologist Carlos Incháustequi, also trained at the ENAH, to conduct research trips through the Mixteca to collect ethnographic data to inform the INI's work. Their first trip took place in February of 1954, when Velásquez and Incháustequi journeyed south of Tlaxiaco by horse visiting the other major town in the district, Chalcatongo, or "Chalca" as locals call it. The anthropologists would also meet with town authorities and collect basic health, education, and demographic data. The anthropologists' broad training was evidenced in their descriptions of what they saw, comparing the large houses in Chicahuaxtla with communal houses of the Brazilian Amazon or the town of Cuqilita with Pueblo Indians of New Mexico.<sup>107</sup> Velásquez also speculated that the round domestic structures in the coffee growing region of Nuyoo might have reflected African architecture.<sup>108</sup>

In a report to Alfonso Caso, then national director of the INI, Velásquez depicted the Mixteca Alta as an agriculturally poor region whose inhabitants lived in unhealthy and unhygienic conditions, and were thus compelled into seasonal labor migration for survival. Noting the poor productivity of the land, he described local agricultural as a

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<sup>106</sup> Carlos García Mora, "Un antropólogo purépecha. Entre el estudio del y por el pueblo mexicano y la mexicanística estadounidense," in *Ciencia en los Márgenes: ensayos de historia de las ciencias en México* ed. Mechthild Rutsch and Carlos Serrano (Mexico: UNAM, 1997).

<sup>107</sup> CDI-FD, "Tercer Informe del Centro Coordinador de las Mixtecas," 1954, 2-4.

<sup>108</sup> CDI-FD, "Informe del Centro Coordinador de las Mixtecas," April 15, 1954, 6.

mere “cultural tradition” as opposed to a productive, self-sustaining activity.<sup>109</sup> The anthropologists noted the inverse relationship between the local minimum wage, hovering around three pesos a day, and the rising cost of corn. In addition, large portions of the population suffered from yellow fever and lice infestation, whose remedy was the aforementioned DDT. Velázquez complained that people slept side by side with domestic animals and that in certain communities, “la defecación es libre.”<sup>110</sup> This sick and unhygienic population was contrasted with Mixtec communities on the coast, who were said to be cleaner and healthier due to access to better food and water. The lack of agricultural self-sufficiency in the Alta compelled many communities to travel to the coffee growing *fincas* near Putla for seasonal work. This *golondrina*, “swallow” migration, followed the coffee harvest cycle, with workers returning to celebrate *Día de los Muertos*, Day of the Dead, with their home communities.

The indigenista view of distinct economic potentials between the Mixteca Alta and Costa and the concomitant health and hygiene assessments appear to be more than mere coincidence or straightforward socioeconomic depictions. While local migration testified to material hardships in the Alta, these constructions drew on existing but contingent inequalities and differences and contributed to naturalizing an impoverished condition.<sup>111</sup> The Alta’s lack of sufficient economic potential conferred on it a backwardness and concomitant sickness, while conversely the coast’s agricultural potential gave its population a healthy valence.

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<sup>109</sup> CDI-FD, Velázquez to Alfonso Caso, October 29, 1954, in “Informes del Centro Coordinador de las Mixtecas, 1954”.

<sup>110</sup> “public defecation is common”

<sup>111</sup> See, Barbara Weinstein, “Developing Inequality,” *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 1 (February 2008): 1-18. In particular her discussion of regional contrasts in Brazil, 12.

Not only did the Alta's population suffer material privation but also exploitation by local elites and authorities. In the town of Nuyoo, the anthropologists described in detail how local coffee workers were kept in debt to CEIMSA, the state coffee corporation, finishing their description with "como es sabido, a la fecha, no hay mejor animal de carga que el propio hombre."<sup>112</sup> In their report, they suggested the INI intervene to avoid a violent confrontation between coffee workers and the rural state police. Land conflicts and boundary disputes had a long history in the Mixteca with violent feuds between neighboring communities a common feature of regional politics.<sup>113</sup> One such conflict involving the town of San Agustín Tlacotepec caught the attention of Velázquez. He argued these disputes were often solved through the violent intervention of the state's rural police force, led by Isauro Zafra.<sup>114</sup> According to Velásquez, Zafra's pistoleros were said to be the sole arbiter of conflict in the region, arbitrarily detaining indigenous men and holding them without cause. Velásquez also understood these conflicts as following along clear racial lines and noted the intense racial discrimination in the major towns of Tlaxiaco and Putla.<sup>115</sup> For example, during his visit to Putla, a local hotel owner refused to provide food or board to Velásquez's Triqui guide. Perhaps reflecting his training abroad, Velásquez explicitly used the language of "racial discrimination," though Marroquín also stressed the discrimination between Tlaxiaco's merchant elite and the surrounding population.

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<sup>112</sup> CDI-FD, "1954 Informe," 15: "As is well known, to date, there is no better beast of burden than human beings themselves."

<sup>113</sup> Francisco López Bárcenas, *Muertes Sin Fin: Crónicas de Represión en la Región Mixteca Oaxaqueña*, (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Antropológicos, Científicos, Artísticos, Tradicionales y Lingüísticos, 2002), 12.

<sup>114</sup> CDI-FD, Unmarked 1954 Informe, 11-12.

<sup>115</sup> CDI-FD, "Tercer Informe," 8.

Velázquez was sensitive to the region's linguistic diversity, noting the differences among Mixtec and Triqui speakers, along with the existence of communities who spoke a variant of "mexicano" or Nahuatl. When Velázquez arrived in some towns, he was unable to communicate with the local population. In some cases, town authorities were the only ones who spoke Spanish and in other cases a town authority was said to be monolingual and communicated through a local interpreter. While the anthropologists used the phrase "no conocen la lengua de Cervantes," their interpretations of the region reflected a sensitivity to its linguistic diversity.<sup>116</sup>

### **High Modernist Ideology and the Construction of the Mixteca**

The intellectual constructions of the region shared certain characteristics. All defined the Mixteca through cultural and linguistic criterion. All described the physicality of the region, in particular, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, who described the region's "menacing geography" (geografía enemiga) as a hostile area in need of "harmonious social planning."<sup>117</sup> This type of language continued as Aguirre Beltrán described highways "defeating" mountains. All reflected the high modernist assumption of knowledge as prerequisite to state action and went about inventorying the region's natural and human resources. All agreed there was a population density of such high degree that the region, in particular the Mixteca Alta, was "over-populated." And all three repeatedly returned to the prehispanic past in their descriptions of the region, to explain contemporary agricultural practices, community traditions, or to contrast a materially deprived present with a historic material abundance.

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<sup>116</sup> "they do not know the language of Cervantes"

<sup>117</sup> Marroquín, 15.

Most strikingly, all focused on language practices as a defining characteristic of the region. What language people spoke, either the national language or an indigenous language, was for these intellectuals, a key question in identifying the population and the challenges facing the region. This calls to mind James Scott's discussion of language in *Seeing like a State*, in which he argues, "In this respect, a unique language represents a formidable obstacle to state knowledge, let alone colonization, control, manipulation, instruction, or propaganda."<sup>118</sup> Yet this was a time when language was not as simple as Scott depicts, when the state, on a rhetorical level, valorized indigenous language to a degree, even if its use was justified mainly as an effective bridge to the national language.

For some, it was as simple an equation as *language equals nation*. For example, if there was a decline in the number of Mixtec speakers, as de la Peña attempted to demonstrate through census data, they were said to have become "campesinos mexicanos," a proud and politically significant category to be placed in.<sup>119</sup>

Distritos	Bilingües	Monolingües	Total Indígena	Población general	% de Indígenas	% no castellanizado
Coixtlahuaca	2,750	250	3,000	19,661	15	1
Huajuapán	8,500	8,000	16,500	56,895	29	14
Juxtahuaca	9,400	17,300	26,700	30,948	86	56
Nochistlán	12,700	14,100	26,800	51,549	52	27
Silacayoapan	4,050	6,650	10,700	31,004	34	21
Teposcolula	7,000	2,700	9,700	35,549	27	8
Tlaxiaco	17,100	33,100	50,200	64,142	78	52
Sola de Vega	3,700	4,500	8,200	27,204	30	17
Putla	6,850	8,850	15,700	34,906	45	25
Jamiltepec	6,700	14,300	21,000	53,383	39	27
Juquila	5,100	10,800	15,900	28,463	56	38
Sumas.	83,850	120,550	204,400	433,704	47	28
Estado	269,000	387,000	656,000	1,192,794	55	32

Image 3: de la Peña's Language Statistics<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Scott, 72.

<sup>119</sup> See, Christopher Boyers, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>120</sup> de la Peña, 126.

The de la Peña study in particular marshaled a host of statistics related to language-use and literacy rates, mapping the region linguistically, with monolingual communities in isolated and mountainous areas and increased levels of bilingualism found in larger towns and municipalities. De la Peña emphasized that bilingualism and the process he termed *castellanización* or *mexicanización* developed in response to commerce and migration rather than the formal education system.<sup>121</sup> De la Peña identified a number of factors inhibiting formal education efforts, including the lack of teachers or funds to attract teachers, Catholic resistance to what the Church denounced as “socialist education” and the general dynamic of communities with little use for reading and writing skills. Despite these acknowledgments, he insisted the region’s indigenosity was a mere transitory phase, an impediment to the social justice promised by agrarian reform.

What impact did these writings have? First, the incessant descriptions of the region as hostile, as having a forbidding topography, have to be critically examined. The region is certainly a mountainous one, with significant levels of soil erosion and low levels of arable soil, yet the view of the region as inherently forbidding appears intimately tied to the outsider status of the observers. How did people from the region describe their lands? Some would have certainly agreed, as one local teacher observed, emphasizing the poverty of the people and their struggle for survival, “*licenciado, mi gente es pobre.*”<sup>122</sup> This is underscored by the significant levels of both seasonal migration and out-migration. The challenge is to separate the difficulties locals faced from the frameworks that supposed a degraded present, in opposition to a prehispanic glorious past.

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<sup>121</sup> de la Peña, 144.

<sup>122</sup> Isaías Sánchez López, interview with author.

Indigenista constructions contributed to the arrival of very concrete attention to the region, through INI development and educational programming. Roads were built, schools raised, and subsidized corn provided. Yet something more ideological also came with this attention. Fernando Benítez, a prominent journalist visiting the region and the INI's center in 1964, embodies this contradiction. As he sympathetically narrated the INI's work in the Mixteca, Benítez wrote,

lo que es hoy la vida de los descendientes de aquellos príncipes, sacerdotes, guerreros, artistas y campesinos, no resulta menos sorprendente. Los mixtecos actuales—mas de medio millón--, permanecen congelados, no precisamente en su antiguo paisaje, sino en las condiciones peculiares creadas por la Conquista. En ese sentido, su mundo actual, es un mundo extremadamente viejo.<sup>123</sup>

There is something troubling in these depictions. What the authors ultimately focused on, despite their positive invocations of prehispanic terracing and artistry, was the need to overcome the indigenusness of the region. The past was both a problem and a source of pride. How was this to be overcome? To begin with, by learning the Spanish language. Language in these frameworks was the prime marker of indigeneity. Their descriptions of language practices are ripe for quoting, with their sense of indigenusness as a degraded state, part of cultural backwardness, or the frequent phrase, the people “do not know the language of Cervantes.” The endless and, no doubt, inaccurate statistics of language-use marshaled to notch a declining population of monolingual indigenous language speakers were an attempt to quantify the problem and thus make it solvable. While Aguirre Beltrán offered platitudes about the need to respect indigenous languages, he oversaw a state

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<sup>123</sup> Benítez, 280: “What today is the life of the descendants of those princes, priests, warriors, artists and campesinos, is not any less surprising. Today's Mixtecs—more than half a million—remain frozen in time, not necessarily in the ancient past but rather in the particular conditions created by the conquest. In this sense, their actual world is an extremely old world.”

project that identified language practices as one of the defining terrains of struggle in the effort for “national integration and progress.”

What purpose did these ideological operations serve? If language was to be overcome then a significant part of one’s being was to be overcome. Bret Gustafson has described *castellanización* efforts amongst the Guaraní in Bolivia as involving “the violent shedding of other modes of being.”<sup>124</sup> That same process in Mexico asked certain populations to give up part of themselves in exchange for the benefits of ‘becoming campesino’ and modern. The exchange on one level was the loss of this part of oneself for purchase into a state project.

If what defined the Mixteca was its language-practice, would the region still be the Mixteca after so-called incorporation and linguistic uniformity? Would it become just another part of the Mexican republic? These intellectuals certainly held some attachment and sympathy for indigenous ways of life. All of them hoped to facilitate a material advancement of the region and the empowerment of its population and all agreed with the politics of strong agrarian reform. Yet more often than not they used language-use as a barometer for a host of other aspects of life and thus were enthusiasts for Spanish language acquisition. Marroquín and others believed proficiency in Spanish would be a weapon indigenous producers could wield in their negotiations with mestizo merchants in obtaining a fairer price for their goods at the Tlaxiaco market. While they might not have conceived of language learning as a zero sum game, meaning the acquisition of Spanish did not necessarily equal the destruction of Mixtec, it appears beyond their intellectual

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<sup>124</sup> Bret Gustafson, *New Languages of the State: Indigenous Resurgence and the Politics of Knowledge in Bolivia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 121.



horizons to conceive of an integration that allowed for the maintenance of cultural difference.<sup>125</sup>

In the mid-1950s, state intellectuals attempted to define and quantify the Mixteca and its people on the state's terms. These constructions drew on broader notions of postwar development that emphasized regional barriers to the modernization and national integration of developing countries. In Mexico, these discourses combined with a longer tradition of indigenista politics. Yet these social scientific constructions were just one factor in the history of the region, which was transforming through migration. *Indigenista* constructions of the Mixteca were deeply ambivalent about the indigenous population, which was both its *raison d'être* as well as its target for state-led transformation. These intellectuals increasingly turned toward language practices as a way to discuss the indigenous problem, a category without the baggage of the disgraced language of race. These constructions served as the intellectual justification for the subsequent indigenista development work and specifically its intervention in the local education system.

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<sup>125</sup> Aguirre Beltrán in 1954 or 1957 had little to say about respect for native languages compared to the Aguirre Beltrán of the mid-1960s and later.

## Chapter Two

### Radio Schools in the Mixteca Alta, 1958-1965

*La Radiodifusora Cultural XEINI transmite su diario Programa Educativo destinado a las Escuelas del Sistema de Educación Radiofónica en la Mixteca Alta, al través de su frecuencia Oficial de 6145 kilociclos, banda de 49 metros en onda corta. Este Programa se difunde desde la Estación Piloto-instalada en el Centro Coordinador Indigenista con sede en la ciudad de Tlaxiaco, Estado de Oaxaca. Al iniciar nuestras labores damos los muy buenos días a los maestros y alumnos que nos escuchan.*<sup>126</sup>

In 1958, in the Mixteca Alta town of Yosondúa, Isaías Sánchez López, an auxiliary radio teacher employed by the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), gathered young children and parents to begin a Spanish literacy lesson. Sánchez was part an INI pilot program that employed shortwave radios to broadcast educational programming to remote indigenous communities. The use of radio broadcasts was not new to educational efforts in Mexico or Latin America but this project formed part of a renewed effort to expand education in rural, indigenous regions. What set the new program apart from others was its use of Mixtec, the local indigenous language, as a bridge to Spanish language literacy. As Sánchez recounted:

*él [maestro conductor] les hablaba directo a los niños y los niños le ponían atención porque les echaba mixteco y como las variantes del mixteco no son iguales pero es mixteco y los niños se quedaron así admirados.*

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<sup>126</sup> Archivo Histórico del Centro Coordinador Indigenista de la Mixteca Alta, Tlaxiaco (Hereafter referred to as AHCCI-MA), Educación, Serie Escuelas Radiofónicas, caja 9, “Identidad de la Radiofusora (ca. 1963)”: “The cultural radio station XEINI transmits its daily educational program for the schools pertaining to the radio education system in the Mixteca Alta on the official shortwave frequency of 49 m/6145 kHz. This program is transmitted from the pilot station of the Centro Coordinador Indigenista, headquartered in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca. At the beginning of our work, we welcome and say good morning to the teachers and students listening to our broadcast.”

*y los padres... se puede decir quedaron así como, no entender que era la radio, unos dijeron que era dios si porque es que llega y otros dijeron que era el diablo... pero lo que más les llamaba la atención es que hablaba mixteco, eso es lo que la gente no acababa de entender, pero saben que [la radio] es parte es de la gente de razón pues y porque habla mixteco? Les extrañó ¿porqué ese radio habla mixteco si ese no es para los pobres pues?*<sup>127</sup>

Why was the radio speaking our poor language? In a context in which colonial categories of *gente de razón* and *indios* persisted in defining daily life in rural Mexico, the efforts of the INI to use modern technology and innovative bilingual instruction methods, challenged all of those involved. Local education authorities, steeped in traditional *castellanización* methods of rote repetition and prohibitions on indigenous language in the classroom, confronted a new federal presence that advocated the educational utility of Mixtec. Parents often viewed the acquisition of Spanish as key to their children's advancement and were suspicious of the use of Mixtec in the classroom. In the provincial capital of Tlaxiaco, the INI's presence was ambiguous. It offered both the benefits of federal attention and spending to the outlying indigenous communities and the prestige of a federal agency to the town's residents, yet the local merchant elite was weary of the INI's efforts to empower indigenous communities. The Catholic Church, a powerful institution in the region, viewed the INI's arrival through the lens of anticommunism.

The creation of the INI's Centro Coordinador Indigenista de las Mixtecas and its educational program formed part of INI anthropologists' early efforts to put into practice their ideas of indigenous empowerment and modernization. This chapter focuses

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<sup>127</sup> Isaías Sánchez López, interview by author, Tlaxiaco, September 9, 2010: "The broadcasting teacher spoke directly to the students and the students paid attention because he spoke to them in Mixtec and even though the variants of Mixtec are not the same, it was still Mixtec, so the children were impressed. And the parents...one could say they didn't understand what the radio was. Some said it was god, because the sound traveled over the air, and others that it was the devil...but what most caught their attention was that it was Mixtec, that the people couldn't believe. They knew the radio was part of the *gente de razón* so why was it speaking Mixtec? It seemed strange to them, why was the radio speaking Mixtec if it was not meant for poor people?"

specifically on the INI's pilot radio school program, begun in 1958 and operating until 1965. While the program was ultimately short-lived, the experience of the radio schools is instructive in understanding *indigenista* experimental educational efforts at mid-century and their reception in an indigenous region of southern Mexico.

In exploring the experience of INI educational efforts in the Mixteca Alta, this chapter reviews the history of educational reform in the region and how the INI negotiated with existing educational authorities and schools. Local Ministry of Education (SEP) officials as well as Catholic priests and activists felt threatened by the INI's arrival. The chapter examines the relationship between INI personnel and often hostile Catholic officials. It narrates the origins of the pilot radio school program, the experience of radio schoolteachers in the field, as well as the challenges they faced. This experience formed part of a particularly experimental moment in *indigenista* educational reform, in which prominent intellectuals were intimately involved with concrete local projects through the Centros Coordinador Indigenista (CCI).<sup>128</sup> It was also part of a halting shift toward bilingual education policy implementation. The radio school program demonstrates the politically charged nature of rural indigenous Mexico in the late 1950s and early 1960s and how local elites chafed at the presence of federal officials. The turn toward bilingual instruction in indigenous languages was neither a given nor understood as a net positive. Rather, the experience of the experimental radio schools demonstrates the halting, half-measures of educational authorities, the complex logistics of indigenous language

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<sup>128</sup> For a comparative example, see Steven Lewis' work on the pilot center in the neighboring state of Chiapas, "Mexico's National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951-1954," *Ethnohistory* 55, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 609-632.

instruction in a region of extreme linguistic diversity, and the often unpopular nature of indigenous language instruction even among its intended beneficiaries.<sup>129</sup>

### **Antecedents**

Prior to the INI's arrival, primary schooling in the Mixteca Alta was relatively developed in Tlaxiaco's municipalities, with schools offering all six grades, but had far less of a presence in its rural, mountainous communities. Established in the late 1920s and 1930s, federal rural schools in the Mixteca were formed as part of the federal government's crusading drive to bring literacy and social justice to the Mexican countryside. Rural schools in towns such as Chalcatongo and Yosondúa engaged in creative strategies of community theaters, hygiene and agricultural education, in addition to anti-alcohol campaigns. During this period rural teachers also encouraged dispersed populations to move closer together in order to facilitate educational and modernizing reforms. Federal school inspector reports from the 1930s emphasized the alleged racial characteristics of students, describing monolingual communities as *mixtecos puros*, *raza mixteca* or even *inditos*, little Indians.<sup>130</sup> Frequent conflicts between communities and rural teachers involved issues of alcohol abuse, financial disagreements with municipal authorities and were often tinged with religious conflict.

Teachers at times used harsh techniques of corporal punishment on students who spoke Mixtec, which they forbade to be spoken in the classroom. While corporal punishment was a common practice in schooling writ large during this period, harsher punishments were meted out in rural, indigenous regions. For example, in the town of

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<sup>129</sup> The experiences of the 1950s and 1980s appear to demonstrate strikingly similar problems.

<sup>130</sup> Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (hereafter AHSEP), Dirección General de Educación Primaria en Los Estados y Territorios, caja 14, "Escuela Cañada de Galicia, Yosondúa, 1928-1969" and "San Pedro Siniyuvi, Putla, 1929-1978."

San Juan Mixtecpec, a former student recounted how if a child was caught speaking Mixtec in the classroom, the teacher forced the entire class to participate in spanking the offending student. Another technique involved a kind of stress position, in which the “misbehaving” student was forced to kneel on sand at the front of the classroom, facing his classmates, while holding rocks in his outstretched hands.<sup>131</sup> These types of punishments perpetuated a colonial logic that forbade indigenous language practices in the school, which was meant to be a modern, Spanish-speaking space.

While primary school instruction was relatively available in municipalities, more far-flung communities faced substantial difficulties when they wished to send their children to school. Primary school often did not go up to the sixth grade. To make up for the lack of normal school-trained teachers, communities informally employed literate locals in these schools, often referred to as municipal teachers. Those who had finished primary school were still very much a minority in the Mixteca Alta, as one former teacher recounted, during the 1950s, “para aquel entonces ya era mucho la secundaria.”<sup>132</sup>

The INI’s initial approach to this situation was to send normal school teachers trained in Mexico City to head up INI efforts in “unintegrated” regions. In the case of the Mixteca Alta, the INI tapped Ramón Hernández López, a native of the Mixteca Alta town of San Agustín Tlacotepec who had written a thesis on bilingual instruction. Hernández was first sent to the INI’s pilot Coordinating Center in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas to learn from experiences there. National officials then sent Hernández to Tlaxiaco to oversee the INI’s educational work in 1954. He began by visiting schools

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<sup>131</sup> Marcos A. Cruz Bautista, interview by author, San Miguel el Grande, Ranchería Vicente Guerrero, November 11, 2009.

<sup>132</sup> Isaías Sánchez López, interview: “at that time, secondary education was considered to be a lot.”

throughout the region. Hernández noted many communities had physical schools but an insufficient number of teachers, if any. In addition, existing schools frequently did not offer all six grades and Catholic activists frequently opposed federal schooling efforts. In his journey, Hernández detailed the physical conditions of the schools, the number of children attending, gender ratios and whether schools were co-educational, and the language practices of the students. He observed that schools often had weak attendance during harvest times and that, despite the lack of dormitories for children, families from *rancherías* would often send their children with little more than tortillas, salt, and chile to eat during the week while they stayed at the school.

While Hernández noted that smaller *rancherías* and *agencias* often lacked sufficient schools or teachers, he discovered certain communities had much stronger educational systems. For example, in the town of Cuanana, an *agencia* of Yosondúa, six teachers were at work serving the relatively small community. In addition to having a tradition of migration to Mexico City, where relatives financially supported educational efforts in their hometown, Hernández speculated educational authorities favored the area because a town native was serving as a federal deputy.<sup>133</sup>

Hernández actively sought to assert the INI's authority in the education system. The INI also faced competition from the Catholic Church. In the town of Itundujia, the local priest combined educational services with catechism to both young boys and girls. While this example contradicted Hernández' view that Catholics opposed coeducation, the priest's efforts were nonetheless viewed as competition by INI officials, who attributed the Church's influence to the lack of state-led efforts in the region. In other

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<sup>133</sup> CDI-FD, "1954 Informe de las labores desarrolladas en el Centro Coordinador Indigenista de las Mixtecas," Educación, 3.

communities, INI officials attempted to reform existing SEP schools in order to win over locals to the INI's authority. In the case of one misbehaving teacher in the town of Nuyoo, accused of alcoholism and absenteeism, INI anthropologist Carlos Incháustegui traveled to Oaxaca City with the town authorities to request that the teacher be replaced. As Hernández argued, "Yo pienso que si nosotros conseguimos los maestros nosotros podremos dirigir la educación de acuerdo con los intereses de nuestro Instituto."<sup>134</sup>

### **Radio as a Solution**

The idea of developing a system of radio schools as a solution to the Mixteca's lack of primary school coverage combined two experimental policies of the period, one, a method of literacy education that employed indigenous languages in oral instruction of Spanish and math, and two, the use of radio as a technology in facilitating rural educational efforts. While instruction in indigenous languages was not new to the 1950s, it did go against the dominant model and practice of primary schooling that, as described above, employed the so-called direct method of language instruction and prohibited the use of vernacular languages in the classroom. The INI spearheaded the use of bilingual instructors through their recruitment of *promotores bilingües* at their coordinating center in Chiapas. These efforts were not implemented universally, as the case of the INI coordinating center in Papaloapan, Oaxaca, demonstrates, where local officials chose Spanish-only instruction due to linguistic diversity.<sup>135</sup>

Hernández was a vocal advocate of bilingual instruction for monolingual indigenous students. According to Hernández, he witnessed firsthand the inefficacy of the

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<sup>134</sup> CDI-FD, "Educación (1954)," 7: "I believe that if we are able to obtain new teachers we will be able to direct the education system according to the interests of our own institute."

<sup>135</sup> It is speculated that Isabel Horcasitas, who lead the INI efforts in Papaplaopan, was dismissed for her refusal to implement bilingual instruction.



direct method at the Chalcatongo indigenous boarding school he attended in the 1930s.<sup>136</sup> There, students learned to repeat but not to understand the content of the words they were parroting. Hernández' subsequent normal school thesis emphasized the need to employ vernacular languages in the classroom. Prior to his arrival in the Mixteca, Hernández was sent by Aguirre Beltrán to observe the efforts in Chiapas.

Even without the radio, bilingual instruction was controversial in and of itself. For example, when Hernández explained the INI's plans to his hometown of Tlacotepec, he encountered explicit opposition. As Hernández recalled:

pues como siempre, en una junta, no falta un viejito que estaba hasta allá atrás, dice, yo quiero hablar, le dieron, la autoridad le dió la palabra, y dice, pinche Ramón, te mandamos a México a aprender la castilla para que nos vengas a enseñar y ahora resulta como que quieres enseñarnos en nuestra propio idioma...<sup>137</sup>

Popular support for bilingual instruction varied by community but for many, schools were one of the few spaces where children could learn the invaluable ability to speak Spanish. They therefore viewed Mixtec in the classroom as a barrier to learning to speak and understand Spanish. Indeed, the word most often used in the region was the formal, *castellano* as opposed to *español* (the *castilla* in the above quotation serving as shorthand). Castellano reflected the still pervasive colonial understanding of language, where “castellano” was a language of power and prestige, not the “poor languages” or mere “dialects” of local towns.

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<sup>136</sup> See Dawson's discussion of the development of *internados*, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), chap. 2.

<sup>137</sup> Ramón Hernández López, interview by author, San Agustín Tlacotepec, August 27, 2010: “Just as always in a meeting, an older man in the back of the room requested his turn to speak. The town authorities gave him the floor, and he says, “Damn Ramón! We sent you to Mexico to learn Spanish so that you could return and teach us and now it turns out you want to teach us in our own language?”

To test the method, Hernández set up two experimental bilingual programs, one in Hernández's hometown of San Agustín Tlacotepec and the other in San Pedro Molinos in May 1957. Julio de la Fuente, a prominent anthropologist working out of a national INI office, collaborated with this effort, visiting the schools and observing classroom instruction. Hernández reported the children in these programs, who ranged in age from six to eight years old, were learning to count in both Spanish and Mixtec and that instruction in Mixtec was more rapid and effective in achieving Spanish language proficiency.<sup>138</sup> The onus was on INI officials to prove the utility of Mixtec language instruction, both to the communities as well as to educational authorities.

INI officials aimed to combine this pedagogical method with the use of shortwave radio broadcasts, which they viewed as a technical solution to the shortage of qualified instructors. There were a handful of precedents of educational radio programming in Mexico (possible Tarahumara example) and internationally organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had touted its effectiveness.<sup>139</sup> The idea to employ radio in the Mixteca Alta appears to have come from a national figure, "el director general de educación, de comunicaciones," who had visited Sutatenza, Colombia and witnessed a Catholic literacy campaign there among *campesinos* involving radios.<sup>140</sup> The Colombian experience was touted as a model to follow.

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<sup>138</sup> AHCCI-MA (prior to 2010 reorganization), "Informe Mensual," Ramón Hernández López to Alberto Jimenez Rodriguez, July 10, 1957.

<sup>139</sup> AHCCI-MA (prior to 2010 reorganization), "Escuelas Radiofónicas," March 22, 1958.

<sup>140</sup> Ramón Hernández López, interview with author. The Colombian program, begun in 1947, was supported by the national government, eventually receiving support from General Electric in the form of donated radios and transmitters.



Image 4: Depiction of Colombian Catholic Radio School Program, Source: AHCCI-MA

In addition, the proposal to create a system of radio schools relied on the support and collaboration between the INI, the SEP and the Comité Nacional de Comunicaciones Vecinales.<sup>141</sup> While initially the program was to begin with just ten schools, the number was increased to fifty and the Hernández began recruiting youths from the region to be trained as auxiliary radio teachers.

To inaugurate the system, none other than Alfonso Caso, then director of the INI, traveled to Tlaxiaco on March 29, 1958 for the opening ceremony. Also invited to attend were Mario Aguilera Dorantes, Official Mayor of the Ministry of Education and the governor of Oaxaca, Alfonso Pérez Gasca. Hernández had already assembled the first fifty auxiliary radio teachers, traveling throughout the region and recruiting youths who had completed primary school, some of who were already assisting teachers in their home communities. Out of the first fifty radio teachers, nine were women. Fernando Benítez, a

<sup>141</sup> Each agency contributed a third of the financing. The CNCV was a dependency of the Secretaria de Obras Públicas.

prominent journalist at the time, later visited the center and interviewed the radio teachers. He described them, with his characteristic flair for the dramatic as, “los nuevos príncipes mixtecos, la única esperanza de esos millares de tejedores de sombreros, de campesinos y pastores que viven en la Mixteca Alta. Por ahora no hay otra esperanza en ese desolado paisaje.”<sup>142</sup> In indigenista thinking of the era, of which Benítez was a prolific popularizer, the radio teachers served as a bridge between a glorious prehispanic past and a tragic indigenous present as well as carriers of modernization and social uplift.

While Hernández trained the youth in a month-long program in Tlaxiaco, he assumed most of their training would take place while in service as auxiliary teachers. Once in the field, the teachers were paid a small sum, initially 60 pesos and eventually raised to 240 pesos a month, and were to work with groups of first and second grade children in the mornings. The mechanics of the program involved a *maestro locator* or broadcasting teacher, who conducted the lesson from the pilot radio station in Tlaxiaco and an auxiliary teacher physically conducting the lesson in the classroom. The program employed a shortwave broadcast, and faced competition from a competing signal emanating out of Guatemala. In some communities, antennas were installed to better capture the signal. Radio teachers were assigned battery-powered receivers, which from archival materials appear to have been different models of Philips radios.<sup>143</sup> According to official thinking at the time, “Teóricamente, los maestros del sistema radiofónico, al actuar en parte como robots, pero haciéndolo diariamente, llegaron a obtener en un año

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<sup>142</sup> Fernando Benítez, Libro III “En el país de los nubes,” *Los indios de México* (Mexico: Biblioteca Era, 1967), 365: “The new mixtec princes, the only hope for the thousands of sombrero weavers, campesinos and shepherds that live in the Mixteca Alta. For now, there is no other hope in this desolate landscape.”

<sup>143</sup> AHCCI-MA, Educación, Serie Escuelas Radiofónicas, caja 3, “Instrucciones de Manejo, Phillips.”

una capacidad pedagógica mayor y mas rápida del maestro común y corriente.”<sup>144</sup>

Hernández, as the broadcasting teacher, conducted the lessons in both Mixtec and Spanish, which consisted of spoken Spanish language instruction, literacy, and arithmetic, along with musical programing.<sup>145</sup> The teachers’ charge was to mimic Hernández and further explain his instructions.

The radio school broadcasts lasted from roughly September 1958 to 1965, when Hernández, who had by then been named director of the Tlaxiaco CCI, was moved to another INI post in Michoacán. A typical broadcast lasted two hours for each grade and combined formal lessons, student teacher interaction and musical programing. Just as in federal rural schools, students began the week with a military-style salute to the flag and patriotic songs. The broadcasting teacher often began the day’s lesson with the phrase, “Quiero ayudarlos a que aprendan a hablar el castellano, a leer y escribir y también a hacer cuentas.”<sup>146</sup> The broadcasting teacher alternated between specifically directing the students in their assignments and instructing the auxiliary teachers in the lesson plan, allotting time for the auxiliary teachers to work with the students on particular assignments. Hernández’ personality was said to fit the medium well and he attempted to create rapport with the students despite his physical absence. As Antolin Osorio, an auxiliary teacher, recounted:

él [Hernández] estaba hasta aquí y dice no, en Tlaxiaco y dice, ante la radio y dice, a ver niños pongan atención, se está dirigiendo al grupo, a ver, Manuel, tu, pasa al pizarrón, a ver, dime qué está ahí, entonces, mira, no estás cumpliendo con lo que te estoy diciendo Manuel, eh, a ver maestro dile a Manuel que haga lo

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<sup>144</sup> AHCCI-MA (prior to 2010 reorganization), “Escuelas Radiofónicas,” March 22, 1958, 5: “Theoretically, the radio system teachers, by acting in part as robots, but doing it daily, will obtain in a year a pedagogic capacity faster and better than the common teacher.”

<sup>145</sup> AHCCI-MA (prior to 2010 reorganization), “Radio transmission schedule,” March 22, 1960.

<sup>146</sup> AHCCI-MA, Educación, Serie Escuelas Radiofónicas, caja 7, “Guion numero 106,” October 1, 1962: “I want to help you learn to speak Spanish, to read and write, and also to make change.”

que yo le estoy diciendo entonces ya el maestro ya entraba y decía mira, dice el maestro que tu, que enseñes la mano ahí o que señales el dibujo aquel o la lámina esa, entonces ya uno es el que va controlando... así era pues.<sup>147</sup>

The radios had a red or blue light when turned on and the auxiliary teachers used this to discipline the students, insinuating that the broadcasting teacher could see them through the light, that it was a “little eye.” While Mixtec was used in the broadcasts, the reality of the language’s multiple variants created challenges for the radio teachers. Despite the hoped for mutual intelligibility of Mixtec within the ex-district of Tlaxiaco, there were still difficulties in translation. It fell to the auxiliary teachers to use their own variants in the classroom.

In radio transcripts, the elements of the broadcast conducted in Mixtec are not written out and only denoted by “mixteco” or “auxilio en mixteco.” This was compounded by the fact that the teachers were not always sent to their home communities.<sup>148</sup> This logistical challenge was acknowledged by officials early on, noting in an internal document that “de encontrarse que esta incapacidad esta mas extendida de lo que parece, habrá necesidad de usar menos el mixteco al dirigirse a los niños y de enseñar más en español...”<sup>149</sup> This was one of the major challenges and barriers to indigenous education in regions with substantial linguistic diversity. Nor does this account for larger dilemma that Mixtec, like many other indigenous languages, had not

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<sup>147</sup> Antolin Osorio Nicolas, interview by author, Oaxaca City, February 22 & April 21, 2010: “he [Hernández] was over here in Tlaxiaco, right, and says, in front of the radio, he says, “ok children pay attention,” guiding the group, “ok Manuel, you go to the blackboard, and tell me what is there,” and then, “look, you are not doing what I say Manuel, teacher, tell Manuel to do what I say,” and then the radio teacher would take it from there, “the teacher says that you, you raise your hand or show us the drawing or the poster,” and that’s how it was.”

<sup>148</sup> Antolin Osorio Nicolas, interview; Isaías Sánchez López, interview.

<sup>149</sup> AHCCI-MA (prior to 2010 reorganization), “Escuelas Radiofónicas,” March 22, 1958, 5: “if this incapacity [internal variants within Mixtec] is more significant than it appears, it will become necessary to use less Mixtec in communicating with the children and to teach more in Spanish.”

been a written language for centuries and was primarily experienced through interpersonal contexts within communities, families and markets. What did it mean to take such a language and broadcast it over an entirely de-personified technology such as shortwave radio?

A sign of the program's initial success was its expansion to a second, Triqui language experimental system in 1963. By 1963, 49 INI schools were functioning with 35 promoters (auxiliary teachers in training) and 23 federal teachers (those with federal accreditation) serving an official enrollment of 2,314 students. The INI took over authority of a handful of schools in the zona alta of the Triqui region, which was said to share mutually intelligible language variants.<sup>150</sup> The Triquis, an indigenous group culturally and linguistically distinct from Mixtecs, yet centered in parts of the Mixteca Alta and Baja, had for decades experienced a combative relationship with their neighbors and state authorities.<sup>151</sup> While popular lore portrayed the Triqui as inherently violent, *gente brava*, government redistricting and land disputes contributed to violent internal conflicts in the postrevolutionary period. Despite hostility with the state government, these Triqui communities agreed to work with the INI.<sup>152</sup>

### **Conflict with Local Education Authorities**

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<sup>150</sup> CDI-FD, "Informe de labores del CCI Mixteca Alta, 1963."

<sup>151</sup> See Francisco López Bárcenas, *San Juan Copala: dominación política y Resistencia popular. De las rebeliones de Hilarión a la formación del municipio autónomo* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco, 2009).

<sup>152</sup> Isaías Sánchez López, interview by author. Describing Hernández encounter with the Triquis, "el mismo nos cuenta que fue a la región triqui y que le dijeron—que con el INI si trabajaban porque con el gobierno no--jajaja que ironía pues se puede decía, con INI si trabajaban pero no con el gobierno, pues era lo mismo, no? (he himself told us that he went to the Trique region and they told him—with the INI we will work but not with the government—hahaha what irony one can say, that they would work with the INI but not the government, it was the same thing, no?)"

While the INI eventually achieved a level of collaboration and a working relationship with local educational authorities, it faced steep challenges from local teachers employed by the SEP as well as state educational authorities along the way. On the most local level, teachers at work in the Mixteca dismissed the young radio teachers as upstarts, lacking either the professional training or a level of “culture” necessary for a true Mexican rural teacher. As one former radio teacher recounted, federal teachers dismissed those from the INI as “huarachudos,” or sandal-wearers, for the cheap, thick sandals typical of rural people of the region.<sup>153</sup> In this regard INI teachers represented a threat to the prestige of the rural schoolteacher, as the educated professional, but equally importantly, a threat for their apparent Indian-ness, represented in their sandals.

The use of indigenous language in the classroom also threatened existing educational authorities. State-level bureaucrats drafted an official complaint regarding the INI’s bilingual method, complaining to the president that it went against established norms. When INI officials became aware of this, they organized, as part of the inauguration ceremonies, a demonstration of the bilingual method in San Antonio, San Tomás Ocotopec. The radio class went off without a hitch, and Caso and Aguilera Dorantes used it as a power play against state level education authorities.<sup>154</sup> Caso and Aguilera asked those assembled if they found the lesson effective and state authorities were forced to agree the bilingual method worked and accepted the presence of the INI. While it remained a tenuous relationship, the INI inserted itself into the local schooling system and Hernández successfully obtained Ministry of Education plazas for some of the radio teachers, gaining them access to both professional development and

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<sup>153</sup> Antolín Osorio Nicolás, interview by author.

<sup>154</sup> Ramón Hernández López, interview by author.



significantly higher pay. By 1964, the INI's presence in the region's educational system was such that, José Sánchez García, a SEP teacher from the El Imperio, a *ranchería* of Yosondúa, unable to obtain an assignment teaching in his home community from the SEP, petitioned to be transferred to the INI in order to serve his home community.<sup>155</sup> In this regard teachers were able to use the cleavage in educational authority to negotiate their own positions.

### **Catholic Opposition**

Hernández' efforts did not just conflict with local educational authorities but also with hostile Catholic authorities. By 1961 Hernández had risen from head of the CCI's education section to director of the center itself. In that capacity, Tlaxiaco's municipal president Héctor Villaverde Hernández invited him to speak at the town's Independence Day celebrations. Taking to the podium in front of the municipal palace, Hernández decried that "los frutos de la independencia, de la reforma, de la revolución siguen siendo una aspiración en muchos lugares apartados del territorio nacional."<sup>156</sup> He went on to criticize local employers and merchants who exploited the indigenous population, whether through poor wages or price manipulation and denounced priests for allegedly confusing the local population, "con el fantasma del comunismo pretenden nuevamente conculcar las libertades del pueblo."<sup>157</sup> However, before he could finish his remarks, which he knew would be controversial, a local priest, speaking through the Church's loudspeakers just across from the municipal palace, denounced Hernández and called for

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<sup>155</sup> AHCCI-MA, Educación, Serie Escuelas Radiofónicas, caja 9, Letter to Prof. Ramón Hernández López, March 4, 1964.

<sup>156</sup> *Política* (Mexico) December 1, 1961: "the fruits of independence, of the reform, of the revolution, remain an aspiration for many regions of the national territory."

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*: "with the specter of communism they attempt to once again infringe upon the liberties of the people."

the town to punish him.<sup>158</sup> Hernández escaped any personal violence yet the local army detachment was called on to protect the INI's Tlaxiaco offices. Catholic activists then organized a march through town the following day, denouncing the INI's alleged communism and posting 'Viva Cristo Rey,' or Long live Christ the King, graffiti on the town's walls.

The hostility the INI faced from Catholic authorities formed part of a broader Catholic oppositional culture centered in the Mixteca Baja, just north of Tlaxiaco, and a seminary in Huajuapam de León. That politicized Catholicism was forged in the 1930s in reaction to socialist education reforms of president Cárdenas and combined anti-secularism with pride in local culture and language.<sup>159</sup> Catholic clergy in the Mixteca Alta most likely trained with figures from Huajuapam and the church in Tlaxiaco continues to display images of Cristero martyrs. Ultimately, Hernández was counseled by Alfonso Caso to avoid confrontations with local Catholic officials. The conflict reached state-level politics when Oaxacan state governor Alfonso Perez Gasca intervened and scolded Hernández for his speech.

While there was a certain irony in Catholic opposition to an INI program directly inspired by parallel efforts of Catholic organizing in Colombia, Catholic anti-communism also drew on the actual presence of Marxist and revolutionary nationalist politics (which borrowed elements from the former) in Mexico. Particularly among educators, Marxism was a salient ideology at the time. Sánchez López, the radio teacher who later served as the Mixtec broadcaster, came into direct contact with Marxist politics while attending SEP training courses in Oaxaca City. After one such course for in-service teachers ended,

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<sup>158</sup> Ramón Hernández López, interview by author.

<sup>159</sup> Benjamin T. Smith, "Anticlericalism and Resistance: The Diocese of Huajuapam de León, 1930-1940," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37, no. 3 (August 2005): 469-505.

many gathered in the patio of a Oaxaca City home, listening to Marxist speeches about inequality and wealth while under the shade of a grapefruit tree.<sup>160</sup>

### **Demise of the Radio School**

In addition to the political and educational conflicts the INI faced, the radio program was beset by a host of practical problems. The first of which was that the INI had a limited window in which to transmit its educational programming due to the interference of another radio station based out of Guatemala, Radio Quetzaltenango. Radio Quetzaltenango's signal interfered with the INI broadcast after one pm so the station was forced to schedule all of its programming in the morning.<sup>161</sup> It was also hemmed in on the morning-side of the schedule by the students' ability to arrive on time, as many still walked significant distances.<sup>162</sup> In addition, the maintenance and upkeep of radio receivers in communities with little experience with electronics was no easy task. When receivers suffered damage they were sent to Tlaxiaco and often then to Mexico City for repair, taking months to be returned. In a Triqui community of Coixtlahuaca, rats ate through the electrical wiring of a radio school's installation.<sup>163</sup> Underscoring the significant challenges facing the radio teachers, one afternoon in 1963, while the fixing the antenna of his radio receptor, the auxiliary teacher in Guadalupe, part of Magdalena Peñasco, was hit by lightning and died.<sup>164</sup> In addition to the problems faced by radio teachers in the field, the pilot station itself experienced difficulties in 1964 as the studio's

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<sup>160</sup> Isaías Sánchez López, interview.

<sup>161</sup> CDI-FD, "Informe de labores del CCI Mixteca Alta, 1963," 13.

<sup>162</sup> Cite radiograms that address students' ability to arrive at eight or nine am.

<sup>163</sup> Benítez, 426.

<sup>164</sup> CDI-FD, "Informe de labores del CCI Mixteca Alta, 1963-1965," 6.

microphones' quality disintegrated. While replacements were ultimately obtained, the new equipment never matched the potency of the original equipment.<sup>165</sup>

These technical problems coincided with changes in the INI's educational mission nationally. By 1964, the SEP created the Servicio Nacional de Promotores Culturales y Maestros Bilingües, a national service of bilingual promoters. Through this reform budgets for training bilingual youth as educational extensionists grew substantially. This shift, along with Ramon Hernandez Lopez's move from the center, meant there was less incentive to support and develop the pilot radio program. Increasingly, more attention went to training the promoters as educators without the pilot radio model. Despite this radio school program in the Mixteca Alta created an important precedent for later INI initiatives of full-fledged indigenous radio stations, a national system of which was created in 1978.

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<sup>165</sup> Isaías Sánchez López, interview by author. See also, AHCCI-MA, Educación, Serie Escuelas Radiofónicas, caja 8, "Se comunica de un micrófono," February 15, 1966.

### **Return to Pátzcuaro: Dependency Theory and Language Policy at the 1968 Congreso Indigenista Interamericano**

La principal característica de la política del desarrollo en América Latina consiste en una manifiesta polarización de sectores, uno que recibe ampliamente los beneficios de la política desarrollista y otro que queda marginado casi totalmente de dichos beneficios. En este ultimo sector podemos colocar a las distintas comunidades indígenas.

—Alejandro Marroquín<sup>166</sup>

In the spring of 1968 delegates from throughout the Americas gathered in the colonial town of Pátzcuaro, located in the Purépecha highlands of the southwestern state of Michoacán. The site was of symbolic importance as the first international indigenista congress organized by Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas' government convened here in 1940. That congress aimed to consolidate Mexico's leading role in Latin American indigenista thought and practice and gave impetus to numerous national indigenista efforts throughout the Americas. In effect Pátzcuaro served as a symbolic space for the Mexican regime, with its ancient indigenous past, its colonial aura, and its connection to the revered Cárdenas, all contributing to its exalted position within PRI political culture. And it was here to which the sixth congress of the Instituto Indigenista Interamericano (I.I.I.) returned in April of 1968.<sup>167</sup> Yet a growing division among the delegates

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<sup>166</sup> Alejandro D. Marroquín, "Economía indígena y desarrollo," Trabajo presentado al VI Congreso Indigenista Interamericano, *América Indígena* XXVIII, no. 4 (Octubre 1968): 936-937: "The principle characteristic of Latin American development policy is a clear polarization between sectors; one that amply receives the benefits of development policy while another remains almost entirely marginalized from said benefits. In this last sector we can include indigenous communities."

<sup>167</sup> The decision to hold the sixth congress in Pátzcuaro was made four years prior at the fifth Inter-American Indigenista congress in Quito, Ecuador. Pátzcuaro's significance to indigenista politics is evidenced in its role as host to the first congress in 1940, as well as the Proyecto Tarasco, spearheaded by Morris Swadesh in the 1939 and 1940 and then later in the 1975 Congreso nacional de los pueblos indígenas.

characterized the 1968 congress. As the Guatemalan representative Carlos Guzmán Böckler noted from the floor of the congress, it was beyond doubt that the delegates were living in a time of changing values, a time of ‘confrontation between generations.’<sup>168</sup> In a nod to the Cold War violence afflicting his country, Guzmán Böckler argued these new values were battling to rise to the surface in a “un baño de sangre y lagrimas,” a bath of blood and tears.<sup>169</sup>

The delegates traveled to the congress in the midst of rising global unrest.<sup>170</sup> The months preceding the meetings witnessed the Tet Offensive against US forces in Vietnam and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee. The political crisis that would eventually erupt into the Prague Spring simmered in Czechoslovakia and massive street mobilizations of students and workers would rock France in the month of May. In Mexico, many of the young anthropologists at the congress would immerse themselves in a youth movement later that summer centered in Mexico City and aimed at challenging government authoritarianism. That movement and its subsequent repression would result in a profound crisis in the relationship between intellectuals and the Mexican government. In Brazil and Argentina, students demanding university autonomy and reform would clash with police in the month of June. And in August and September of that year, the Conference of Latin American Bishops met in Medellin, Colombia, from which they declared their “preferential option for the poor.” Inspired by such figures as Paulo Freire and other currents of liberation theology, the seemingly all too institutional

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<sup>168</sup> “Un Polvorín en Centroamérica: Millones de Indígenas en Condiciones Insoportables,” Alejandro Ortiz Reza (continued on 15-A) *Excelsior* (Mexico), April 19, 1968.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> For a discussion of the simultaneity of the 1968 protests in Latin America, see, Jeffery L. Gould, “Solidarity under Siege: The Latin American Left, 1968,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 2009): 348-375.

body profoundly contributed to the growing social justice sensibility of the era.<sup>171</sup> This was the context in which delegates gathered in Pátzcuaro to discuss the future of indigenous peoples of the Americas.

For indigenista policy circles, April of 1968 was an experience of between things ended and things begun. Within the political effervescence of the period, anti-colonial thinkers fiercely debated whether vernacular languages were tools in the struggle for indigenous liberation or barriers to a class-based solidarity perceived as necessary for social transformation. The congress therefore serves as a window into the changing nature of indigenista thinking and practice. More specifically, the chapter explores the relationship between emergent ideas of dependent development and indigenous peoples' place in the nation. The 1968 Congress was a moment of continuity but also change, in which long-standing indigenista positions were increasingly confronted with new notions of indigenous peoples' cultural rights and relationship to the state. Examining the congress proceedings, the dominant ideas and papers presented, as well as the diverse group of attending delegates, I argue the experience of the congress demonstrates an increasingly instability of the indigenista project, growing internal divisions, and the emergence of a more robust cultural pluralism as it related to indigenous language-use. While never fully breaking from modernizationist tendencies for which *indigenismo* has been criticized, the congress reveals dramatic shifts in indigenista thinking that would have repercussions in indigenous politics throughout the Americas.

The congress began on the afternoon of Tuesday, April 16 with a speech by renowned indigenista intellectual, and then director of the Mexican INI, Alfonso Caso.

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<sup>171</sup> The parallel between shifts in the Catholic Church and changes in the indigenista project merits further discussion; both were external projects with long histories of work in indigenous communities and both experienced serious revision and reorientation during this period.

The delegates would have had to walk the cobblestone streets of the ancient city, once the seat of power of the Purépecha people, to take part in the afternoon's proceedings at the auditorium of the Centro Regional de Educación Fundamental para la América Latina (CREFAL). The presidium had all the trappings of official Mexican celebrations, with representatives from federal agencies, the Organization of American States, and local state government in attendance. The Mexican delegation included the anthropologist (and then director of the I.I.I.) Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán and Everardo Gustavo Varela, director of the Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios, along with Ignacio Bernal, then president of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, as president of the delegation. After the opening ceremony the state government was to offer an afternoon comida for the assembled delegates.



Image 5: Opening Presidium of the Sexto Congreso Indigenista Interamericano, (April 15-21, 1968). At center, head of the US Delegation Robert Bennet, to his right, Alfonso Caso, director of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista, Agustín Arriaga, the governor of Michoacán, and Theo Crevenna, representative of the Organization of American States.<sup>172</sup>

What becomes apparent from various accounts of the congress is a growing disquiet within indigenista circles, particularly among young social scientists. The congress proceedings and official documents reveal an entrenched and established

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<sup>172</sup> *Sol de México*, April 17, 1968.



community that sought to defend its project against a growing criticism of indigenista practice forming among young indigenista workers and anthropologists.<sup>173</sup> Perhaps trying to match the sense of urgency, Alfonso Caso, whose career spanned the entirety of indigenista experience up to that point, set a distinct tone in his opening remarks. Caso addressed the 300 or so delegates from the 15 member countries frankly and directly, arguing the discrimination faced by indigenous peoples required immediate redress; one journalist described his tone as “severe.”<sup>174</sup> The 72-year-old archeologist emphatically declared:

En el futuro se tomarán medidas para castigar enérgicamente, con todo el rigor de la ley, a quienes aun consideran al indio como un animal y no un humano, contra quien se puede ejercer cualquier violencia. Esta discriminación tenemos que atacarla todos los hombres conscientes que vivimos en este Continente y la atacaremos por falsa, por estúpida, y por inmoral.<sup>175</sup>

Caso’s opening remarks quite clearly aimed at appeasing the growing politics of anti-racism in Americas. While indigenista circles had been concerned with indigenous peoples’ place in the nation for decades, indigenista intellectuals previously eschewed categories of race and the language of racial discrimination as they attempted to move away from race-based “scientific research.” It was during this period that the language of racial discrimination re-emerged. Yet the congress at large still reflected the preceding period’s focus on indigenous integration and modernization, with integration understood

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<sup>173</sup> Andres Medina and Carlos Garcia Mora, *La quiebra política de la antropología social en México: Antología d una polémica* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 1983-1996).

<sup>174</sup> While there were 15 member countries in 1968, only 13 were listed as sending official delegations, these included: Venezuela, Paraguay, Honduras, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Brazil, Peru, the United States, and Panama. See, “Acta Final del Sexto Congreso Indigenista Interamericano,” *Anuario Indigenista*, Vol. XXXI (1971): 47.

<sup>175</sup> *Sol de Mexico* (Mexico), April 17, 1968: “In the future, severe measures will be taken to punish, with all the force of the law, those who treat the Indian as an animal and less than human, against whom any violence can be exercised. We, as men of conscious of this continent, must attack this discrimination, and we will attack it for its falseness, its stupidity, and for its immorality.”

as participation in official politics and productive economic activity. Thus varying projects were on display at the congress, some reflecting longstanding integrationist paradigms along with others that borrowed from new languages of liberation.

In the spring of 1968 Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) was president of Mexico and the political upheaval that would shake the country that year would not stir till the end of July. The regime itself, and up until recently academic literature, portrayed this period as one of economic and political stability. The postwar economic growth, for which Mexico was lauded internationally, had produced massive urbanization and a growing middle class. Díaz Ordaz' administration continued the policies of so-called stabilizing development of the previous period and the president himself emerged out of the conservative faction of the PRI. Mexico's place in the Cold War politics of the era was, while rhetorically sympathetic to Cuba, decidedly in the US camp and the Cold War polarization of politics was on display at the congress itself.

During the opening day of the congress, the head of the US delegation, Robert L. Bennet, was forced to answer questions from a hostile press. In reaction to reporters' questions regarding the ongoing U.S. war in Vietnam, Bennet stressed Native Americans were overwhelmingly volunteers as opposed to drafted enlisted personnel and disproportionately patriotic.<sup>176</sup> Bennet further emphasized the racial discrimination facing the US black population (the violent images of which were broadcast on Mexican television) was entirely unrelated to the position of native peoples in the United States.<sup>177</sup> The uneasy balancing act that was Mexico's Cold War posture was reflected in the fact that while Mexico was officially anti-imperialist Díaz Ordaz himself was in the United

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<sup>176</sup> *Sol de Mexico* (Mexico), April 17, 1968.

<sup>177</sup> Jorge Volpi, *La imaginación y el poder: una historia intelectual de 1968* (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1998), 117.

States visiting with President Lyndon Johnson during the week of the congress. While Díaz Ordaz would achieve notoriety for overseeing the violent suppression of youth protests, his authoritarian tendencies were evidenced prior to 1968 in his treatment of a doctors' strike in 1964 and 1965. The 1968 summer Olympics, set to take place in Mexico City, were designed to market Mexico to the world as an economically modern and democratic country (the first so-called developing country to host the Olympics).

As a delegated congress organized under the auspices of the Organization of American States, the meetings consisted of national delegations as well as invited guests (researchers and political figures). Where they existed, each country's respective indigenista agency submitted formal summaries of the previous years' work. Submitted in one of the four official languages of the congress (Spanish, English, French, and Portuguese), these documents assessed past work, current projects, and plans for the future. Along with these documents, which were often imprecise and self-congratulatory, were research-based documents submitted by academics and government researchers focused on particular technical or practical elements of indigenous development. Delegates deliberated on this material in various working commissions divided by theme. For example, under "Educación y lenguas indígenas," the material was divided into five subthemes, including "el empleo de las lenguas indígenas en la enseñanza," and "problemas de la enseñanza y educación de adultos." These distinct working commissions were charged with developing a set of shared goals to be voted on by the congress at large.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Subsequently published by the congress, these were non-binding resolutions for member countries.

While the Inter-American indigenista congresses predated World War II and the politics of the Cold War, by 1968 they had come to form part of or at least affiliated with Cold War institutions. Based in Mexico City and officially incorporated into the OAS in 1953, the I.I.I. served to organize the congresses and conduct the institute's ongoing research and policy programs. Among the invited observers at the 1968 congress were representatives of Canada, the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Inter-American Development Bank.<sup>179</sup> As such the congresses served as just one more conduit in a network of US-led developmentalist institutions. Yet it would be erroneous to chalk up the character of the congresses to this broader alignment of power. Internal tensions existed within this postwar consensus. The conferences certainly reflected Mexico's powerful role in indigenous development policy, attempting to gain influence and credibility internationally through its indigenous policy-making. Furthermore there was heterogeneity among policy makers just as one would expect to find in institutions such as the United Nations. Anti-colonial sentiment therefore percolated into congress debates and in this era the very meaning of "anti-colonial" was itself called into question. The institution provided a space in which diverse ideas and actors were brought into to conversation with each other.

This diversity was evidenced in the cast of characters assembled in Pátzcuaro that April. From Lyndon B. Johnson's pick for US Commissioner on Indian Affairs, Robert L. Bennet, to the Marxist Salvadorian Alejandro Marroquín, to the evangelical founder of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, William Cameron Townsend. At the level of national delegations there was also a heterogeneity. Some were robust delegations reflecting the

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<sup>179</sup> "Acta Final del Sexto Congreso Indigenista Interamericano," *Anuario Indigenista* Vol. XXXI (1971): 14-15.

work and positions of a particular country's government ministry. Other national delegations were merely represented by the country's ambassador to Mexico (the case of Brazil) and lacked any specific connection to indigenous policy. Then there were others, such as Marroquín from El Salvador or Guatemala's delegate Carlos Guzmán Blocker, who were academic researchers in indigenous issues but did not represent strong government institutions.

Among the official delegates were Paraguay's Juan Alfonso Borgognon, a senior officer in the Paraguayan armed forces and Alfredo Stroessner's director of the native affairs department (institutionally part of the ministry of defense). In contrast, Guzmán Böckler was an academic trained in the initial generations of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLASCO) in Santiago, Chile and later in France, under the supervision of Georges Balandier.<sup>180</sup> The president of the Brazilian delegation, Frank Moscoso, was Brazil's ambassador to Mexico and had no specific relation to indigenous issues. Julia Elena Fortún, an anthropologist and ethnomusicologist from La Paz, who pioneered those fields in the wake her country's 1952 revolution, represented Bolivia. From Honduras, the founder of the country's history and anthropology institute, Jesús Núñez Chinchilla, and from Chile, an only recent signatory to the Pátzcuaro charter, René Argandona Olivares served as delegation president along with the participation of the communist Alejandro Lipchutz.<sup>181</sup>

Nor were the delegates alone with their thoughts in Pátzcuaro. Mexican security agents from the benign-sounding Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (part of the

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<sup>180</sup> "Carlos Guzmán Böckler," ENcontraARTE-Aporrea.org, Venezuela, <http://encontrarte.aporrea.org/40/personaje/> (accessed November 16, 2012).

<sup>181</sup> Out of the 13 delegation presidents, a sizeable group had careers as successful government bureaucrats, active into the 1990s, and some of them worked as academics or served in related cultural institutions.

Dirección Federal de Seguridad) kept close watch at the congress, filing reports on the meeting's proceeding and even collecting copies of the various academic submissions.<sup>182</sup> This political surveillance formed part of a much broader domestic spying operation in Mexico, which identified government anthropologists and other staff employed by indigenista agencies as potential threats to the political order.

An interesting example of the shifting terrain indigenista officials faced was the changing terminology used to refer to indigenous participants at the congress. Whereas at the 1940 congress in Pátzcuaro there were official “delegados indígenas,” designated as such, by 1968, the notion of a “delegado indígena” was far more problematic. In the early years, in which identity-based claims were far less frequent, the term “delegado indígena” fit a context which assumed white or *mestizo* men as legitimate actors but by 1968, the term revealed the external nature of *indigenismo*. In other words, as indigenous peoples became more visible for their indigeniety and active as such in public life in the Americas, having officially “indigenous delegates” at a congress nominally aimed at indigenous empowerment only reiterated how the congress was not a congress by and for indigenous peoples, but something else. Laura Giraudo makes a similar point, analyzing the changing official terminology of indigenista congresses; in 1940, the term used was “delegado indígena,” in 1964, “dirigente indígena,” and in 1972, “líderes de las organizaciones indígenas.”<sup>183</sup> Rather than substantive changes in the nature of the congresses, this shift terminology reflected the changing contexts in which indigenista bureaucrats met.

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<sup>182</sup> The IPS files pertaining to the congress are located in the Archivo General de la Nación, Dirección Federal de Seguridad, IPS (hereafter AGN-IPS), caja 1544A, expediente 2 and caja 1544B, expediente 5.

<sup>183</sup> Laura Giraudo, “El Instituto Indigenista Interamericano y la participación indígena (1940-1998),” *América Indígena* LXII, no. 3 (July-September 2006): 26.

## Indigenista Developmentalism

By 1968 indigenista circles were fully immersed in post World War II developmentalism. This meant the overriding themes of the congress centered on socio-economic questions and educational theory and policy for indigenous peoples.<sup>184</sup> Along with the education and indigenous language working committee, other major committees focused on health, economics (including sessions focused on land tenure and land scarcity), and the specific problems faced by indigenous peoples located in arid or tropical regions. A final major working committee focused on the training and professionalization of indigenista personnel. This section centered on the development of anthropology in the distinct participating countries as well as indigenista training for non-anthropologist specialists such as doctors and economists.

The broad thrust of both national reports and research papers remained squarely in the developmentalist paradigm. With indigenous integration framed primarily as an economic process, of turning indigenous populations into a productive sector of the nation state, *indigenismo* here was at its most homogenizing or assimilating worst. Some framed integration as merely an economic process while others employed a language of citizenship. A member of the Chilean delegation (a country which only signed on to the indigenista charter in 1961), Alejandro Lipschutz, framed the process as some “araucanos” voluntarily choosing to become “chilenos”.<sup>185</sup> The focus on economic integration is clear in the relationship between the I.I.I. and the Andean Indian Mission or Misión Andina, a development project led by the International Labor Organization. The I.I.I.’s then director, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, in his assessment of the Institute’s

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<sup>184</sup> Giraudo groups the 1964, 1968, and 1972 congresses together as sharing these themes.

<sup>185</sup> Alejandro Lipschutz, ‘Notas del Instituto Indigenista Chileno,’ *América Indígena* Vol. XXVIII, no. 2, (1968): 559.

activities, celebrated its collaboration with Misión Andina in Ecuador, through personnel training programs. Misión Andina's formulation fell squarely along Fordist assumptions of productive citizens, citing the untapped economic potential of the Andean region's indigenous population.<sup>186</sup> Here the congress appears to fall squarely in the post-war Western consensus that favored state-led market development.

From preliminary research on the official delegation presidents and the experience of the preceding I.I.I. congress in Quito, Ecuador in 1964, one notes a shift in the representation of radical voices inspired by elements of Marxism or dependency theory.<sup>187</sup> Whereas the 1964 congress was primarily a governmental affair focused on development in its narrowest of sense, it was at the 1968 congress where a critique of developmentalist practice was articulated and an argument regarding cultural pluralism emerged in a substantial way.

The broad thrust of modernization theory-inspired development was a homogenizing approach to indigenous peoples and cultures. While indigenous peoples were celebrated in the abstract by twentieth century modernizing states, particularly in the case of Mexico through its promotion of native arts and crafts, indigenous peoples figured into modernizing paradigms mainly as untapped economic resources. In these schemes indigenous labor was a potential resource and anything that hindered that labor from being integrated into modern economic activity, be it belief systems or cultural and language practices, was a barrier to that integration. There were of course exceptions to this policy. In the history of indigenista experience there were internal debates as to the

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<sup>186</sup> Jason Guthrie, International Labour Organization, "The International Labor Organization, Community Development, and the Roots of the International Technocratic Class, 1944-1966," <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/century/download/guthri.pdf> (accessed November, 2011).

<sup>187</sup> Marc Becker, "The Limits of *Indigenismo* in Ecuador," *Latin American Perspectives* 39 (September 2012): 45-62.



utility of indigenous languages and cultural knowledge and voices on the periphery advocated for the retention of certain cultural practices or language-use. Particularly in the post World War II period, linguists, anthropologists and social scientists advocated for indigenous language instruction merely for its utility in advancing integration and Spanish-language acquisition. By the mid-1950s (discussed in chapter two), Mexican officials in collaboration with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) began to develop indigenous language teaching materials and employ bilingual promoters in their development and educational work. In these cases, vernacular languages were considered to have value on their own. This experience was mirrored by other efforts of the SIL and national governments in the Andean region during the 1960s (evidenced by congress document on Peru). Yet these projects were overwhelmingly articulated as efforts toward national integration and justified (whether strategically or sincerely) as mere bridges to national languages.<sup>188</sup>

The modernization project that enjoyed broad support from both the United States and national governments in the Americas was under attack by the mid-1960s. Within development circles a new generation of anthropologists and intellectuals associated with a set of ideas, eventually termed dependency theory, gained strength and group cohesion.<sup>189</sup> The *dependentistas* employed an often harsh and denunciatory language in their depiction of previous indigenous development efforts. They declared that so-called developing countries, far from being able to follow the model of more economically

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<sup>188</sup> Some of the figures at the congress were probably more politically radical than they appear in official documents yet just as today, they may have strategically couched their arguments in more moderate language but this is hard to parse out historically.

<sup>189</sup> Some of the major works of *dependentistas* include, Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) and Tulio Halperín-Donghi, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1969).

advanced countries, had been underdeveloped by the same processes that enriched other countries. In other words, the development of Europe, and increasingly North America, were dependent on the sacking of wealth from countries in the global south. Yet many critics shared some of the same assumptions as the modernizers, particularly when it came to questions of culture and language, for reasons entirely of their own.<sup>190</sup>

Whereas most modernizers viewed cultural and language difference as barriers to the onward and upward development of capitalist modernity, many dependentistas viewed this very same alterity as a barrier to the universal dynamic of class exploitation and class struggle. In this view, indigenous peoples' subordinated position was fundamentally an economic one, even if it played out in terms of cultural discrimination, and thus had an economic solution, social revolution led by a culturally unified working class and or peasantry, given the proclivities of the theorist.<sup>191</sup> Indigenous peoples' liberation was tied to their ability to conform to and join this broader struggle. It should be noted that in many cases this disregard of indigenous cultural knowledge was not malicious but rather grew out of a substantive concern for indigenous peoples' position in society. Yet the attendant political solution caused a kind of theoretical blindness in which language issues did not register for those engaged in polarized debates regarding land tenure or the nature of capital accumulation.

### **Anti-Colonialism Revised**

At the Thursday plenary session, the divisions within indigenista circles exploded onto the congress floor. During what was depicted as a drowsy session of national

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<sup>190</sup> It should be noted that the dependency school emerged in part from pre-existing Marxist approaches to development, which had uneasily coincided with modernizationist projects.

<sup>191</sup> Dependency theorists' emphasis on global relations and the transfer of wealth from south to north often meant they displaced the working class as the agent of change for some other social force, in many cases a global south peasantry.

delegation reports, Carlos Guzmán Böckler, the 37-year-old leader of the Guatemalan delegation, took the microphone to address what many must have been speaking of informally.<sup>192</sup> The delegate decried the paternalistic nature of indigenista projects, concluding:

No pretendo hacer de este Congreso una tribuna pero sí centrar el problema para que se entienda correctamente. Somos un laboratorio en el cual se enfrentan una serie de intereses y problemas que, consecuentemente, demandan no el análisis superficial, sino el de sus causas profundas.<sup>193</sup>

In this statement Guzmán Böckler aimed at a systemic critique of indigenista policy and practice and demonstrated that the Cold War violence occurring in Central America could not be avoided in the congress's discussions. Following Guzmán Böckler, the esteemed Salvadorian delegate Alejandro Marroquín felt compelled to address the poverty facing El Salvador's rural population and the attendant political crisis, which, he argued, threatened violent revolution. The published accounts of this session do not reveal whether Mexican voices supported the Central American delegates.

The generational conflict revolved around a number of related issues, one of which was the question of anti-colonialism. In effect the delegates disagreed over which theories effectively explained indigenous peoples' relation to broader society and the possibilities for their emancipation. The older generations of indigenista intellectuals, from Alfonso Caso forward, generally aimed to free indigenous peoples from their "marginalized state" mainly through state integration and what they benevolently termed "acculturation." This approach was inevitably paternalistic in that it posited top down

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<sup>192</sup> Alejandro Ortiz Reza, "Un Polvorín en Centroamérica: Millones de Indígenas en Condiciones Insoportables," *Excelsior* (Mexico), April 19, 1968.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid: "I do not aim to turn this congress into a tribunal but to clarify the problem so that it is understood correctly. We are a laboratory in which a number of competing interests and problems come into conflict, that consequently demand not a superficial analysis but one that addresses the core causes."

changes to integrate indigenous peoples into a national culture. While this generation was rhetorically anti-colonial, supporting self-determination and nationalist politics in the Americas, it was an anti-colonialism that viewed the state as the primary agent in confronting marginalization and poverty. They theorized regional factors as the main impediments to indigenous development and therefore the national state had a role to play in removing regional obstacles to integration and the subsequent uplift of indigenous people.

Sitting somewhat uncomfortably between the history of indigenista practice and the insurgent youth was Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán. While Aguirre Beltrán was certainly part of the indigenista establishment, the insurgents had a much more ambivalent relation to him. This was due in large part to the publication of his theory of “regions of refuge” in 1967.<sup>194</sup> A more sophisticated articulation of regional underdevelopment, this theory posited that caste (or what today might be termed racial) discrimination and power prevented indigenous peoples’ integration in provincial Mexico. Aguirre Beltrán argued this caste discrimination and power had to be eliminated first in order to have a modern, class society. This position in effect mirrored the stagist approach of many Latin American Communist Parties that also promoted a gradualist, some might say reformist, approach to social and political change.

In contrast, the dependentistas increasingly viewed poverty and indigenous peoples’ subordinate positions as a result of global structures born out of the colonial experience and the subsequent independent regimes that maintained colonial relations

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<sup>194</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Regiones de refugio. El desarrollo de la comunidad y el proceso dominical en mestizo América* (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1967).

between metropole and the countryside.<sup>195</sup> For them, Latin American states' relations with the indigenous, even progressive nationalist states like that of Mexico, fundamentally revolved around increasing state control and integration of these populations and were thus colonial. Guzmán Böckler's own research on Guatemala, published just two years after the congress, applied the internal colonialism thesis, articulated by the Mexican Pablo González Casanova, to his country's indigenous regions.<sup>196</sup> Citing among others, Albert Memmi and Franz Fanon as major influences, Guzmán Böckler articulated distinct categories of colonial intermediaries, including that of an "agro-export bourgeoisie" and the "servant bourgeoisie" and combined these with a focus on the centrality of Mayan-European conflict.<sup>197</sup> This type of analysis constituted a huge shock to the previous generation of indigenistas. Those who believed their entire careers had been based on systematically challenging colonialism and empowering indigenous peoples were now indicted as collaborators with colonial regimes.

Aguirre Beltrán lashed out at this line of thinking in the pages of *Anuario Indígena* in 1970. While he underscored the fact that Bockler and his coauthor, Jean-Loup Herbert, had witnessed devastating violence in Guatemala, he called into question a number of their arguments, including the internal colonialism thesis. Aguirre Beltrán argued against what he saw as the insufficiency of the authors' class analysis and emphatically insisted that the indigenous ethnic dynamic remained outside of the class

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<sup>195</sup> Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, "Rupture and Return in Mexican Anthropology: Modernization Theory, Dependency Paradigms, and the "Colonial," 1945-1970, presented at the Aesthetic of Revolt: Latin America in the 1960s Conference, Latin American Studies Center, University of Maryland, College Park, April 13-15, 2011, 20.

<sup>196</sup> Pablo González Casanova, *Democracy in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>197</sup> Carlos Guzmán Böckler and Jean-Loup Herbert, *Guatemala: una interpretación histórico-social* (Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores, 1970).

structure and drew on the Peruvian Carlos Mariátegui to defend his own position.<sup>198</sup> In his defense of the anti-colonial nature of indigenismo, he cited Bartolomé de las Casas as an anti-colonial theoretician and named Morris Swadesh and Marroquín as evidence of contemporary anti-colonial indigenistas. Finally, Aguirre Beltrán took aim at the intellectual origins of the internal colonialism thesis, arguing that it emerged among French intellectuals and was ultimately a French psychological projection that aimed to place the blame of colonialism on others.<sup>199</sup>

Yet the two generations were speaking past each other. For the older generation, there were a host of theoretical as well as technical problems involved in reforms of the existing system, reforms conceived of as tremendously significant. For the younger generation, in the aftermath of the successful Cuban revolution and in the polarizing world of 1968, many became impatient with reformism. In the eyes of radical dependentistas reformism could be viewed as almost worse than the existing order, in that it offered further integration into an unequal system. For these critics, indigenous peoples' liberation was bound to struggles that could break structural power. Large-scale economic and political power had to be contended for, and if not, one was merely tinkering with colonialism.<sup>200</sup> This was part of the intellectual contours of the Pátzcuaro congress in April of 1968.

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<sup>198</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Guatemala: Una interpretación histórico-social," originally published in *Anuario Indigenista* vol. XXX (1970). Republished in *Obra Polémica* (Mexico: Fondo Cultura Económica, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1992), 87.

<sup>199</sup> Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Guatemala: Una interpretación histórico-social," in *Obra Polémica* (Mexico: Fondo Cultura Económica, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1992), 94-96.

<sup>200</sup> Franz Fanon wrote at length about national bourgeoisies and middle classes as incapable of anti-colonial action, see *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 148-154. In particular, his argument that, "the battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism."

Alejandro Marroquín's contribution to the congress constituted the most explicit critique of indigenista developmentalism and clearly drew on the growing dependentista thinking of the era.<sup>201</sup> While Marroquín was officially head of the Salvadorian delegation (his institutional affiliation was the Universidad de El Salvador), he nonetheless was equally active in Mexican research and academic circles given the political conflicts in his home country. In his presentation, Marroquín set out to first define a so-called indigenous economy and then to critique its integration in broader economic structures. Drawing on figures such as Max Weber and Melville Herskovits as well as Karl Marx's *Capital*, Marroquín elaborated what he identified as the key characteristics of indigenous economies: rudimentary agricultural production, the subsistence character of that production, and most importantly, its self-sufficiency.<sup>202</sup>

These economies' integration into national and international markets was on fundamentally unfavorable terms, allowing for exploitation of all elements of indigenous society by "ladino" classes, and was marked by stark cultural divisions. Combining the work of Mexican sociologist Pablo González Casanova and Aguirre Beltrán's concept of "regiones de refugio" Marroquín described the interdependence of indigenous and national economies as a form of internal colonialism. In this schema, the indigenous economy was fully integrated into capitalist production and was compatible with national markets yet maintained its unique characteristics. Marroquín's own research on the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca, Mexico served as the main case study for his argument. His

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<sup>201</sup> It is unclear whether Marroquín was a Marxist that preceded dependentista theories or whether he was fundamentally part of the dependentista school.

<sup>202</sup> Marroquín, 930.

close study of the district capital of the Mixteca Alta, Tlaxiaco, published as *La ciudad Mercado*, detailed the role of provincial towns and elites in indigenous economies.<sup>203</sup>

Because capitalism tended toward the destruction of communal lands, the basis of indigenous economies according to Marroquín, the growth of national economies had bequeathed few benefits to indigenous communities. From this general position Marroquín moved to identify the problems inherent in most Latin American development projects; they relied on a unilateral focus on the economic realm relegating social questions to secondary importance, their quantitative focus was fundamentally dehumanizing, and they either did not recognize the existence of indigenous economies or viewed them as mere remnants of past societies.<sup>204</sup> Interestingly, the exception to this was Mexico. According to Marroquín, Mexico had used anthropology and the social sciences to promote development of indigenous communities while respecting their traditional values. Dismissing “desarrollo equilibrado” as utopian, Marroquín’s conclusions focused mainly on economic planning that included the indigenous sector—a so-called integral planning that would involve land reform. Marroquín only briefly discussed indigenous language practices, arguing that Latin American literacy campaigns rarely reached indigenous communities and concluding, “la barrera ideológica que supone la falta de asimilación del idioma nacional” to indigenous development.<sup>205</sup> In other words, his main interest remained in an integrationist position that the lack of Spanish literacy facilitated continued exploitation of indigenous peoples.

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<sup>203</sup> Alejandro Marroquín, *La Ciudad Mercado (Tlaxiaco)*, (Mexico City: UNAM, 1957).

<sup>204</sup> Marroquín, 937.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 938: “the lack of assimilation of the national language posed an ideological barrier” for indigenous peoples’ advancement.”



It is in this regard that in judging the difference between dependendista development ideas and modernizationist models the critique leveled by postdevelopment theorists rings most true. This literature points to the fundamental convergence of ideas between the nominally opposed camps, noting how both bodies of ideas shared notions of development centered on economic growth and nationalist paradigms that failed to account for local understandings of well-being or prosperity.<sup>206</sup> Here, dependentista understandings of cultural knowledge and linguistic diversity add further to the already large body of evidence demonstrating its universalist and assimilationist core.

### **Language Policy**

At the congress, these notions of dependent development intersected with an emerging social scientific consensus around the utility of indigenous language instruction. While an entire section of the congress was dedicated to education and language policy, themes of education were present throughout the varied discussions at Pátzcuaro. Of the published education presentations, three were from US Bureau of Indian Affairs officers, four from Mexican researchers with different state affiliations, and two by members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Peru and Mexico. The overriding themes were the utility of vernacular language-use in facilitating Spanish language literacy, the need for bilingual, indigenous instructors, and the professed respect for local and indigenous cultures while “integrating” these populations into the nation state. These arguments would not have been terribly controversial within indigenista circles at the time given that Aguirre Beltrán had been making similar arguments, albeit

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<sup>206</sup> Saldaña, 56.

on a more theoretical level, since even the early 1950s.<sup>207</sup> Yet in 1968 the combination of sufficient research and experience in indigenous language instruction along with a renewed politics of anti-colonialism created the possibility for a pivot in the history of indigenous education.

While in the 1970s controversy would surround the Summer Institute of Linguistics for its work among indigenous communities in the Americas (in the case of Mexico, leading to an official break in relations between the S.I.L. and the Ministry of Education in 1979), in Pátzcuaro the institute enjoyed a privileged position, with its founder William C. Townsend in attendance along with a number of individual S.I.L. researchers. One such contribution was that of C. Henry Bradley.<sup>208</sup> Submitted in English, Bradley's socio-linguistic study focused on methods of determining dialectical boundaries among indigenous languages, particularly various Oaxacan languages. Bradley's method drew on the work of North American linguists such as Carl Voegelin and James Crawford to determine the number of distinct variants of a given language through a series of set, tape recorded questions exploring mutual understanding until unintelligibility revealed a new language variant. Bradley's presentation focused on a study of the Mixtec language, whose geographical dispersal proved a challenge to the method's formulation. While not fully completed, Bradley estimated the existence of at least 20 mutually unintelligible dialects of Mixtec.

Evangeline Arana Swadesh, the widow of the recently deceased US linguist Morris Swadesh (July, 1967) and instructor at the INAH, presented on her experience

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<sup>207</sup> See for example, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Teoría y practica de la educación indígena* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional Indigenista), 1953.

<sup>208</sup> C. Henry Bradley, "A method for determining dialectical boundaries and relationships," *América Indígena* XXVIII, (Tercer Trimestre 1968): 751-760.

with a bilingual education project on the Costa Chica of Oaxaca. A project based out of the INI's local centro coordinador, Swadesh argued literacy in indigenous language, in this case coastal Mixtec, facilitated Spanish language literacy. More specifically, she argued, the use of bilingual community members as instructors was key given their knowledge of cultural norms and ability to relate education materials to the specific context. In her words, "Al utilizar el maestro la lengua de sus alumnos se crea un ambiente de interés, de confianza, de entendimiento mutuo que es decisivo para la enseñanza."<sup>209</sup>

To further her case, Arana Swadesh presented UNESCO work in Asia and Africa that supported vernacular language-use in primary education as well examples from within Mexico including the 1939 Proyecto Tarasco in the state of Michoacán (in which her late husband collaborated), the Ministry of Education's development of didactic materials in collaboration with the S.I.L., as well as early efforts of the INI. Yet her case study revolved around the INI's CCI in the Mixteca Costa of Oaxaca. A region of high indigenous monolingualism, Arana Swadesh described the initial opposition of parents to the use of Mixtec in the instruction of their children. As a primarily oral language, the parents saw no utility in their children learning how to write in Mixtec. These were also communities with no previous experience in formal education, which resulted in at times high rates of absenteeism.<sup>210</sup> Arana Swadesh detailed the challenges of writing in Mixtec, particularly how educators handled the difficulty of denoting tonal difference in Mixtec.

Concluding that the bilingual method avoided the "psychological barriers" of Spanish-

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<sup>209</sup> Evangelina Arana Swadesh, 'Importancia de la lingüística en la alfabetización en la lengua indígena' (91-96): 92. [0562]: "By using the language of his students, the teacher creates an environment of interest, of trust, and of mutual understanding that is decisive for the education process."

<sup>210</sup> Swadesh, 93.

only instruction, Arana Swadesh argued the key to the method was the also the use of oral Spanish from day one.

Describing an experimental project begun in 1964 by the Peruvian ministry of education and the S.I.L. Peru, Donald Burns, similarly upheld the utility of indigenous language instruction in the highland region of Ayacucho, Peru. Also involving a majority monolingual region, the project focused on the training of Ayacucho teachers in bilingual methods as well as the creation of cartillas and other didactic materials. Burns noted that in Ayacucho, rural schools were perceived as Spanish-speaking spaces and that despite rural teachers' bilingualism, there was a negative attitude toward the use of Quechua in the classroom.<sup>211</sup> The project therefore focused on university-level training of teaching, technical and administrative staff and involved 32 bilingual teachers at different levels and approximately 1,200 monolingual students.<sup>212</sup> The program, indicative of trends at the time, aimed to achieve sufficient Spanish language proficiency amongst students so as they would be able to participate in Spanish-only classrooms by the second year of primary school. In the case of Ayacucho, Burns suggested that while the program contributed to declining the prejudice against the use of Quechua, absenteeism of students related to agricultural cycles and the lack of exposure to Spanish outside the classroom constituted barriers to successful bilingual instruction. Burns stressed that bilingual teachers became important brokers for communities' wellbeing, collaborating

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<sup>211</sup> Donald H. Burns, "Niños de la sierra peruana estudian en quechua para saber español" (105-110): 105.

<sup>212</sup> Burns, 107.

with other development projects, and empowering communities to articulate their own interests.<sup>213</sup>

Interestingly, both Burns and Arana Swadesh stressed the instruction of oral Spanish as a prerequisite for further Spanish language literacy. This went against prior practices that prioritized written literacy. In addition, both independently concluded that indigenous languages facilitated instruction in mathematics and more abstract ideas in general, explicitly cutting against the notion that indigenous language lacked the ability to communicate complex ideas. Finally, both of the respective projects claimed success in terms of more effectively and humanely reaching Spanish literacy amongst indigenous children and on one level the projects remained thoroughly integrationist. Linguists such as Arana Swadesh had an interest in language preservation yet the parameters of official discussion were such that most participants framed their research in the most uncontroversial of terms. And while national ministries of education supported these projects, they remained minority experiences, dependent on committed local actors as well as outside, often foreign, specialists. Therefore, it is not that pluralist projects did not exist prior to the 1968 congress but rather that they were insufficient and amounted to mere drops in the bucket in relation to the broader indigenous experience of education.

Just as the dividing line between modernizationists and dependentistas regarding language was murky, with some modernizationists favoring language preservation and some dependentistas eschewing it, so too was the dependentista camp itself.

Significantly, a minority of prominent dependentista thinkers articulated a more pluralist approach to indigenous cultural practices that included projects of preservation and

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<sup>213</sup> Burns, 110. This point raises the question of whether this generation of indigenous brokers remained democratic agents or became another form *caciquismo*.

revitalization. At the congress itself, this was most evident in Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's submission. This uneasily fit well with the evangelical work of SIL figures who pioneered linguistic work on indigenous language in the mid-twentieth century.

Bonfil Batalla's contribution to working committee on "Preparación de personal para la labor indigenista," levied the critique that indigenista research had often lacked a global vision that took into account class relations and internal complexity of nation states and argued indigenismo had often been a narrow, folkloric discipline. As such Bonfil Batalla stressed that indigenismo needed to be continually reoriented toward contemporary social relations. He concluded by putting forth the argument that all elements of indigenous culture at risk of extinction should be rescued and preserved:

Esta labor no es un mero pasatiempo académico ni la ociosa expresión de un romanticismo anacrónico; es un deber del indigenismo cuyo cumplimiento reportara beneficios reales a la población indígena estableciendo la imagen de su pasado inmediato (necesaria para su propia valoración, punto de partida para su liberación) al mismo tiempo que significa el robustecimiento de la cultura y de la conciencia nacionales. Sacar a luz los rasgos particulares de las culturas indígenas es tender puentes para la identificación recíproca, fundar puntos de apoyo para la consolidación nacional.<sup>214</sup>

Here Bonfil Batalla combined both a notion of cultural knowledge as important for indigenous peoples' self-emancipation with what seems to be a basic tenet of contemporary multiculturalism, the belief that non-indigenous society will benefit from an engagement with of native peoples' culture. While a call for broad-based multiculturalism appears relatively uncontroversial in Latin American politics today, it

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<sup>214</sup> Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, "Tareas de la investigación antropológica en *indigenismo*," *América Indígena* vol. XXVIII no.4, (October 1968): 926: "This work is not merely an academic hobby nor a useless expression of an anachronistic romanticism; it is a duty of indigenismo whose accomplishment will produce real benefits for the indigenous population, creating the image of its immediate past (necessary for its own valorization, starting point for its liberation) while at the same time broadening and strengthening national culture and consciousness. To bring to light the particular traits of indigenous cultures is to weave bridges of reciprocal identification, to develop points of support for national consolidation."

was a significant departure from the more mundane indigenista celebrations of indigenous archaeology and handicrafts. More significantly, the proposition would lead to further developments in indigenous education and social policy, lending theoretical support to the use of indigenous brokers in development policy.

The final acts of the congress, published in 1971, articulated this range of ideas in terms of policy. In the formal recommendations to member countries, the congress emphasized the need for the continued study of indigenous languages and the development of didactic materials in these languages, the establishment of close working relationships between linguists and education policy administrators, and significantly that primary education personnel (at least through third grade) be bilingual and members of target communities.<sup>215</sup> At first glance, these resolutions do not seem entirely unfamiliar to the indigenista experience. As early as 1940, at the first Inter-American congress, the indigenista movement had made overtures to the utility of language-use and preservation, stating, “los idiomas indígenas pueden ser aprovechados en cualquier sentido que se exija en los programas de educación o de divulgación cultural,” that “que se llegue a la simplificación y la uniformidad de los alfabetos” of indigenous languages and that while the national language should be used in the classroom, “sin perjuicio de dar como suplemento, el conocimiento de la lengua nativa.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> “Acta Final del Sexto Congreso Indigenista Interamericano,” *Anuario Indigenista*, Vol. XXXI (1971). Recommendations 15-18. Recommendation 16 reads, “Que los realizadores de la primera etapa de la enseñanza, sean adiestrados suficientemente en la aplicación de la metodología adecuada. En lo posible, los realizadores deberán pertenecer a la cultura nativa dentro de la que van a actuar y dominar la lengua vernácula.”

<sup>216</sup> Alejandro Marroquín, *Balance del Indigenismo: informe sobre la política indigenista en américa* (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1972), 43: “Indigenous languages can be used in whatever way educational programming demands or for cultural dissemination,” that “we arrive at the simplification and unification of the alphabets” of indigenous languages and that

A rhetorical invocation of the value of indigenous languages ran throughout the indigenista tradition. While there were numerous internal debates regarding the utility of indigenous language-use and instruction from the 1930s forward, which included such figures as Ricardo Pozas, notable in his staunch support of Spanish language instruction as tool for indigenous empowerment, there was also a consistent invocation of language as a central cultural marker. Indeed, Mexico's census defined indigenous identity through language ability up until the end of the twentieth century. Yet there was something new at the 1968 congress. An emerging consensus among indigenista intellectuals had developed around not only the utility of indigenous bilingual instruction and but more specifically the need for the use of native instructors in the first years of primary education. While there was no immediate translation of intellectual consensus into large-scale policy, the ramifications of this consensus would have dramatic effects in second half of the twentieth century as state spending in indigenous development dramatically increased.

Further, the final resolutions included a nod to the radical cultural pluralists. Congress resolution number 37 affirmed Bonfil Batalla's call for rescuing and valuing all forms of indigenous cultural knowledge and moreover included a self-criticism of the indigenista project:

Que debe formar parte de las responsabilidades del *indigenismo* la de rescatar para el conocimiento los rasgos culturales que la propia acción indigenista, así como el desarrollo nacional, o a la marginalización están haciendo desaparecer irremisiblemente de las comunidades indígenas...<sup>217</sup>

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while the national language should be used in the classroom, "the knowledge of native languages should be used as a supplement without prejudice."

<sup>217</sup> "Acta Final del Sexto Congreso Indigenista Interamericano," *Anuario Indigenista*, Vol. XXXI (1971): "That part of the responsibilities of indigenismo should be the work of rescuing the cultural traits that the very same indigenista activities, along with national development, or marginalization, have been making irreversibly disappear from indigenous communities."



This was a significant achievement. Not only did the resolution move from a rhetorical embrace of indigenous language-use to a more robust call for bilingual instruction but the final resolutions, voted on by the national delegations, included self-criticism and a call for a systematic revision and assessment of indigenista practice to date in the Americas.

This self-criticism was elaborated in a systematic study of indigenista practice, called for in the final resolutions and published by the I.I.I. in 1972. While the published report did not cover the entirety of the indigenista project in the Americas (it reviewed the experience of six countries, Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Bolivia), it developed a scale to assess each country's experience, with no country receiving over sixty percent of the total points possible.<sup>218</sup> In other words, all six countries received a failing grade in the I.I.I.'s own publication. In the concluding essay, entitled "el *indigenismo* y su crisis," Alejandro Marroquín, the volume's lead author, listed the development of indigenista bureaucracies, the insertion of indigenous peoples into an exploitative global society and the general paternalist nature of *indigenismo* as just some of the negative results of the project. In other words, much of the core criticisms made by dissidents at the 1968 congress were incorporated into official indigenista programs just four years later.

Scheduled to coincide with the international "Day of the Indian" on Saturday, April 19, the closing ceremony of the congress was celebrated in the Plaza de Don Bosco of Pátzcuaro. Along with the delegates, thousands of local residents, schoolchildren, and indigenous peoples from throughout Mexico (mobilized through the INI) filled the plaza

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<sup>218</sup> Alejandro Marroquín, *Balance del Indigenismo: informe sobre la política indigenista en américa* (Mexico: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1972), 280.

to witness the final ceremony.<sup>219</sup> Beneath the gaze of the bronze statue of Vasco de Quiroga, the sixteenth century bishop and ‘protector of the Indians,’ Gonzalo Rubio Orbe, head of Ecuadorian delegation, took the stage to offer his concluding remarks. Highlighting the polarizing context in which the delegates met, the national paper *Excélsior* reported that Rubio made the “ominosa advertencia” that “o nuestros pueblos resuelven sus problemas mediante planes acelerados o estos—los pueblos—tendrán que satisfacer sus grandes necesidades y angustias por otro camino: el de la violencia.” Gonzalo Rubio Orbe was reported to have concluded, “entre las dos alternativas, es preferible la primera...”<sup>220</sup> Rubio Orbe went on to conclude:

quiero terminar esta intervención mía a quienes se dieron esta oportunidad tan honrosa y al terminar, quiero expresar un anhelo, un ansia; que ojalá la puede ver cristalizarse en realidad en los años que me quedan de vida. Esta es: que los futuros congresos Indigenistas Interamericanos la participación de los representantes indígenas sea cada vez mas intensa, activa, y directa hasta que algún día llegue la situación en que los que somos indigenistas auténticos los que estamos perteneciendo a otra cultura, seamos los asesores, los coordinadores...<sup>221</sup>

Rubio’s remarks reflected the increasing self-reflection and awareness of an indigenista project that had been in the business of doing things in the name of the indigenous and celebrating indigenous aesthetics and was now confronted by active indigenous peoples. To be sure, they formed part of a longer tradition of indigenista thought, in which the injunction to have more indigenous participation in policy making had been a mainstay.

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<sup>219</sup> Alejandro Ortíz R, “América Festejo el Día del Indio,” *Excélsior* (Mexico) April 20, 1968

<sup>220</sup> Ibid: “ominous announcement” that “either our peoples solve their problems through accelerated plans, or the people will have to satisfy their greatest necessities and anguishes through another road, that of violence.” “between these two alternatives, the first is preferable.”

<sup>221</sup> AGN-IPS, caja 1544-B, expediente 5, “Informe 19 Abril 1968”: “I’d like to conclude my remarks by thanking those who gave me such an honorable opportunity and to express one of my greatest desires, something I hope to see crystalize into reality in the years that are left in my life. This is it: that in the future Inter-American indigenista congresses, the participation of the indigenous representatives is each time more intense, active and direct until the day arrives that those of us that are authentic indigenistas, those of us that belong to another culture, become the advisors and coordinators...”

Yet the congress themes of linking development with indigenous participation acknowledged the increasing reality of indigenous people speaking for themselves.

It was at the closing ceremony of the congress that Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, whose career bridged two broad tendencies in indigenismo, gave an impassioned defense against the insurgent critics. Demonstrating an intellectual agility for which he was both admired and criticized, Aguirre Beltrán outlined the more damning criticisms of indigenista practice; that it was fundamentally a paternalist ideology bent on keeping indigenous peoples in a subordinated status, it was little more than a project to keep certain professionals well fed, and that it masked the more universal dynamic of class exploitation. As he summarized the critics' points he rallied the attendees to better define and defend their project, in his words, "Frente a criterios como estos, quienes estamos dedicados con Fe y sinceridad a la causa del Indigenismo Americano, necesitamos precisar estas ideas en forma concreta."<sup>222</sup> Aguirre Beltrán was well positioned to dialogue with the younger generation, as they themselves had singled his work out for praise in terms of his theorizing of regional exploitation and his respect for indigenous cultural knowledge.

It was perhaps fitting that the congress met beneath the gaze of the 'Protector of Indians,' Vasco de Quiroga. Much like the modern indigenistas, Vasco de Quiroga employed a humanistic framework to legitimize another hegemonic project, that of Spanish control and manipulation of indigenous society. In sixteenth century Michoacán, de Quiroga applied concepts drawn from Thomas Moore's *Utopia* to organize collectives of indigenous production under Spanish auspices in attempt to shield them from the so-

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<sup>222</sup> AGN-IPS, caja 1544-B, expediente 5, "Informe 19 Abril 1968": "With criticisms such as these, those of us dedicated with faith and sincerity to the cause of American indigenismo need to define our ideas concretely."

called excesses of colonialism. If Vasco de Quiroga drew on renaissance humanism to critique and promote an alternative colonial indigenous policy, twentieth century indigenista intellectuals applied Marx, Weber, and modern social science, in theorizing indigenous-state relations.<sup>223</sup> In April of 1968, one can see the long arch of indigenista politics attempting to make the turn from a fundamentally external project to one embraced and shaped by indigenous peoples themselves. While it was ultimately incapable of such shift, its own transformations reveal a changing reality for its intended subjects.

The 1968 congress did not mark massive changes on the level of official policy. The younger generation was still relatively on the outside, banging away at what it viewed as a fossilized indigenista bureaucracy. It would not be until the mid-1970s that some of this generation would gain official positions, and in one view, become institutionalized within indigenista agencies. Two years later in Mexico, after government repression of student protests and the firing of certain critical academics, figures such as Bonfil Batalla and Salomon Nahmad would be welcomed back into the government fold and given jobs under the administration of President Luis Echeverría. In assessing the significance of the 1968 congress, one is tempted to view it as the last gasp of a previous generation, an attempt to save an indigenista project, which had been under considerable attack. A last gasp of a political project fundamentally tied to the PRI and its hegemony. Many of the critics themselves did not seek to demolish the indigenista project but rather

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<sup>223</sup> There are significant limitations to this analogy. While it historicizes indigenous relations to hegemonic projects it also reinforces a crass dichotomy between indigenous and non-indigenous actors when historically numerous power struggles existed among pre-Hispanic and contemporary indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica. The analogy also reinforces a notion of one unitary project of indigenous subjugation without space for change over time. Nevertheless, it also points to a long-term historical problem.

to reformulate it on new terms, terms shaped by a new reality critical of dependent development and the folkloric treatment of native peoples. Education policy was a specific way they aimed to do this. In the years to come they would, in fits and starts, look to foment critical consciousness, that was both political and indigenous, and involved a respect for indigenous language-use.

***Indigenismo Occupied: Developmentalism and 1968 Radicalism in Oaxaca, 1969-1975***

*El régimen mexicano y particularmente sus organismos indigenistas, hablan de la necesidad de revindicar al indígena y de incorporarlo a la cultura nacional, sin embargo cuando un grupo de indígenas, como lo son los promotores actúan por si mismos, rompiendo el paternalismo oficial que ideológicamente encadenados quisiera verlos eternamente agradecidos, cuando exigen respeto a sus derechos y no dicen gracias, cuando incluso, manifiestan sus puntos de vista, propios sobre lo que debe ser la política indigenista, el régimen lo emprime. Esta es la verdadera actitud del gobierno que se esconde en mascarar con los llamados al diálogo que hace Echeverría.*

—Coalición de Maestros y Promotores Indígenas de Oaxaca<sup>224</sup>

In April 1975, indigenous youth in Oaxaca occupied regional development centers throughout the state. From the southern sierra town of Miahuatlán, to the arid highlands of the Mixteca Alta, to the valley of the Papaloapan Dam project, these youth took Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) coordinating centers and held them for upwards of a month. The youth, trained as development promoters by a separate and new institution, the Instituto de Investigación y Integración Social del Estado de Oaxaca (IIISEO), demanded professional training and the creation of positions for themselves as bilingual teachers. Their banners denounced ethnocide committed by the Mexican

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<sup>224</sup> AGN-IPS, caja 1544-A, expediente 2, Informe, April 30, 1975: “The Mexican regime, and specifically its indigenista agencies, speak of the necessity of vindicating the Indian and incorporating him into the national culture. Yet when an indigenous group, such as the bilingual promoters, act for themselves, breaking with the official paternalism whose ideological chains would like them to remain eternally grateful, when they demand respect for their rights and don’t say thank you, or when they actually voice their own views as to what indigenista policy should be, the regime represses them. This is the true attitude of the government that hides itself behind Echeverría’s rhetoric of dialogue.”

government.<sup>225</sup> They called the Mexican state's celebration of indigenous culture a mask for continued exploitation and insisted upon a pedagogy that recognized the integrity of indigenous communities. As such, they formed part of a transnational political movement, one of whose most iconic expressions included the 1968 Mexico City student protests, a denunciation of Mexico's authoritarian regime that met with violent repression. After six years of struggle and politicization, the promoters eventually won, gaining positions as bilingual teachers within the Ministry of Education (SEP). Yet the concessions won also formed part of a savvy response on the part of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled Mexico since 1929 through an authoritarian corporatist political system.

This chapter demonstrates how the political radicalization associated with 1968 in the Americas involved more than university students or middle class elements and specifically included new generations of indigenous youth. Examining neither the iconic Mexico City student protests nor the turn toward guerrilla struggle in the countryside, the chapter focuses on the radical formation and subsequent mobilization of indigenous youth in provincial (non-urban) Mexico. As a government security report stated in an internal assessment in 1977, "De 1974 a la fecha este grupo de promotores bilingües ha estado en constante agitación y en estrecha relación con los estudiantes ..."<sup>226</sup> The government's anxiety over the promoters' actions speaks to their sustained oppositional

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<sup>225</sup> The youths' demands were articulated a year prior and a tentative agreement was made between them, the state government, and the IISEO administration but was subsequently not respected, see "Pliego Petitorio," *Carteles del Sur* (Oaxaca), April 4, 1974; "Convenio que se celebra entre la Dirección General del IISEO y la Colación de Promotores," April 23, 1974, personal papers of Santiago Salazar.

<sup>226</sup> The assessment went on to claim the youth were manipulated and controlled by these university students, see, AGN IPS, caja 1544-A, expediente 3, Informe, October 5, 1977: "From 1974 until the present this group of bilingual promoters has been in constant agitation and in direct relation with the Oaxacan state university students..."

activity. The chapter examines the experience of the first generations of youth who passed through the IIISEO, along with the origins of the institute, its founders, pedagogical and developmental philosophies, and place in the history of indigenous policy in Mexico. This radicalization is framed as a fundamentally transnational process, in which conversations about radical social transformation took place throughout the Americas. One of its specific conduits was applied anthropology, employed at the service of developmentalist states or agencies. The chapter then charts the experience of the initial generations of promoters in the field and their struggle for economic and political rights. It also assess the achievements of that movement, specifically, its role in the shaping of education policy.

### **IIISEO: Social Integration or Social Struggle?**

The youth who occupied those development centers in the spring of 1975 had been trained at the IIISEO, which in many respects embodied the newest ideas in development and educational theory. Yet the IIISEO also emerged out of a nineteenth-century Oaxacan tradition, the system of “pupilos” or wards, in which well-off Oaxaca City families would take in indigenous children from the countryside, to work as “mozos” or servants in their home, in exchange for the child’s room, board and education expenses. One of Oaxaca City’s most prominent society members, Mariela Morales de Altamirano, developed a reputation for taking in young girls. Eventually, in the early 1960s Oaxacan governor Rodolfo Brena Torres offered to build on her perceived success by creating an institute, the Escuela de Mejoradoras del Hogar Rural (EMHR), which Doña Morales would run.



The school trained the girls in a host of domestic skills as well Spanish language literacy. In 1969, Víctor Bravo Ahuja became governor and in that capacity presided over the closing ceremonies of the EMHR. After the performance of “el Jarabe del Guajolote” and the “Fandango Mixe,” traditional Oaxacan dances, Bravo Ahuja dismissed the young women with the perfunctory words, “Ojala que algún día gracias a ustedes todos los oaxaqueños hablen la lengua nacional.”<sup>227</sup> The combination of celebrations of indigenous aesthetics while declaring the need for Spanish language literacy formed part of a long tradition of indigenista policy. Yet the school started by Morales would undergo a transformation under the leadership of the new governor’s wife, Gloria Ruiz de Bravo Ahuja, a linguist trained at the Colegio de México.

The Bravo Ahujas were an up-and-coming political couple, whose fortunes were tied to the political faction, termed *camarilla*, of Luis Echeverría. Before becoming president in 1970, Echeverría served as minister of government under President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970). Víctor was originally from Tuxtepec, on the Oaxacan border with Veracruz. He attended the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN) in Mexico City and spent his early political career in the northern city of Monterrey. Part of a new generation of PRI technocrats, Bravo Ahuja was trained as an engineer, oversaw the production of Mexican war planes during World War II, and was closely identified with Mexico’s technical education programs (prior to serving as governor he served as director of technical education at the SEP in Mexico City). Gloria, a native of Mexico City, entered the Colegio de México, one of Mexico’s most prestigious educational centers, while her husband was at work at the SEP national offices. Victor served as governor of Oaxaca for

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<sup>227</sup> “Regresan las Mejoradoras a sus Comunidades a Enseñar,” *Carteles del Sur* (Oaxaca), May 3, 1969: “I hope that one day, thanks to all of you, every Oaxacan will speak the national language.”

two years. In 1970 incoming President Luis Echeverría named him secretary of education.

The IISEO was formally constituted in August of 1969, on the Xoxocotlán campus of the Mejoradoras school, situated on the southwestern edge of Oaxaca City. The institute received initial funding from a variety of sources, including private interests such as the Monterrey Group (a group of industrialist from the northern city of Monterrey), the financiers Elias Souraski and Carlos Trouyet, along with funds from UNESCO and Mexican federal and state agencies.<sup>228</sup> It would also receive support, both directly and through visiting personnel, from US universities, including the University of Texas at Austin.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, due to the political connections of its founders, the IISEO was a veritable elite school for indigenous children, sporting the newest equipment and research supplies at their Xoxocotlán campus along with well-equipped regional development centers and new, imported Ford Broncos for their administrative staff.<sup>230</sup> An educational institute with this type of funding and support, directed at training indigenous youth to become leaders of their communities, had few precedents in the history of indigenous policy in Mexico.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca (hereafter AGEPEO), Concertación, costal “IISEO,” Periódico Oficial, Órgano del Gobierno Constitucional del Estado Libre y Soberano de Oaxaca (2 de Agosto de 1969, Tomo LL, No. 31), Decreto Núm 68. Also see, “Castellanización e Integración es la Meta de las Mejoradoras y Promotores Sociales,” *Carteles del Sur* (Oaxaca), March 23, 1969; “Plan de Castellanización,” *Carteles del Sur* (Oaxaca), March 24, 1969. For a brief description of the IISEO’s origins, see Salvador Sigüenza, *Héroes y escuelas: La educación en la Sierra Norte de Oaxaca, 1927-1972* (México: INAH y IEEPO, 2007), 251-253.

<sup>229</sup> “Instituto de Investigación e Integración Social del Estado de Oaxaca,” María Luisa Acevedo Conde, personal papers, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

<sup>230</sup> María Luisa Acevedo Conde, interview by author, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, May 12, 2010.

<sup>231</sup> Perhaps the only comparable precedent was the Casa del Estudiante Indígena in Mexico City, which operated from 1925 to 1932 and also aimed to create an indigenous leadership that would incorporate their respective communities into the modern nation state.

The founders of the IISEO sought to create an innovative institute that could confront the historic problems of indigenous development in Mexico. For example, its director, Gloria Ruiz Bravo Ahuja, broke with long held castellanización methods to create a new method, which she viewed as more effective. Whereas SEP and INI policy had focused on Spanish language literacy, often through “cartillas” or cards with key vocabulary words, Bravo Ahuja and the IISEO pioneered a method that focused on oral acquisition of Spanish first, prior to literacy instruction.<sup>232</sup> Further, the IISEO aimed to be an institution that combined development and research, in contrast to the INI and other institutes which practiced one or the other but not both.<sup>233</sup> Thus the institute was based on a pyramidal structure, that included research and advanced degrees (offering Bachelor’s, Master’s and doctoral degrees in “social integration”) while the thrust of the institution was the training of “agents of change,” the promoters.<sup>234</sup> These promoters, explicitly recruited from each of Oaxaca’s indigenous groups, were trained and then sent back to their home communities to serve as leaders in community development.

In order to train the promoters and test the new language method, the institute recruited preschool age children, termed portadores to invoke the notion of bearers of culture. To test the language method, Gloria Bravo Ahuja believed she needed children who were 100 percent monolingual in indigenous languages and therefore interviewed the children to test their language ability. Reportedly, with the young girls, Bravo Ahuja

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<sup>232</sup> See Bravo Ahuja’s, *La Enseñanza del Español a los Indígenas Mexicanos* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1977), 292-326, in which she outlines the linguistic foundation for what she terms the audiovisual method.

<sup>233</sup> While the INI did engage in research, especially during the early 1950s, it ultimately focused much more on development work and the administration of government resources than research or analysis. This would later be a major point of criticism by dissident anthropologists in the 1970s.

<sup>234</sup> Over the course of the decade that the IISEO operated, while it graduated a number of Bachelor’s degrees and a handful of Master’s, it never produced a PhD.

would offer a doll from a collection she kept behind her desk if only they would say something for her in Spanish. If they were able to utter a semblance of Spanish, they were given the doll and then rejected from the program.<sup>235</sup> If they could not or did not speak Spanish, they were selected as adequate participants. In this “scientific” experiment, indigenous language was in a rare but increasingly common case an advantage, prioritized in this new model of development.

In addition to the portadores, Bravo Ahuja relied on a large staff to carry out the mission of the institute. The staff at the IIIEO consisted almost entirely of people not from Oaxaca, experts and university educated youth, from Mexico City and abroad, many of whom were engaged with emerging ideas critical of previous developmental and educational models. Tasked to lead the research component of institution was Margarita Nolasco, a prominent anthropologist who took part in the rupture within Mexican anthropology at the time. This generation of anthropologists, who had previously criticized indigenista institutions, would soon gain administrative positions within them. The clarion call of this generation was the edited volume, *de eso que se llama la antropología Mexicana*, which launched a trenchant critique of indigenista thought and practice, arguing it had been engaged in a colonial practice of studying Indians in isolation, that it was particularly non-theoretical, and that it had rejected comparative analysis. Comparing themselves favorably to Bartolomé de las Casas and dissident Catholic orders during the colonial period, the authors denounced indigenista practice, arguing, “el antropólogo...es un técnico en manipular indios.”<sup>236</sup> Drawing theoretical

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<sup>235</sup> Elsie Rockwell, PhD., interview by author, Mexico City, Mexico, April 5, 2010.

<sup>236</sup> Arturo Warman, Margarita Nolasco, Guillermo Bonfil, Mercedes Olivera, and Enrique Valencia, *De eso que llama antropología Mexicana* (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1970), 58: “The anthropologist...is a technician in the manipulation of Indians.”

support from figures ranging from Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, to Herbert Marcuse and Andre Gunder Frank, Margarita Nolasco would argue, “el indigenismo- ha sido siempre una antropología colonialista, destinada al conocimiento- y en consecuencia al uso- del dominado.”<sup>237</sup>

The implication for indigenous education policy was quite clear: rural school teachers and other indigenista agents had been engaged in nothing less than ethnocide, in which indigenous peoples were forced into a homogenizing assimilation process, losing both cultural knowledge and language. Nolasco, brought on to head up the research component of the IISEO, supervised, among other activities, the “scientific” selection of promoters based on levels of monolingualism in each language group. In addition Nolasco brought with her students from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) to conduct research and train the young promoters. Within this dissident current were social scientists Alberto González Pintos, Hector Manuel Popoca, and Helario Aguilar, all of whom would go on to serve as advisers to the promoters in the struggle for professionalization.

Also among the staff was Gerald Morris, a US monk who had studied with Ivan Illich, in Cuernavaca, Morelos, outside of Mexico City. Illich promoted a model of education that was critical of institutionalization and rigid classroom-focused models, and encouraged the creativity of youth.<sup>238</sup> Morris was also associated with the archbishop of Cuernavaca, Sergio Méndez Arceo, a prominent liberation theologian. Popular among the students, Morris taught by example through his work with the portadores or monolingual

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<sup>237</sup> Warman, et al., 80: “Indigenismo has always been a colonialist anthropology, devoted to the knowledge and thus use of the dominated.”

<sup>238</sup> For his most representative work, see Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

children selected by Bravo Ahuja.<sup>239</sup> In addition, Evangelina Arana de Swadesh, a linguist from the Escuela Nacional de Antropología (ENAH) (and the wife of Morris Swadesh), the linguist Benjamín Pérez (INAH), and researchers from the Summer Institute of Linguistics collaborated with the IISEO in its initial years.<sup>240</sup> Added to this mix were linguists from the Colegio de México, an institute, which at the time had little experience with indigenous languages. While Bravo Ahuja had a very defined project, more or less in line with official discourse on indigenous development, the staff she counted on to carry it out were engaged in much more critical ideas, and in turn shared and debated those ideas with their students.

### **Recruiting Indigenous Youth**

Eva Ruiz Ruiz was from the small town of Santa Inés de Zaragoza, a Mixtec community in the arid Nochixtlán valley, just north of Oaxaca City. After finishing primary school and lacking the money to continue her studies, her uncle encouraged her to travel to Oaxaca City to sit for the promoters' entrance exam, which she did successfully. On the other hand, Santiago Salazar, from the Mixteca Alta town of San Juan Teita, claims his mother tricked him into enrolling in the IISEO. In the fall of 1969 his mother, already taking his sister to Oaxaca City for the entrance exam, asked Santiago to accompany them on horseback to the nearest town. Upon arrival to Tlaxiaco, the district capital, Santiago's mother encouraged him to accompany them all the way to Oaxaca City. Using her powers of persuasion, she convinced him to sit for the entrance exam. Two years later, Felipe Feria, another would-be promoter, would take a similar

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<sup>239</sup> The term *portador* intended to convey the idea of a carrier of culture.

<sup>240</sup> "Plan de Castellanización," *Carteles del Sur* (Oaxaca), April 24, 1969.

journey, traveling for three days on foot, through the Sierra Mixteca, to enroll in the IIISEO.

All were responding to the official convocation sent out by the IIISEO to municipal authorities, which targeted particular regions for recruitment due to their relatively high levels of indigenous language monolingualism. The requirements for enrollment were strict; the youth had to be between seventeen and twenty-one years of age, have completed six years of primary school (a major accomplishment in Oaxacan communities that if they had a primary school, often lacked instruction through the sixth grade), be bilingual in Spanish and their indigenous language, and pass an entrance exam. The entrance exam, framed along the lines of a Spearman factor G exam, aimed to test general aptitude and intellectual capacity. Out of the roughly 500 youth who applied the first fall, only 100 were selected, a majority of whom were young women, with a total of 87 ultimately matriculating.<sup>241</sup>

Upon acceptance, the youth enrolled in a ten-month residential program. There was a strict separation of male and female students, as indigenous communities were particularly concerned about the commingling of their young girls with the male students. The curriculum focused on a host of practical skills, including carpentry, domestic organization, sewing, elementary electronics, nutrition, basic linguistics, and most importantly, Spanish language instruction (this, along with the occasional Catholic mass that Doña Morales encouraged them to attend). What differentiated the IIISEO's curriculum from previous indigenista efforts were the courses offered on rural economy

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<sup>241</sup> Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección General de Educación Extraescolar en el Medio Indígena (hereafter SEP-DGEEMI), caja 9188, folio 38, Victor Bravo Ahuja y Ramón Bonfil, "Bases del IIISEO," ca. 1972, 8. See also, Gloria R. de Bravo Ahuja and Beatriz Garza Cuarón *Problemas de Integración* (Mexico: IIISEO, 1970), 14.

and the social sciences. Further, the students were asked to record their native languages in the schools' linguistic laboratory. This training was very advanced and broad compared to promoters employed by the INI, who at most received one month of training before being sent to communities as agents of development. The skills in which they were trained led some to label themselves, "todólogos," or experts in everything. Students were allowed to return home for vacations, yet many spent the entire ten months in Oaxaca City, as they could not afford the trip to their home communities.<sup>242</sup> While these youth were groomed as agents of development, Oaxaca City, like much of the Americas at the time, was experiencing a new wave of political dissidence clamoring for political and social change.

### **Apertura Democrática**

The year before the first class of students entered the IIISEO, youth launched protests throughout the Americas and the world. The year 1968 has come to represent much more than the year itself, signifying the political dissidence that emerged from Mexico City to Buenos Aires, from Paris to Tokyo, and that stretched well into the 1970s [1968 as such is addressed in a chapter three]. A historical moment with seemingly endless determinants; the US war in Vietnam and violent conflicts over US race relations, the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia, to movements against European colonialism in Africa and events in China, all seemed to call into question the legitimacy of the world's super powers. Change appeared not only possible but seemingly inevitable.

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<sup>242</sup> Felipe Feria, interview by author, Santa Rosa, Oaxaca City, April 28, 2010.



All of these events percolated in Mexican dissident culture, shaping a generation that would challenge a regime that ruled in the name of revolution.<sup>243</sup>

Yet in Mexico the government cleverly responded to this dissidence with “a carrot and stick” strategy. Whereas the violence of the state against youth in Mexico City is most iconic, perhaps historically more significant was the regime’s use of the “carrot.”<sup>244</sup> This approach, eventually termed the “apertura democrática” or democratic opening, is most associated with the presidential term of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976). Echeverría, who headed up the “stick” approach as chief of government in October of 1968, oversaw an opening of the regime in which previous dissidents and government critics were welcomed into state institutions. Echeverría’s rhetorical left turn, responded both to domestic pressure as well as a changing international context, by presenting Mexico as a third world nationalist government.<sup>245</sup>

Echeverría himself was thoroughly a product of the postrevolutionary state.

Having studied law at the UNAM in Mexico City, he worked his way through the PRI

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<sup>243</sup> For a thorough discussion of intellectual consumption of international events see, Jorge Volpi, *La imaginación y el poder: una historia intelectual de 1968* (Mexico: Ediciones Era, 1998). For contemporary coverage see, dissident Mexico City magazine, *Por que?* (ed. Mario Menendez); and Eric Zolov’s study of rock and roll, which argues dissident culture developed through new spaces produced by music consumption, see Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>244</sup> For literature on 1968-era dissent in Mexico, see, Elaine Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices: Gender, Power, and Terror in 1968 Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Lessie Jo Frazier and Deborah Cohen, “Defining the Space of Mexico '68: Heroic Masculinity in the Prison, and “Women” in the Streets,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (Nov., 2003): 617-660. O’Neil Blacker-Hansen examines political violence in the context of the state of Guerrero, see, “La Lucha Sigue! (The Struggle Continues!): Teacher Activism in Guerrero and the Continuum of Democratic Struggle in Mexico.” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2005).

<sup>245</sup> The contradictions of which were ripe. During the 1970s, Mexico would provide exile to various Latin American guerillas (notably the Brazilians responsible for the kidnapping of US ambassador Charles Burke Elbrick in 1969) while pursuing its own dirty war against armed dissidents, see Alberto Ulloa Bornemann, *Surviving Mexico's Dirty War: a Political Prisoner's Memoir* ed. Arthur Schmidt and Aurora Camacho de Schmidt (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007).

party system, forming part of a generation that came of age after the armed phase of the Mexican revolution but preceded the phase of technocratic administrators (often trained abroad) of the 1980s. His intellectual formation therefore included a nationalist politics that borrowed elements of Marxism, particularly in regards to international relations. By the mid-1960s Echeverría would have sympathized with certain elements of dependency theory, viewing strong state intervention as necessary for developing economies while respecting certain national markets and the role of industrialists. Coming to power after the repression of youth protest in 1968, historian Alan Knight has argued that Echeverría “felt obliged to extend an olive branch to the left, especially the student left.”<sup>246</sup> This, along with a context in which developing nations played an increasingly prominent role in international politics (Echeverría himself was unsuccessful in his bid to lead the United Nations), helped to transform Echeverría from PRI bureaucrat into a progressive nationalist leader, sporting guayaberas and sunglasses in his frequent travels throughout the republic.

In this polarizing period, exacerbated by armed conflict and political violence in parts of South America, Echeverría’s posture incurred domestic conservative opposition. His rhetoric as well as specific policies allowed conservative critics to paint him as akin to Salvador Allende of Chile and concerns over left-wing terrorism drew on this international context as well as a small but significant domestic guerrilla threat. Kidnappings and armed attacks on businesses and government buildings occurred in cities throughout the republic. In the summer of 1972, as Oaxaca prepared to celebrate its

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<sup>246</sup> Alan Knight, “Cardenas and Echeverría: Two “Populist” Presidents Compared,” in *Populism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, ed. Amelia Kiddle and Maria L.O. Munoz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 22.

annual Guelagueta, a celebration of regional music and dance, three bombs exploded throughout the city, killing one person.<sup>247</sup>

The apertura democrática went beyond rhetoric; Echeverría initiated a dramatic increase in social spending, nearly doubling the number of teachers in Mexico while creating new rural development agencies and policies to distribute land and combat poverty.<sup>248</sup> In addition, the voting age was lowered from twenty-one to eighteen.<sup>249</sup> The federal government initiated new academic programs and university systems, such as the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City in 1974, which took as its starting point contemporary critiques of hierarchy in higher education. All of this constituted an expansion of the state sector as the regime aimed to incorporate a growing population pushing for increased economic and educational opportunities. These measures, along with state intervention in industry and failed efforts at tax reform, constituted a dramatic effort to reformulate and stabilize an aging authoritarian regime.

After completing their training, the promoters were sent back to their home communities, both to collect population data for the institute's research component as well as to spur on community development. While most focused on teaching Spanish language to preschool age children of the community, they were also tasked with the innumerable other activities. In addition to the skills discussed above, the promoters

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<sup>247</sup> The bombs were placed in the Palacio Municipal, the offices of *Oaxaca Grafico*, and at a military garrison. See, "Atentados Dinamiteros Contra Tres Locales en Oaxaca; un Muerto," *Excelsior* (Mexico), July 23, 1972.

<sup>248</sup> Joe Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico: the Teachers' Movement, 1977-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 22; Karen D. Caplan, "Poverty, Policy and the World Bank in Mexico" (paper presented at the Latin American Studies Center, University of Maryland, College Park, October 8, 2007). Caplan details the experience of PEDIR (Programa de Inversiones en el Desarrollo Rural) funded by the World Bank and the Mexican government and guided by a World Bank policy termed "redistribution with growth."

<sup>249</sup> Knight, 28.

aimed to train municipal authorities in basic administrative skills, how to send telegraphs, compose official letters to state agencies, and negotiate land conflicts (all too common in Oaxaca). In some cases, they were the only state agents in the communities, while in others they worked alongside rural schoolteachers or INI promoters. In general, communities warmly received the promoters. Having left their town, received an education, and returned, they were often viewed as respected sons and daughters of the community, bringing with them needed skills and knowledge. Their ability to solve basic problems with knowledge about state law and health care (including child birth) meant that they were often called upon. Despite their broad training, many ended up specializing in one service, language instruction to the communities' youth, agricultural support, or health services.<sup>250</sup> Yet they also came into conflict with some primary school teachers, who viewed their work outside the classroom as a threat to their own authority.<sup>251</sup>

For their services the promoters were paid between 600 and 800 pesos a month, with no vacation or time off.<sup>252</sup> Significantly they were not considered full time state employees, which would have meant access to federal health and social security services. As single youth in their late teens and early twenties, administrators believed the promoters did not need a larger salary; particularly in rural Oaxacan communities where little remunerated employment existed. The institutional expectation appears to have been that the youth were volunteers in their communities, though there is also evidence that

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<sup>250</sup> One promoter working in communities on the Pacific coast (a region characterized by violent inter-community conflicts) ended up specializing in autopsies, see Eleazar García Ortega, interview by Alverino López López, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, August 2, 2007.

<sup>251</sup> Servando Vergulo Aparecio, interview by author, San Lucas Yosonicaje, September 8, 2010.

<sup>252</sup> SEP-DGEEMI caja 9188, folio 38, Victor Bravo Ahuja y Ramón Bonfil, "Bases del IISEO," ca. 1972, 9.

they knew the wages were ultimately insufficient.<sup>253</sup> In contrast to the traditional role of the rural schoolteacher inside the classroom, the promoters were explicitly placed into the broader community.<sup>254</sup> This positioning, allowed the promoters to build close ties to the communities they served.

### **Oaxaca Insurgente**

These communities were undergoing significant economic and demographic changes. One of the poorest states in Mexico at the time, Oaxaca had a population of roughly two million people, a majority of whom belonged to the state's sixteen different indigenous groups. Never having undergone any significant industrialization, the state's population supported itself through small-scale agricultural production. The so-called Mexican miracle, in which post-war Mexico experienced substantial economic growth, had laid waste to much of Oaxaca's small-scale agriculture.<sup>255</sup> Due to the state's rugged topography, few regions were ripe for large-scale agriculture with the exception of the parts of the Pacific coast and the fertile valley bordering the state of Veracruz (where Governor Bravo Ahuja's family held large tracks of land). In these regions, as well as the Isthmus, commercial agriculture and livestock were profitable. Yet in mountainous regions such as the Mixteca Alta, which lacked both arable land and water, the population

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<sup>253</sup> Acevedo Conde, interview.

<sup>254</sup> While there is a plethora of literature on the social role of rural schoolteachers, particularly during the Cárdenas years, by mid-century normal school trained teachers' often focused on classroom instruction as opposed to social work. The promoters' job description along with their political formation led them to collaborate closely with communities, be it in basic health routines or in illegal land seizures.

<sup>255</sup> The 1971 documentary film *México: la revolución congelada*, by the Argentine director Raymundo Gleyzer, dramatically depicted the crisis in parts of rural Mexico. In Oaxaca, the INI commissioned a documentary on the Mixteca Alta's regional market, entitled *Iño savi* (1972) directed by Olivia Carrión, Epigmenio Ibarra, and Gonzálo Infante, which also depicted material deprivation affecting the rural population. This agricultural crisis was intimately tied to overall population growth.

literally could not sustain itself. In fact, the INI's main "development work" in the region consisted of importing corn at subsidized rates to fight malnutrition. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, rural Oaxaca experienced an uptick in agrarian conflicts and struggles over land.

While some violent conflicts revolved around long-standing land disputes, others were struggles for land reform that involved poor campesinos and the violent responses of guardias blancas, armed groups at the pay of large landholders.<sup>256</sup> In particular on the Costa Chica, violent confrontation erupted in 1973 between campesinos and the Iglesias Meza family of Jamiltepec.<sup>257</sup> While these struggles remained relatively isolated incidents with little broad response, by the mid-1970s there emerged a growing cohesion of dissident forces. Echeverría's 1970 presidential campaign had recognized the reality of rising inequality, particularly the problems facing the Mexican countryside, and promised a more balanced distribution of the fruits of the revolution.<sup>258</sup> Young Oaxacans took Echeverría at his word, campaigning for changes big and small.

National polarization took a particular form in Oaxaca. Following Bravo Ahuja's departure in 1970, Manuel Zárate Aquino succeeded interim governor Fernando Gómez Sandoval in 1974. From the beginning of his term, Zárate Aquino explicitly aimed to confront dissident activity in the state. Shortly after assuming power he employed military force to suppress municipal elections that did not favor the ruling PRI party.<sup>259</sup> Without a substantial industrial sector, polarizing struggles around land (both rural and of

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<sup>256</sup> Cuauhtemoc Gonzalez Pacheco, "La lucha de clases en Oaxaca: 1960-1970 (primera parte)," in *Oaxaca: una lucha reciente: 1960-1978* (Mexico: Ediciones Nueva Sociología, 1978), 29.

<sup>257</sup> Francisco José Ruiz Cervantes, "La lucha de clases en Oaxaca: 1971-1977 (segunda parte)," in *Oaxaca: una lucha reciente: 1960-1978* (Mexico: Ediciones Nueva Sociología, 1978), 49.

<sup>258</sup> Caplan.

<sup>259</sup> Jaime Bailón Corres, "Los avatares de la democracia (1970-2008)," in *Oaxaca: Historia Breve* (Mexico: Colegio de Mexico/Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 254.

a growing urban squatters' movement) and emergent independent unions shaped the period. As for student politics a new generation transformed the student federation at the Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, previously a pillar of PRI politics and a mechanism for political advancement, into a mobilized organization.

In dialogue with events in Mexico City, the university movement in Oaxaca City not only transformed the existing student federation, the Federación de Estudiantes Oaxaqueños, but also ushered in a number of new organizations, including the Bufete Popular Universitario and eventually the Coalición Obrero Campesino Estudiantil de Oaxaca (COCEO) in 1972. The students aimed to reform their university, demanding democratic control of the university's administration and political autonomy, and eventually broadened their struggle to support independent trade unions in Oaxaca City and peasant groups engaged in land seizures in the countryside.<sup>260</sup> In this milieu the protest music of Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés intermingled with classic rancheras of Pedro Infante and José Alfredo Jiménez. During this same period, a movement of youth and popular classes surged in the Isthmus town of Juchitán, culminating in the ouster of the PRI from the municipal government, the first such case in the republic.<sup>261</sup> Political violence intensified, both on the part of the government and on the part of dissidents, some of who saw armed struggle as the way to achieve transformative social change.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> For a detailed discussion of university politics of the era, see Víctor Raúl Martínez Vásquez, *Movimiento Popular y Política en Oaxaca (1968-1986)* (Mexico: CONACULTA, 1990).

<sup>261</sup> See, Howard Campbell, *Zapotec Renaissance: Ethnic Politics and Cultural Revivalism in Southern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Jeffrey Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>262</sup> The guerrilla organization "Liga 23 de Septiembre" may have been active in Oaxaca and responsible for a number of small bombing attacks, see Francisco José Ruíz Cervantes, "La lucha

## Getting Organized

The highly educated youth, sent to communities facing material deprivation and geographic isolation with goals of improvement, came to form part of this broader political dissidence. They moved to the center of ongoing struggles over land or confrontations with local authoritarian politics. Better trained and politically astute, they often came into conflict with promoters of the INI. INI employees, an older generation at work since 1958, practiced a developmentalism more aligned with the distribution of state resources rather than the promotion of political or social change. Yet the IISEO youth lacked the material support to carry out their tasks. Trained in carpentry and animal husbandry, they often lacked basic building materials or animal feed.<sup>263</sup> The Institute's ample funding focused on the research and educational missions and lacked resources for larger projects involving significant capital inputs. The promoters complained of overwork, no vacations, poor pay, no compensation for their transportation costs, and a complete lack of job security.<sup>264</sup> Perhaps more significantly, the promoters' increased expectations, developed through their technical training and reading of protest movements throughout the Americas, tended to make more piece-meal reforms seem insufficient. The IISEO had created conditions in which well-trained indigenous youth had learned to think critically about the problems they and their communities faced, yet they lacked the material support to confront those very same problems.

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de clases en Oaxaca: 1971-1977,” in *Oaxaca: una lucha reciente: 1960-1978* (México: Ediciones Nueva Sociología, 1978), 54.

<sup>263</sup> This lack of basic material support led Santiago Salazar, an eventual leader of the promoters' movement, to describe his generation as “soldados sin fusil”, soldiers without arms.

<sup>264</sup> CMPIO leaflets distributed in 1975.



The logistics of organizing themselves, dispersed as they were throughout the state, were daunting.<sup>265</sup> How to address the shared complaints? How to create a space to discuss their work experiences and grievances? The initiative came in 1971 from the first generation of promoters, thirteen of whom were trained as “técnicos de integración social,” in effect supervisors of the others in the field. Along with the official courses, staff offered parallel courses in alternative themes, including a broad range of Marxist literature.<sup>266</sup> These courses taught by IISEO staff and visiting “voluntary teachers” from the ENAH, la Universidad de Chapingo (the national agricultural school), and the national universities in Mexico City (UNAM and IPN), had a profound impact on a number of the youth. Santiago Salazar remembers reading a variety of Marxist literature, including interpretations of Marx’s *Capital*, from Ernest Mandel to Marta Harnecker. Eleazar García Ortega, a técnico from the central valley, recalls that among various currents of Marxism, from Trotskyism to Maoism, the Peruvian intellectual Carlos Mariátegui was most influential:

Como intelectual peruano, con una influencia muy fuerte de los pueblos quechoaimara que viven en el Perú, decía bueno por qué buscamos un socialismo distinto? Por qué siempre queremos un socialismo al estilo europeo, no? Decía él, nosotros tenemos una propuesta de socialismo que es propia de nuestra tierra. Entonces decía él que era el socialismo indiano de allí surge la indianidad o sea indigenismo no es lo mismo que indianismo. Un indio es distinto en 1960 por qué él se apoya en los principios de la comunalidad. Allí surge esta propuesta, que no es nueva sino que ya desde Rosa Luxemburgo lo planteaba, los Flores Magón ya lo planteaban pero él es el primero que lo plantea como un proyecto futuro. No como un proyecto del pasado. No como el indio muerto que fue muy glorioso heroico, etc. No, sino que él planteaba el socialismo indiano como una propuesta para la humanidad...Entonces él decía nosotros tenemos los elementos para una vida al socialismo sin pasar por el capitalismo...Podemos pasar de ese socialismo indiano al comunismo o al socialismo sin pasar por esa etapa dolorosísima. Decía él que es el capitalismo y que nos viene a matar prácticamente. Me llamó mucho la atención eso porque toda el área

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<sup>265</sup> IISEO rosters, María Luisa Acevedo Conde’s personal papers, Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

<sup>266</sup> Eleazar García Ortega, interview.

mesoamericana tiene una similitud grande con lo que él planteaba entonces nosotros pensamos que efectivamente podía ser viable.<sup>267</sup>

In such ways, the youth attempted to make sense of their very particular situation through debates and ideas articulated on a global level. The concept that would become salient among this generation was that of *comunalidad*. Based on the experience of indigenous communities' traditions, and re-articulated in relationship to Marxist politics of the time, *comunalidad* was a concept flexible enough to embody multiple meanings for the promoters. It could carry the valence of a radically democratic and socialist society, or it could mean nothing more than using the strength of community-ties in struggles for material improvement. *Comunalidad* would go on to be articulated by the linguist Alberto González Pintos and served as a bridge between the classed-based politics of social emancipation and the turn toward cultural concerns over language and indigenous knowledge.

These *técnicos* led the initial organizing efforts of the promoters in 1973. They began by calling regional meetings, in which the promoters were brought together to discuss grievances and strategies for redress. For example, in the Mixteca Alta, the *técnicos* used basketball tournaments (a product of early post-revolutionary reforms

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid: "As a Peruvian intellectual, with a strong influence of the Quechua and Aymara peoples, Mariátegui asked, why do we look for a different socialism? Why do we always want a European-style socialism? He said, we have a socialism that comes from our own lands. He described this as an Indian socialism, as *indianismo*, not the official *indigenismo*. An Indian is different in 1960 because he bases himself in the principles of communalism. That's where the proposal comes from, which is not that new but goes back to Rosa Luxemburg or the Flores Magón brothers, they had articulated this as well but Mariátegui is the first to articulate it as a project for the future. Not just as the past. Not just the dead glorious Indian, etc. No, he proposed an Indian socialism as a project for humanity. He argued that we had the elements for a socialist life without passing through capitalism. That we could move from Indian socialism to communism without passing through that very painful phase. He argued that capitalism practically came to kill us. This stood out to me because all of Mesoamerica is similar to what he described; we thought this could be a real option."

aimed at promoting healthy citizens) to bring together coworkers.<sup>268</sup> These tournaments provided the space for initial discussions but eventually the técnicos took a more provocative path: using their authority to call “official” regional meetings, compelling all promoters to attend, and discussing the drive to form a collective organization.<sup>269</sup>

By April of 1974, the promoters had achieved enough group cohesion and commitment to occupy the Xoxocotlán campus. Occupying the offices for 15 days, this action resulted in the April 23 signing of an official agreement between the IISEO administration and the promoters’ new organization, eventually named la Coalición de Promotores Culturales Bilingües.<sup>270</sup> The agreement detailed a number of labor rights, including the creation of “plazas de base” or permanent positions for the promoters and their incorporation into the national Ministry of Education’s Dirección General de Educación Extraescolar en el Medio Indígena. This struggle, along with other efforts by promoters pertaining to the INI, resulted in a massive expansion of indigenous education, through the creation of permanent positions for bilingual teachers on a national level.<sup>271</sup>

Peace at the Institute did not last long. By November of 1974, rumors abounded that the promoters would stage another action, this time, more dramatic.<sup>272</sup> The coalition, shorthand for the promoters’ organization, had developed explicit relationships with other dissident groups, officially forming part of the COCEO. Only a few months after signing

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<sup>268</sup> Felipe Feria, interview. For a discussion of postrevolutionary athletic reforms, see Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 94.

<sup>269</sup> María Luisa Acevedo Conde, interview by author.

<sup>270</sup> “Convenio que se celebra entra la Dirección General del IISEO y la Coalición de Promotores,” 23 Abril 1974, Personal Papers of Santiago Salazar. The coalition was officially founded on April 2, 1974.

<sup>271</sup> For a comparable experience in the state of Michoacán, see, María Eugenia Vargas, *Educación e Ideología: Constitución de una categoría de intermediarios en la comunicación interétnica. El Caso de los maestros bilingües tarascos (1964-1982)*, Mexico: CIESAS, 1994, 140.

<sup>272</sup> AGN-IPS caja 1544-A, exp. 2, Informe, November 30, 1974.

the initial agreement, the promoters argued that the Institute's administration was not respecting what had been established. In particular, they complained that the administration engaged in intimidation and reprisals, arbitrarily changing promoters' assignments (to communities outside their language area), and that seven of the técnicos, in other words half of the leadership, had been fired. On March 30, 1975, twelve promoters were arrested in the city of Oaxaca for passing out literature detailing their demands. Federal agents, conducting surveillance of the conflict, noted the slogans the protesters raised, including, "el indígena no es folklore, el indígena no es turismo, es sobre explotación."<sup>273</sup> After being taken into custody by local police, a large crowd, numbering in the hundreds and organized by the COCEO, gathered outside police headquarters, demanding the promoters' release and chanting "Zárate Aquino, Pinochet!"<sup>274</sup> Eventually the governor himself, Manuel Zárate Aquino, ordered the protestors' release.

### **Indigenismo Occupied**

Just after the arrest and release of the protesters, they initiated their most dramatic action to date to achieve their demands. Early in April 1975, they struck simultaneously four INI coordinating centers, occupying office buildings and warehouses and paralyzing the Institute's activities for the entire month. While security agents stressed that no violence occurred in the actions, it is clear from interviews that violence, mainly directed at the occupiers, was a constant reality.<sup>275</sup> Those occupying the Miahuatlán coordinating

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<sup>273</sup> AGN-IPS caja 1544-A, exp. 2, Informe, March 30, 1975: "We are not folklore, we are not just for tourism, this is about exploitation."

<sup>274</sup> This was a clear reference to the recent military coup against the left-leaning, democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile.

<sup>275</sup> Each report by federal agents at the time ends with the phrase, "hasta el momento no se han suscitado incidentes violentos (until now, no violent incidents have occurred)."

center faced violent attacks by the centers' staff, armed with machetes.<sup>276</sup> The promoters sought public support and sympathy by organizing nighttime meetings in the central plazas of Huatla de Jiménez, Miahuatlán, and Tlaxiaco, speaking to the gathered crowds of their own struggle as well as the alleged corruption of indigenista agencies.<sup>277</sup> To survive, promoters occupying the Tuxtepec center, located in an agriculturally rich region, sent cash and supplies to comrades in need at other centers.<sup>278</sup> All of this aimed to place pressure on officials, both at the IISEO but also at the Ministry of Education, to meet the coalition's demands.

Eva Ruiz led the occupation of the Miahuatlán center. Despite their numerical majority, promotoras remained a minority within the leadership. Yet Ruiz played a decisive role in holding together the Miahuatlán occupation, facing off the threat of armed INI employees angry at the promoters' actions as well as internal tensions between the promoters and their allies. One radical university student, armed with a pistol and targeted by those outside as an agitator, was disarmed by a group of promotoras in an effort to de-escalate the conflict. Once the student and another teacher were secreted out of the center at three in the morning, Ruiz rallied the remaining comrades to continue the occupation, successfully convincing them that if one center fell into the hands of the administration, that would be the end of their strike.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> AHCCI-MA (prior to 2010 reorganization), costal "1975 Radiogramas," Radiograma, 7 Abril 1975. The director of the Tlaxiaco center, José Martínez Fortiz, cabled INI offices in Mexico City, on April 7, stating, "Permítame informarle este centro encuéntrase un grupo- promotores IISEO causando problemas. Esperamos instrucciones (Allow me to inform you that a group of IISEO promoters are causing problems at this office)."

<sup>277</sup> AGN-IPS caja 1544-A, exp. 2, Informe, April 8 1975.

<sup>278</sup> Santiago Salazar, interview by author, Oaxaca City, December 15, 2009.

<sup>279</sup> Eva Ruiz Ruiz, interview.

The promoters were successful, winning their demands for the reinstatement of the supervisors, recognition of their organizational structure by the Ministry of Education, and placement within the Dirección General de Educación Normal.<sup>280</sup> The promoters' struggle formed part of a much broader political effervescence involving youth and independent trade unions, which gave material and political support to one another. This, along with a pending visit to Oaxaca by President Echeverría on May first of that year, contributed to the authorities' eventual recognition of their organizational structure and demands.

The work of the promoters gained national attention not only from authorities forced to deal with their labor demands but also from the national media. In the winter of 1976, Paco Ignacio Taibo II, at the time a young writer from a prominent literary family, traveled to Oaxaca to witness the work of the promoters. Describing his experience in an article for *El Universal*, Taibo wrote that despite his initial cynicism the promoters were indeed engaged in something new. On a visit to the community of El Oro, Nuxaá he observed a community meeting conducted in Mixtec, which discussed collective projects such as the building of individual garden plots to improve nutrition as well as the construction of terraces to protect the soil from intense erosion in the region. These projects aimed to improve material conditions but also build community organization, as one promoter argued, “El trabajo por equipo no tiene como único sentido realizar obras materiales, sino también reforzar la confianza de la comunidad en si misma; fortalecernos

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<sup>280</sup> AGEPEO, Concentración, costal “IIISEO,” exp. S.P.-5.12/9/75-IIISEO, “Convenio que se celebra por una parte la Secretaría de Educación Pública y por la otra los Representantes de los Promotores Bilingües egresados del Instituto de Investigación y Integración Social del Estado de Oaxaca, 3 Mayo 1975.”

nosotros mismos, no quedar aislados, fortalecer nuestra unidad.”<sup>281</sup> Taibo’s reporting confirms that for the promoters, development came to mean working along side communities, not only for improved economic activities but also the self organization and dignity of these communities.

The youth’s engagement with guiding notions of the new critical anthropology at the time, in this case, the self-activity of indigenous peoples, could not be clearer. This of course did not stop them from challenging the administration; they argued they had been used as conejillos de indias or guinea pigs for Gloria Bravo Ahuja’s doctorate. Yet their relationship to their instructors, many of whom encouraged them in their critical reflection, was much more ambivalent. As one staff member recounted, “lo primero que se les enseñaba, déjame decírtelo en una sola palabra, era a pensar. A no aceptar las cosas como lo dijo fulano.”<sup>282</sup>

The relationship between the youth and their instructors in this sense is best understood as a conversation or dialogue, although of course this played out on unequal terms. As such, this chapter is an attempt to identify some of the specific political projects and discourses that were part the formation of this new generation. This is important because '68 is such an overly determined political moment. Applied anthropology at the service of developmentalism was a conduit for the radicalization of the period and this insight points to how ideas circulated and what conversations took place. Indeed, what this experience shows is far from being a solely middle class or urban

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<sup>281</sup> Paco Ignacio Taibo II, “Experimento en Oaxaca (1) “En Esta Barranca se Enseña Castellano;” el Trabajo de los Promotores en Pueblos Perdidos,” *El Universal* (Mexico), December 27, 1976: “Collective work doesn’t just have as its main goal the construction of particular projects; rather, it serves to reinforce the confidence of the community in itself, to strengthen ourselves, to not remain isolated but to strengthen our unity.”

<sup>282</sup> María Luisa Acevedo Conde, interview: “The first thing we taught them, let me say it to you in one word, was to think. To not accept things as they were.”

affair, the radicalization of the period included indigenous youth, who actively consumed and articulated their own version of politics and often challenged even progressives (Margarita Nolasco for example) as they collaborated in development and education initiatives.

The political mobilization continued until 1978, when the coalition gained further autonomy under a “pilot plan,” formally constituted under the SEP’s newly created Dirección General de Educación Indígena. The most historically significant result of the IIISEO and the struggle of the promoters, by then renamed the Coalición de Promotores y Maestros Indígenas de Oaxaca (CMPIO), was the achievement of institutional autonomy in 1975. Won through sustained mobilization and campaigning, and inspired by transnational currents of radical and Marxist politics, the CMPIO carved out autonomous space within the Oaxacan state Ministry of Education and successfully held it. Initially, the only issue on which the youth and the administration appeared to agree was the need to prioritize Spanish language learning. Their struggle, along with PRI high politics, eventually contributed to the shuttering of the IIISEO.<sup>283</sup> Yet the autonomy the CMPIO won allowed them to pioneer a radical pedagogy inspired by figures such as Paulo Freire, which in the late 1970s and early 1980s made significant strides in language revitalization efforts and promoting alternative education that embraced local knowledge.<sup>284</sup> While the Ministry of Education shifted to officially celebrate bilingual intercultural education in the 1990s, it was the CMPIO who pioneered this pedagogy,

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<sup>283</sup> The IIISEO’s Xoxocatlán campus was converted into a technical agricultural school. It was rumored that the subsequent Governor used the school to host private parties.

<sup>284</sup> Initial agreement with castellanización policies, see, Eva Ruiz Ruiz, interview by author, Santa Lucia del Camino, Oaxaca, December 11, 2009. Freire’s most important work, first published in 1970, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000).



both developing it through their classroom practice and campaigning for it at national congresses.

The IISEO and its promoters' experience also demonstrate how a shifting indigenista policy found resonance among indigenous youth and was re-articulated on their own terms. This is evidenced in the leaflets distributed in April of 1975, outside the Palacio del Gobierno in Oaxaca City:

Los promotores no son responsables de que quienes lo formaron profesionalmente piensen puerilmente, es posible desarrollar una comunidad indígena sin enfrentarse a los caciques, acaparadores y terratenientes enfrentamiento que es forzosamente de carácter político.

Esta situación revela el carácter contradictorio del gobierno mexicano que llega a asustarse de su propia demagogia.<sup>285</sup>

*Indigenismo* here clearly serves as a terrain of struggle, in which indigenous youth chosen for their language ability and membership in indigenous communities developed an alternative vision of what development itself meant. As one promoter put it, describing the role of their instructors:

esta orientación progresista nos ayudó muchísimo a poder entender la dinámica política y socioeconómica de las comunidades, la cuestión cultural, la cuestión, este, digamos, del modo de concebir las cosas, la cuestión cosmogónica, todo eso, este, había que tomarlo en cuenta y había que entenderlo, por qué, por que si debíamos de trabajar...digamos, pues para avanzar vamos a llamarlo así, no tanto para incorporar a la civilización, pero para avanzar, pero, para que se diera un, un cambio había que entender la situación.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> AGN-IPS caja 1544-A, exp. 2, Informe, April 30, 1975: "It is not the bilingual promoters' fault that those who trained them professionally foolishly think it is possible to develop an indigenous community without confronting caciques, monopolies, and landlords, a confrontation that is utterly political. This situation reveals the contradictory character of the Mexican government that ends up frightened of its own demagoguery."

<sup>286</sup> Santiago Salazar, interview: "That progressive orientation helped us to better understand the political and socioeconomic dynamics of the communities, the...lets say the cultural question, the way of understanding things, the cosmology of the communities, all of that. This had to be taken into account and one had to understand it because if we were going to work, lets say, to advance, lets call it that, not really to incorporate into the broader society but rather to advance, to make a change, we had to first understand the situation."

Rather than a top down process determining the possibilities for indigenous youth, the processes surrounding state-led development created the space and possibilities for these youth to engage with new ideas of anti-colonialism and anti-racism.<sup>287</sup>

The youth also formed part of a generational conflict, in which local PRI authorities, who had participated in post-revolutionary state building, were dying out and demographic growth created a new generation of indigenous youth. Jeffery Rubin has argued this point in his discussion of 1970s activism in the case of Juchitán, and anthropologist Jan Rus has noted similar dynamics amongst indigenous communities of Chiapas.<sup>288</sup> Oaxacan scholar David Recondo has put a finer point on the phenomenon, arguing that the clientelist pact that successfully equated nation, party, and community in indigenous Mexico, was becoming undone in the 1970s, as the state was forced to deal with a plethora of new actors.<sup>289</sup> In a state such as Oaxaca, with a long tradition of government negotiation with indigenous leaders, this new generation, employed by an integrationist state, ended up challenging its creator.

The experience of the IISEO youth demonstrates how this broader shift played out in its specifics. Whereas previous generations would have found mobility through municipal governments, peasant leagues, or perhaps rural normal schools, during this

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<sup>287</sup> This argument regarding developmentalism's unintended consequences is also articulated by Ramón Cota Meza, "Indigenismo y Autonomía Indígena," *Letras Libres* (Mexico), August 2001, 47-50. Similarly in the case of Ecuador, Marc Becker, citing Fernando Guerrero and Pablo Ospina, identifies the Communist Party, developmentalist policies of the 1960s, and progressive Catholic groups as the main contributors to indigenous resurgence, see, *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indigenous Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 12.

<sup>288</sup> Rubin, 42-43; Jan Rus, "The 'Comunidad Revolucionaria Institucional': The Subversion of Native Government in Highland Chiapas, 1936- 1968," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, ed. Gilbert Michael Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 265-300.

<sup>289</sup> David Recondo, *La política del gatopardo: Multiculturalismo y democracia en Oaxaca* (Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social/Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos, 2007), 79-80.

period new spaces of sociability were created through state-led reforms as well as bottom-up practices. The creation of the IISEO put youth from around the state in dialogue not only with each other but also placed them in the vibrant politics of Oaxaca City. There, a dissident politics rooted in youth culture that transcended national boundaries grew to encompass more than university politics. The anthropologists and other social scientists on staff at the IISEO constituted another ingredient in this political effervescence. The academic rigor of the institute itself played a part in the youth's unrest, as one promoter noted, with the pyramidal structure of degrees at the institute, the IISEO itself was creating higher expectations, "nos dejaron sembrando esa inquietud."<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Servando Vergulo Aparecio, interview: "they planted in us a seed of unrest."

### **The Rise of the Bilingual Teacher: Institutionalization of Indigenous Education Reform**

By 1978 the Mexican educational system had undergone dramatic transformations. These changes included an expansion of the number of primary school teachers nationally (a near doubling during the 1970s) as well the growth of secondary and higher education systems. President Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) empowered a number of bureaucrats associated with the third generation of indigenistas, which critiqued prior indigenista efforts as assimilationist.<sup>291</sup> Then Secretary of Education, Víctor Bravo Ahuja, spearheaded these reforms, specifically the Ley Federal de Educación, which attempted to implement a decentralization of the education system.<sup>292</sup> Decentralization had been an elusive goal of education reformers since former Secretary of Education Jaime Torres Bodet's effort in 1958.<sup>293</sup> While there were technocratic reasons to support decentralization, the postwar population boom put severe strains on the system; leaders of the national teachers' union, the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), drew political and financial power from the existing system and viewed decentralization as a threat. Indigenous education reform

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<sup>291</sup> Echeverría placed them in positions of authority both in the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) and the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). This "pluralist" tendency is described as such in Stefano Varese's *Indígenas y Educación en México* (Mexico City: CEE/GEFE, 1983), 121.

<sup>292</sup> The education reform law, ratified on 27 November 1973, replaced the "ley orgánica de educación pública de 1941. See, Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (AHSEP), *1970-1976 SEP Memoria*, 36.

<sup>293</sup> Merilee Grindle, "Interests Institutions, and Reformers: The Politics of Education Decentralization in Mexico," in *Crucial Needs, Weak Incentives: Social Sector Reform, Democratization, and Globalization in Latin America*, ed. Robert Kaufman and Joan M. Nelson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

formed part of the broader constellation of administrative reforms begun under President Echeverría and continued under his successor, José López Portillo's administration.

This chapter explores the 1978 creation of the Dirección General de Educación Indígena (DGEI) in the context of the broader reformism and reorganization of the SEP during the *sexenio* of President José López Portillo. By examining the official charge of the DGEI and its component parts, it explores the institutionalization of emergent ideas of bilingual and bicultural education. Specifically, it examines the relationship between a generation of critical indigenistas and the technocratic reform of this period. The chapter then couples these national-level changes with profiles of Oaxacan educators and the experience of a dissident rank and file movement of teachers in that state. It concludes by assessing the strained relationship between dissident union movement and the goal of bilingual-bicultural education.

The creation of the DGEI is not necessarily an inspiring story of progressive policy change and indigenous cultural revival that the sympathetic observers might hope for. While there were certainly individual educators, teacher organizations, and specific communities that found language and cultural revitalization valuable and a source of pride, by and large, top-down educational reform that instructed indigenous bilingual teachers to teach and valorize indigenous language did not succeed in the Mixteca Alta. The official invocation to promote ethnic identity ran up against larger dynamics of a society that associated indigenous language with poverty and cultural backwardness. National-level education reform alone could not counter these dynamics. The teaching profession therefore was often a vehicle for individual upward mobility and a site of broader political conflict and struggle (be it internal democratization of the union or

confronting national authoritarian politics). In far fewer cases was it a horizontal relationship between teacher activists and the communities they served. This does not mean that educational reform was meaningless to indigenous people in Mexico. Far from it, education reform offered material and professional opportunities to some of the most marginalized sectors of society and on a more significant level, offered a language and platform to confront inequality, be it institutionalized racism or authoritarian power.

### **Antecedents**

A number of different sub-ministries and agencies inside and outside the SEP had been charged with the supervision and implementation of education policy in indigenous regions of Mexico. Always a contentious issue, controversy surrounded the creation of the DGEI, with some concerned that an agency specifically dedicated to indigenous education would be eliminated during the reorganization of the SEP.<sup>294</sup> Within the SEP a number of sub-ministries predated the DGEI. These included the Dirección de Culturas Populares, which Aguirre Beltrán had led, the national service of bilingual promoters begun in 1964, along with the Dirección General de Educación Extraescolar en el Medio Indígena (DGEEMI), created in 1971. Under Echeverría, the DGEEMI created a new type of residential schools, *escuelas albergues*, and increased the number of bilingual promoters and teachers at work nationally. In addition, since the Instituto Nacional Indigenista's (INI) founding in 1948 and the subsequent creation of its coordinating centers throughout the republic in the early 1950s, the INI played a fundamental role in indigenous education, training bilingual promoters and financing related efforts. At times, the INI's approach to education conflicted with local SEP officials and federal

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<sup>294</sup> Ramón Hernández López, interview by author, San Agustín Tlacotepec, Oaxaca, August 27, 2010.

schoolteachers often hostile to the use of vernacular languages in the classroom (as noted in chapter two). Bilingual classroom instruction was pioneered nationally first by the INI but with the creation of the DGEI, the INI and SEP's efforts were increasingly linked.

The new indigenous education office within the SEP was legally constituted on September 11, 1978. Formally a sub-ministry of the Ministry of Education, the DGEI's official responsibilities were to oversee education policy for all of the country's indigenous populations, which included curricula design, pedagogical training, and the supervision of indigenous boarding schools, *escuelas albergues*. More specifically, the DGEI was charged with supervising educational services among monolingual indigenous communities and facilitating their acquisition of Spanish literacy. While those involved in the development and subsequent administration of the DGEI were closely associated with emergent ideas of a "pluricultural" nation, there was no explicit reference to instruction in indigenous languages or language rights in the official charter of the DGEI and instead a consistent emphasis on *castellanización* or Spanish language acquisition.<sup>295</sup> The first director of the DGEI, Salomón Nahmad Sittón (b. 1935), was a Mexican anthropologist of Syrian extraction who trained at the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia (ENAH) in the 1950s alongside figures such as Margarita Nolasco and Luis Reyes. By 1978 Nahmad served simultaneously as director of the DGEI and as assistant director of the INI, reflecting the increased cooperation between the two agencies.

President Echeverría, who styled himself a leader of the third world, had broke with recent presidential tradition and increasingly invoked Mexico's indigenous population, replacing the aristocratic trappings of Los Pinos, the presidential residence,

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<sup>295</sup> It is unclear whether this represented the politics of education administrators at the time or the formalism of bureaucratic charters. See, *Diario Oficial*, Artículo 19 Corresponde a la Dirección General de Educación Indígena, 11 September 1978.

with regional folk-art and cuisine, while his wife, Maria Esther Zuño, donned tehuana dresses from the Isthmus of Oaxaca.<sup>296</sup> By the end of his *sexenio*, the reform and expansion of state services and industry ran up against increasing economic difficulties.<sup>297</sup> In 1976, with the presidential succession of José López Portillo (1976-1982), rising inflation and a balance of payments deficit provoked intervention by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Many Mexicans struggled under inflation and rising prices of basic foodstuffs, such as corn and sugar. This, along with the IMF-backed austerity measures such as wage freezes provoked increasing labor unrest.<sup>298</sup> At the same time, the discovery of new oil reserves allowed the federal government to paper over these contradictions for a number of years through unprecedented levels of state spending. Yet by the end of the 1970s, the growth and decentralization of the education system combined with a sharp economic contraction to produce a rank and file movement for improved compensation and union democracy. The Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE) formed out of the struggles of rural agricultural schools in 1979 and aimed to coordinate various regional movements for union democracy. Yet reforms in the indigenous education sector continued apace, with figures such as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla and Salomón Nahmad Sitton heading up federal reform efforts.

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<sup>296</sup> José Agustín, *Tragicomedia Mexicana 2: La vida México de 1970-1988* (Mexico: Editorial Planeta Mexicana), 18. Mrs. Echeverría appeared frequently in the national press dressed in indigenous dresses, see for example *Excelsior* June 9, 1974, which depicts Mrs. Echeverría's visit to the Isthmus of Oaxaca.

<sup>297</sup> In 1976 Echeverría devalued the peso from 12.5 to 20 pesos to the dollar. See Alan Knight, "Cardenas and Echeverría: Two "Populist" Presidents Compared," in *Populism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, ed. Amelia Kiddle and María L.O. Muñoz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 32.

<sup>298</sup> Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 279.



López Portillo, Echeverría's Secretary of Finance and eventual successor (1976-1982), marked a conservative shift in official rhetoric and policy. In the education sphere, López Portillo's reforms were officially termed "Educación para todos," or education for all.<sup>299</sup> During his term, Fernando Solana was tapped for Secretary of Education after Porfirio Muñoz Ledo's brief one-year stint as Secretary.<sup>300</sup> Under Solana's tenure, the SEP attempted to implement a form of decentralization that created state-level SEP delegations, termed *desconcentración* or de-concentration. Begun in March of 1978, de-concentration was framed as a modernizing effort by Solana but was also clearly an attempt to centralize control of the education system around the Secretary and his supporters. In this sense, it represented a struggle to wrest control away from the SNTE and its supporters who occupied positions throughout the ministry. As Maria Elena Cook has argued, "deconcentration aimed to marginalize those bureaucrats sympathetic to the union, gain greater control over education administration in the states, and provide stronger links between the center and the regions."<sup>301</sup> In this context, decentralization in fact aimed to centralize power around the Secretary. The conflict this administrative reform engendered created space for insurgents in union locals, in the case of Oaxaca, Sección XXII of the SNTE, to challenge their ossified leadership and PRI cronyism.

The creation of the DGEI was not without controversy. On November 21, just two months after the establishment of the DGEI, a group of Oaxacan educators massed in the

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<sup>299</sup> Alberto Arnaut depicts Lopez Portillo's reforms as a shift toward qualitative improvements after the quantitative expansion of education sector under the previous administration, see Arnaut, *La federalización educativa en México* (Mexico: Colegio de México/CIDE, 1998), 267.

<sup>300</sup> Solana and Muñoz Ledo had distinct political trajectories, with the former a fixture in national PRI politics (named director of Banamex under president de la Madrid) and the later a founding member of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD).

<sup>301</sup> Maria Elena Cook, *Organizing Dissent: Unions, the State and the Democratic Teachers' Movement in Mexico* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1996), 90.

patios of the Ministry of Education, just north of the Zócalo in Mexico City. In the patios that house some of Diego Rivera's earliest frescos, depicting capitalists as pigs and rural teachers of the Mexican revolution educating *campesinos*, the Oaxacan educators set up camp. There they passed out broadsheets of their demands, which they also published in the dissident Mexican daily, *unomásuno*.<sup>302</sup> The educators' organization, the Coalición de Maestros y Promotores Indígenas de Oaxaca (CMPIO), which had struggled for institutional autonomy and professionalization since the early 1970s, had, by 1976, been placed under the supervision of the Dirección General de Educación Normal.<sup>303</sup> Yet with the creation of the DGEI, to which they were administratively transferred, the CMPIO felt its autonomy threatened. They therefore demanded a return to the Educación Normal along with a host of specific grievances.

The Oaxacans kept up the pressure for two days, during which their protests connected with other activists in the city center demanding amnesty for political prisoners.<sup>304</sup> According to state documents, CMPIO representatives Francisco Abadía, Fernando Soberanes and others met with director Nahmad on November 21. Nahmad insisted that it was never the intention of the SEP to destroy the coalition and indicated his willingness for them to maintain their own internal structures.<sup>305</sup> By November 25, the two sides reached an agreement, which the CMPIO declared a victory. The document signed by SEP officials and CMPIO representatives agreed to the administrative transferal to the DGEI but stipulated the CMPIO's institutional autonomy in the form of a

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<sup>302</sup> "Alto al Etnocidio!" advertisement, *unomásuno* (Mexico), November 21, 1978

<sup>303</sup> Santiago Salazar, personal papers. "Convenio suscrito entre los representantes de los CC. maestros y promotores culturales bilingües egresados del IISEO y el C. Kabal Abbud, Asesor del C. Oficial Mayor de Educación Pública," November 19, 1976.

<sup>304</sup> Reference relevant IPS informe

<sup>305</sup> AGN-IPS, Caja 1544B, exp. 6, Informe 21 November 1978, 2.

*dirección regional* or school zone along with its democratic internal self-governance would be respected. This arrangement was codified as a “plan piloto” or pilot plan for indigenous education in Oaxaca.<sup>306</sup> The pilot plan also represented one element of the tension between national-level education reform and local educators’ vision of their professional status and classroom practice.

### **Component Parts of DGEI**

The DGEI’s responsibilities fell into three main areas, one, the training of primary school teachers, two, the castellanización of monolingual indigenous children of preschool age, and three, adult education and literacy instruction. The castellanización efforts were conducted through both residential schools and traditional schools by staff specifically trained for such work. According to the DGEI’s requirements, the castellanizadores were to be, “personal de origen indígena (bilingüe) con nivel de Secundaria en promedio; y que hablan el idioma de los niños con quienes cumplen su tarea.”<sup>307</sup> While there was always an enormous gap between stated policy and classroom practice (and prior indigenous education efforts had employed bilingual staff), the DGEI’s official commitment to employing only bilingual personnel reflected a new institutional consensus regarding the need and desirability of bilingual instruction.

The DGEI began by contracting and training larger numbers of castellanizadores, a position that dated back at least to INI education efforts of the 1950s and who the SEP

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<sup>306</sup> Santiago Salazar, personal papers. “Acuerdo al que llegan la secretaria de educación pública, representada por el director general de educación indígena y la coalición de promotores indígenas (IISEO de Oaxaca), con la presencia del C. Delegado de la secretaria de educación pública en el estado de Oaxaca,” 25 November 1978, 1-9.

<sup>307</sup> Dirección General de Educación Indígena, Centro de Información y Documentación de Educación Indígena (hereafter referred to as DGEI-CID, *Programa de educación para todos: Programa de castellanización, Informe anual 78-79*, 28 May 1979, (Mexico: SEP/INI), 6: “staff of indigenous origin (bilingual) who have completed, on average, their secondary education and that speak the language of the students with whom they are working.”

had employed through their national system of bilingual promoters since 1964. Under the DGEI's supervision, the castellanizadores were trained in two different pedagogical methods, a method developed by US linguist Morris Swadesh, "Juegos para Aprender Español," and the method associated with the Centro de Investigación para la integración Social (CIS), in Mexico City, termed "Enseñanza del Español a Hablantes de Lengua Indígena."<sup>308</sup> Both of these methods stressed oral proficiency in Spanish as opposed to traditional literacy approaches (Morris' approach also aimed for literacy in vernacular languages). Trained in one of the two methods during a two-month program, the roughly 2,000 instructors were then sent into service in the classroom. There, they joined others already teaching with varying levels of training.<sup>309</sup> Their charge was to promote ethnic identity while teaching the national language to monolingual children.<sup>310</sup>

Indigenous boarding schools, termed *internados*, had a long history in Mexico, dating back to postrevolutionary state building efforts. Just as in other countries, critics condemned Mexican boarding schools for taking indigenous children out of their cultural environment and for their hostility to children's specific language and cultural practices. In part due to these criticisms, beginning in the 1970s *internados* were closed or converted into *escuelas albergues*, so-called hostel schools. In contrast to full-time residential schools, *albergues* allowed parents in far-flung rural communities to send their children to school during the week, where they were provided room and board, but where they would also return home to their families during weekends. This innovation, along with the injunction that members of indigenous communities staff the *escuelas albergues*,

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<sup>308</sup> For the later, see Gloria Bravo Ahuja, *La Enseñanza del Español a los Indígenas Mexicanos* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1977).

<sup>309</sup> DGEI-CID, *Informe anual* 78-79, 7.

<sup>310</sup> Elisa Ramírez Castañeda, *La Educación Indígena en México* (Mexico: UNAM, 2006), 171.

gave the schools a different connotation.<sup>311</sup> The SEP had managed hostel schools with financing from the INI. With the creation of the DGEI, teacher training and evaluation of the *albergues* came under its control. In 1978, the DGEI oversaw a significant expansion of the *albergue* system, adding 300 new schools to the roughly 900 in operation nationally.<sup>312</sup>

### **Expulsion of the Summer Institute of Linguistics**

As part of the broader reformulation of indigenous education, the Ministry of Education officially severed its relationship with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) on September 21, 1979.<sup>313</sup> A US-based evangelical missionary organization dedicated to translating the bible into Amerindian languages, the SIL became particularly controversial during the 1960s and 1970s. In Mexico, the SIL had enjoyed a privileged position, signing an official agreement to collaborate with the Ministry of Education under president Lázaro Cárdenas. While the relationship between a nationalist government and foreign, evangelical linguists had always been a tenuous one, by the 1970s critical anthropologists and others engaged in questions of indigenous rights looked upon the SIL in a new light. In the polarized global context of the Cold War and anti-colonial movements, to which the SIL was not immune, particularly in its operations in Southeast Asia and South America, SIL's intentions and goals were called into question. While the SIL was not engaged in missionary work per se, they were explicitly

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<sup>311</sup> For a comparative discussion of the *albergues*, see Alexander Dawson, "Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States," forthcoming in *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 5 (2012): 80-99.

<sup>312</sup> DGEI-CID, *Informe anual* 78-79, 8. The *albergue* system had 46,900 students in attendance nationally.

<sup>313</sup> Todd Hartch, *Missionaries of the State: The Summer Institute of Linguistics, State Formation and Indigenous Mexico, 1935–1985* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 157. For a detailed discussion of the break, see chap. 10, "Denounced! Anthropology Turns against the SIL."

prohibited from establishing churches in Mexico; the mere existence of foreign missionaries doing the linguistic work of the Mexican state was increasingly unpalatable.

One of the first cases of Mexican criticism occurred in October 1975, in a statement by the first National Congress of Indigenous Peoples, in Pátzcuaro.<sup>314</sup> Pressure built against the organization at the second Barbados conference in July 1977, where figures such as Bonfil Batalla, Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, and Stefano Varese denounced the SIL's work in Mexico to the international gathering. The rising tide of criticism not only decried the alleged cultural imperialism and divisive role of the SIL in indigenous communities but also took aim at its linguistic work, questioning its development of vocabularies for language variants and its pedagogic materials.<sup>315</sup> While the severing of the *convenio* in 1979 was a dramatic symbolic achievement of the critical indigenista administrators, with the SIL's staff of roughly 140 people forced to slowly leave the country by the end of 1980, it also formed part of their larger strategy for what they called *etnodesarrollo* or ethnic-development, which upheld the self-activity of indigenous peoples in the cultural and linguistic defense and development of their communities.<sup>316</sup>

### **The Pátzcuaro Ethnolinguistic Program**

Once the alleged imperialist agents of the Summer Institute of Linguistics were expelled, Nahmad and Stavenhagen led the effort to create a group of Mexican linguists, specifically indigenous linguists. To this end, leaders from the INI, including then

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<sup>314</sup> Hartch, 149. For the 1975 congress, see María O. Muñoz, "We Speak for Ourselves": The First National Congress of Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Indigenismo in Mexico, 1968-1982 (PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 2009).

<sup>315</sup> Hartch, 152. Critics argued the SIL deliberately overstated variant difference in indigenous languages to divide indigenous peoples. Also, see ALAI, "El Instituto Lingüístico de verano, Instrumento del Imperialismo," *Nueva Antropología, Revista de Ciencias Sociales* no. 9 (Mexico, October 1978).

<sup>316</sup> Hartch, 157.

director Ignacio Ovalle Fernández, along with others from the Centro de Investigaciones Superiores del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (CIS-INAH) and the newly created DGEI created the Programa de Licenciatura en Etnolingüística. The program was to train indigenous linguists who could then lead efforts in the creation of didactic materials for the development of bilingual-bicultural education as well as serve as leaders in their home communities. The Pátzcuaro program was short-lived, training just two generations of students before closing.<sup>317</sup>

Along with fluency in Spanish and their native language, prospective students were to hold normal school degrees or have a minimum of secondary education. A three-year program, the students would receive a *licenciatura*, the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in ethnolinguistics. The program selected 81 students, 67 of whom enrolled, and 54 of whom completed the program.<sup>318</sup> The majority of the students were men, with only seven women in the original group of 67. The program selected students from seven language groups, given priority due to perceived demographic importance and the availability of qualified instructors. These included Nahuatl, Mayan, Mixtec, Otomi, Purépecha, Tononaco, and Zapotec. The INI provided financial support to the program while the DGEI-SEP and the CIS-INAH provided instructors.<sup>319</sup>

Classes began at the Centro Regional de Educación Fundamental para la América Latina (CREFAL) campus in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán on July 2, 1979. The majority of the teaching staff was from Mexico, including such figures as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, Luis

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<sup>317</sup> Yakamura (locate correct page number)

<sup>318</sup> Mutsuo Nakamura, "Programa de Formación Profesional de Etnolingüistas (Primera Generación 1979-19782)," (master's thesis, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Mexico, D.F., 2000), 29.

<sup>319</sup> DGEI-CID, *Informe anual* 78-79, 22.

Reyes, and Carmen Nava Nava.<sup>320</sup> Yet a significant number of foreign researchers and intellectuals also led courses. These included the historian of Chiapas Robert Wassertrom, the Guatemalan Carlos Guzmán Böckler, and the U.S. linguists Marshal Durbin and Carol Mock, among others.<sup>321</sup> The curricula at Pátzcuaro consisted of three years of formal course work, workshops organized by ethnicity, as well as fieldwork. The courses included such topics as Introduction to Ethnohistory, Theories of Ethnicity, the Word: Linguistics, and Creole-Mestizo Domination.<sup>322</sup> In order to complete the program students had to write a thesis based on fieldwork, some of which were published in a series of small volumes by the SEP and INI.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> The staff consisted of both full and part-time instructors, a majority of whom held masters' degrees or doctorates.

<sup>321</sup> Nakamura, Annex 3.

<sup>322</sup> Course descriptions, Nakamura, 41-51.

<sup>323</sup> See for example, Juan Julián Caballero, *El Papel del Maestro en el Etnocidio en San Antonio Huitepec, Oaxaca*, Etnolingüística 20, Cuadernos de Información y Divulgación para Maestros Bilingües (Mexico: SEP/INI, 1982).



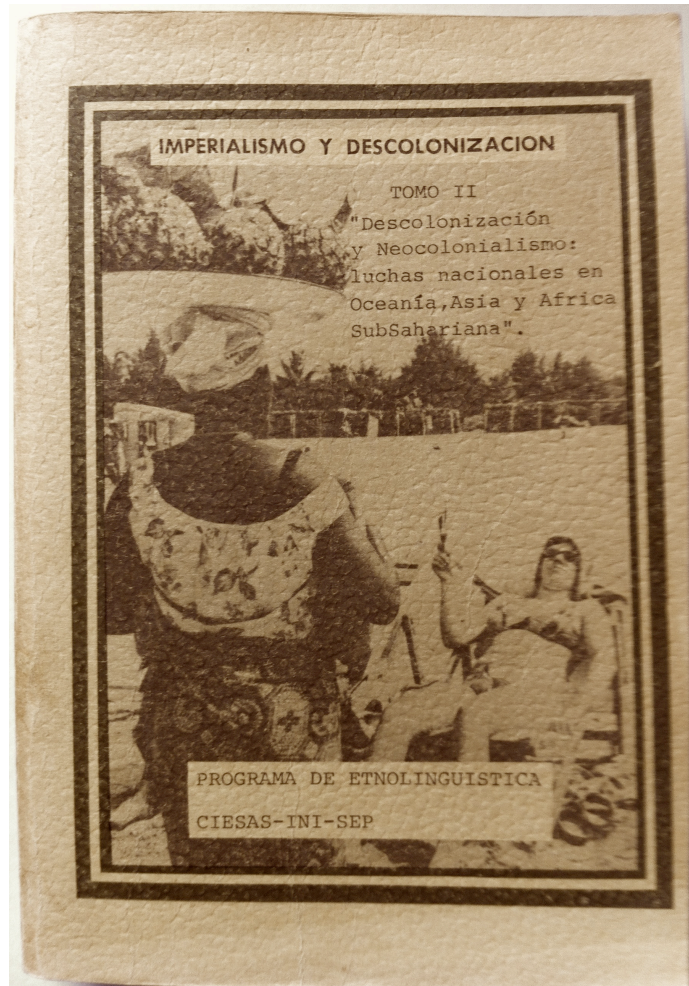


Image 6: The second volume of the “Imperialism and Decolonization,” one series featured in the Ethnolinguistic Program. Source: Marcos A. Cruz Bautista, Personal Papers

### **Indigenous Professionals in Training**

Of the eighty-one selected, one of the Mixtec participants was Marcos Abraham Cruz Bautista. Born in 1949, Cruz Bautista attended primary school in San Juan Mixtepec, roughly forty kilometers west of the district capital of Tlaxiaco in the Mixteca Alta. Cruz Bautista’s path to Pátzcuaro and the ethnolinguistic program reveals much about the nature of indigenista reformism in post-1950s Mexico. After finishing primary school, Cruz Bautista enrolled in secondary night school in Tlaxiaco with his parents’ support but after the death of his father his family told him to come home to attend to the fields and animals. Cruz Bautista refused to return home and lacking their financial

support, looked for work to support himself. Eventually he found work with a Tlaxiaco merchant, Rufino San Juan, carrying merchandise from the merchant's home to business. In exchange for a room in San Juan's house, Cruz Bautista ran showers the merchant rented out to travelers. He cut the wood, heated the water and attended to the clients.

During his third year in secondary school, Cruz Bautista heard of INI scholarships for Mixtec speakers and successfully applied. For a time, he worked for the merchant while pursuing his studies with the help of the INI. When Fortino San Juan let Cruz Bautista go, the then director of INI operations in Tlaxiaco, Veracruz-born anthropologist Fructuoso Díez Pérez gave Cruz Bautista a room in one of the bodegas of Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares-Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (CONASUPO-IMSS).<sup>324</sup> Cruz Bautista's responsibilities for the INI included lining up local residents on Saturday mornings to purchase CONASUPO's subsidized corn. After transitioning to the position of *velador* or night watchman for CONASUPO, he began his studies for a *bachillerato* or high school degree.<sup>325</sup>

When the *convocatoria* for the Pátzcuaro program was announced, Cruz Bautista was at work for the INI in the neighboring district of Nochixtlán and had finished his *bachillerato*. As Cruz Bautista recounted, he did not fully understand the nature of the program:

fueron maestros que nos despertaron, me enseñaron, me cambiaron la forma de pensar, porque yo no sabía a qué iba, solo iba por la licenciatura cualquiera que fuera porque yo no tenía como estudiar, no tenía recursos y yo la verdad que algo tenía que hacer iba por la licenciatura, resulta que me dan la de etnoligüista y cambia mi forma de pensar, ahí cambié,

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<sup>324</sup> The CONASUPO-IMSS program, initiated in 1965, aimed to regulate prices on basic foodstuffs, particularly corn, through state subsidies.

<sup>325</sup> Cruz Bautista estimated he was eighteen or nineteen years old at this point.

cambió mi forma de ser, comencé a ser radical hacia la unión, que era igual, que la cultura y ya empecé a aprender hacer la investigación sobre mi propia lengua, sobre mi propia cultura, sobre mi propia gente, eso cambió mi vida...<sup>326</sup>

Other participants echo this sincerity and conviction of the program's transformative power.<sup>327</sup> For Cruz Bautista, the notion of valorizing the indigenous elements of his self was a transformative notion. Where as much of his prior schooling and social world shunned indigenous language and culture as representing poverty and ignorance, in Pátzcuaro his instructors reaffirmed indigenous language and culture as intrinsically valuable. However, Cruz Bautista noted some students felt so uncomfortable with the programs' emphasis on ethnic consciousness that they quit. Others depicted these students' departures as a disagreement with the ethnic politics promoted in the program.<sup>328</sup>

While the ethnolinguistic program's theoretical justification drew on notions of indigenous self-activity and emancipation, Cruz Bautista's narrative stresses the inadvertent way he arrived to the program. A child of humble origins, Cruz Bautista's education and life story reflect an intimate connection between education and material advancement. From secondary school forward, the state rewarded his bilingualism and intelligence with financial assistance and eventually employment in the indigenista bureaucracy. This was initially a minority experience but as the state expanded

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<sup>326</sup> Marcos Abraham Cruz Bautista, interview by author, San Miguel el Grande, Ranchería Vicente Guerrero, Oaxaca, November 11, 2009: "these were teachers that woke us up, that taught me, that changed my way of thinking, because I didn't even know what I was going to, I just went for the degree, whatever it was, because I didn't have the means to study, and the truth is I was just going for the degree, as it turned out that they gave me ethnolinguistics and that changed my way of thinking, there I changed. It changed my way of being, I began to be radical in terms of union politics, similar to the culture, and slowly I began to learn how to do research about my own language, about my own culture, about my own people, that changed my life."

<sup>327</sup> Juan Julián Caballero, interview by author, Oaxaca City, January 29, 2010. See also, anonymous profiles in Nakamura.

<sup>328</sup> Daniel Cazés, "Zapotecas Rebeldes Rechazan Ser Indios Profesionales," *unomásuno* (Mexico) June 29, 1980.

indigenous education services more indigenous youth found professional opportunities as teachers.

The interdisciplinary curricula at Pátzcuaro consisted of three major fields of study, linguistics, history and social anthropology. One of the instructors, Nemesio Rodríguez edited a multivolume series for the program, entitled *Imperialismo y Descolonización*. This series was animated by a third world politics focused on ethnic minorities and questions of racial discrimination and self-determination. Rodríguez framed the volume's case studies by arguing the existence of a crisis in Western political hegemony, citing the myriad examples of colonized and formerly colonized countries, from China to Mozambique, as evidence of a global anti-colonial movement. The touchstone cases included Vietnam and the Philippines and highlighted texts by Amílcar Cabral. The volume included texts critical of what Rodríguez termed, the "bureaucratic Left," meaning the USSR, its foreign policy and allies. These works aimed to place indigenous peoples of Mexico's history into this broader constellation of anti-colonial politics and emphasized the role of culture in struggles for liberation. Mutsuo Nakamura noted the program's curricula focused on two primary concepts, *diferencia y desigualdad*, difference and inequality, as analytical points of departure.<sup>329</sup>

Another Mixtec participant in the Pátzcuaro program, Juan Julián Caballero (b. 1949), wrote his thesis on the detrimental role rural teachers played in the destruction of indigenous culture. Based on his own experience as bilingual promoter for the INI and later as a bilingual teacher, Julián Caballero's thesis was in effect a self-indictment. He recounted his own "bitter experience" of primary school education in the 1950s, in which his teachers favored Spanish-speaking students over those more comfortable in Mixtec

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<sup>329</sup> Nakamura, 35.

and used rote repetition to teach Spanish. His studies were frequently interrupted by the need to work as a seasonal laborer in nearby coffee *fincas*, yet Julián Caballero finished primary school in 1964 and took a job as a bilingual promoter for the INI in 1967. INI promoters received just one month of training before being sent to communities in need. Despite the promoters' assignment to use Mixtec as a bridge to *castellanización*, without adequate training, Julián Caballero reverted to the same technique his own teachers had used, that of corporal punishment and Spanish repetition exercises.<sup>330</sup> Julián Caballero and his Pátzcuaro colleagues were trained to reverse these trends in education history, a daunting assignment.

The Pátzcuaro program constituted in effect another pilot program, in which federal agencies gave a limited amount of funding and administrative space to a group of committed academics interested in the politics of ethnic resurgence. While training two generations of students, the experience of the ethno-linguistic program reinforced the yawning gap between the stated goals of social change and overturning colonial power dynamics and the meager institutional support offered. Some contemporary critics viewed its focus on cultural politics as a distraction, arguing the state was deliberately misleading indigenous youth away from the politics of class and social revolution. Yet the curricula engaged both sets of ideas and did not formulate a distinction between cultural politics and struggles for liberation. On one level, the program was a success, in that it trained a cadre of indigenous educators who would go on to work in the DGEI administration and develop their own projects of linguistic and cultural revitalization. In the case of the Mixtec participants, Julián Caballero, with others, helped found two civic associations, that, beginning in the 1990s, sought to promote a unified Mixtec vocabulary

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<sup>330</sup> Julián Caballero, 11.

and the collection of oral narratives for language revitalization.<sup>331</sup> Yet the Pátzcuaro program's fate was also tied to the precarious economic context of the early 1980s, in which the state quickly move to slash social spending.

In the Mixteca Alta, the SEP had expanded the primary school system in this period, creating more school zones and employing more instructors. This expansion provoked *promotores bilingües* to organize for union representation. One such teacher was Antolín Osorio Nicolás. Born in 1945 near Chalcatongo and from a family of teachers, Osorio began his career as an INI auxiliary radio teacher at the age of seventeen. In the mid-1970s, as recounted in chapter four, *promotores bilingües*, whether trained by the INI, SEP or a state institution such as the IIISEO, were generally employed by the SEP as contract workers, often with renewable, six-month contracts. Just as the IIISEO *promotores* had campaigned and won *plazas de base*, or permanent positions within the SEP, Osorio had engaged in a similar struggle. Once the *promotores* had secured these positions, they were full members of the SNTE. Osorio helped organize new school zones and union delegations during this expansion in the first half of the 1970s.

Osorio himself had struggled to learn Spanish as a child in primary school and described this experience informing his later classroom practice. Recounting one of his students' first day of class:

llegó llorando en la escuela porque seguramente sufría lo que, lo que yo sufrí en ese momento no?, yo llegué y, y yo no conocía a otros ahí y luego lo que hablaba la maestra pues no, no le entendí para nada y me sentí incómodo, me sentí, este, pues con desánimo ahí y dije pues, qué pasa aquí no?, eh, entonces eso lo transmití o lo, lo llevé cuando estoy viendo a un niño que llega con miedo y empieza a llorar y eso?, entonces lo que hago es hablarle en mixteco, no llores, en mixteco, no llores, aquí te vas a quedar conmigo yo voy a jugar contigo, aquí

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<sup>331</sup> Nakamura, 141-174.

están los niños todos vamos a jugar, no llores, al rato de aquí te vas a ir a tu casa, le expliqué en mixteco, uh pues ya quedó tranquilo el niño y ya salió de la escuela y se fue y hasta se despidió en mixteco conmigo y se fue porque se dio cuenta que, que soy como él o soy parte de él, y él es parte mía no?<sup>332</sup>

In the most direct sense, for Osorio being a *maestro bilingüe* meant this most basic principle that he and his students were cut from the same cloth. That while indigenous children often still experienced primary school as an outside world; they had an ally within the classroom in him.

By 1976 Osorio rose to school zone supervisor, first based in Santiago Amoltepec and later in Huajuapán de León. Osorio's professional advancement, from INI *promotor* to supervisor, demonstrates a basic dilemma of education reform. While Osorio was employed precisely for his indigenous language ability, the dynamics of professional advancement undermined the very project of language maintenance and cultural preservation. As he established himself as a teacher, and significantly as a union activist, he advanced in part through a willingness to frequently travel and work outside his home community. When SEP officials offered him the supervisor position in Huajuapán, he negotiated to earn a *doble plaza*, in effect an extra salary, to maintain himself and his family. He met with such national figures as Aguirre Beltrán and, for short time worked in the Mexico City offices of the DGEI, professional advancement meant frequently leaving the community for urban areas with more services. Osorio eventually settled in Oaxaca City with his family, a pattern common among indigenous educators after

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<sup>332</sup> Antolín Osorio Nicolás, interview: "he arrived crying at school because he surely suffered what I had in that same moment, no? I arrived, and I didn't know others there and then the teacher spoke and I, well, I didn't understand her at all. So that is what I brought with me. I bring it with me when I see a boy that arrives with fear and begins to cry. So what I do is speak to him in Mixtec, don't cry, in Mixtec, don't cry I say. You are going to stay with me and I'm going to play with you, here are the other children and we are all going to play together, don't cry. In a bit you'll go home to your house, I explained in Mixtec. And then the boy became calm and when he left school, he even said goodbye in Mixtec. He realized that, I'm like him or part of him, and that he is part of me."

decades of service. While this dynamic did not necessarily create a fundamental barrier to indigenous education practice, it reflected a professional and union culture that on a basic level was at odds with the project of *etnodesarrollo*.

### **Teacher Insurgency**

Given the exponential expansion of primary education during the first half of the 1970s and the subsequent economic downturn of the second half of that decade, teacher pay increasingly failed to meet basic needs, particularly in southern states zoned for less pay than their northern counterparts. The federal government attempted to paper over these economic difficulties through increased state spending financed by rising oil revenues. Yet López Portillo's administrative reforms within the SEP caused delays in salary payments, meaning teachers often worked for months without pay. This increased economic uncertainty along with an internally divided and qualitatively larger union membership helped spark a dramatic dissident union movement at the end of the 1970s.

The SNTE had served as a mechanism for internal PRI politics and mobility, what Joe Foweraker has termed a "transmission belt," in which trade union positions conveyed power within the party structure and positioned union leaders to contend for political positions, locally as well as nationally. Particularly in rural Mexico, municipal presidents were frequently former teachers and trade union officials.<sup>333</sup> Alongside the populist rhetoric of Echeverría, a new SNTE leadership coalesced around the figure of Carlos Jonguitud Barrios, who echoed the rhetoric of Echeverría and served as general secretary of the SNTE from 1974 to 1977. While Jonguitud's official term ended in 1977, the principal of no re-election kept him from serving another term, he and his political

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<sup>333</sup> For a similar dynamic in the neighboring state of Chiapas, see Luz Olivia Piñeda, *Caciques culturales: el caso de los maestros bilingües en Los Altos de Chiapas* (Puebla, Mexico: Altres Costa-Almic, 1993), 175.



grouping, the *Vanguardia Revolucionaria*, would maintain control to the early 1990s.

While this *charrista* current espoused radical rhetoric, it oversaw a tight vertical control of the union that served the union president more than its rank and file members.

The struggle for improved compensation and trade union accountability by teachers therefore called into question the entire structure of the SNTE and its political allegiance with the PRI regime. As teachers in Oaxaca, Chiapas and other states struggled to oust their local union leaders, the defenders of the status quo; they called into question national SNTE leadership, in effect challenging their authoritarian power. Out of the struggles of the rural agricultural schools came the *Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* (CNTE) in 1979, which aimed to coordinate the various regional movements for union democracy.<sup>334</sup>

Along with the diminished value of teachers' salaries, the efforts to decentralize the Ministry of Education through the creation of state-level *delegaciones generales* also generated disputes among union leaders. As Isidoro Yescas Martínez and Gloria Zafra describe, the head of the Oaxacan SNTE local (Sección XXII), Fernando Maldonado, was tapped to become leader of the statewide PRI organization in Oaxaca in April 1980, underscoring the clientelist political culture permeating the union local. This, along with the violent repression by state security agents during the May Day march in Oaxaca City that same year, contributed to the rapid radicalization of the union movement.<sup>335</sup> When Sección XXII struck on May 2, 1980, they remained on strike for 44 days, until they successfully ousted their previous leadership body, the Comité Ejecutivo Seccional, and

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<sup>334</sup> Joe Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico: the Teachers' Movement, 1977-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 33.

<sup>335</sup> Yescas and Zafra, 66.

replaced it with new leadership. Not only did they break the Vanguardia's control of their union local but they also won a 22% wage hike.<sup>336</sup>

Despite contributing financially to the union's coffers, teachers involved in indigenous education had historically been excluded from participation within the SNTE. Given indigenous educators' distinct professional formation and the racial overtones identified with indigenous education, teachers with normal school training and with the title of federal teacher disparaged indigenous educators. Stories of school inspector discrimination and harassment of indigenous educators were frequent. Yet as the union struggle accelerated, indigenous educators began to challenge these informal exclusionary practices by participating in union politics and mobilization in ways they had not done before. In the Mixteca Alta, Isaías Sánchez López recounted:

vienen ese movimiento órale ahí estamos todos, y entonces vió el maestro federal de que el maestro indígena le entró y con ganas y además de entrarle según ellos que somos fuertes en las luchas que hemos sido a México porque en México se dieron muchas luchas y en Oaxaca ahí estábamos, entonces fuimos aceptados por el maestro federal, juimos aceptados a partir de ahí, claro que jue lento no es rápido, despacio poco a poco, ya se borró eso de que aquél es maestro federal y yo soy maestro indígena se está borrando, pero fue un proceso lento licenciado, no fue de la noche a la mañana...eso es lo que vino en cierta forma a favorecer la igualdad...<sup>337</sup>

In this way the union struggle opened up opportunities for indigenous teachers to prove to their counterparts their capabilities and value a union militants. The struggle to democratize Sección XXII, the Oaxacan teachers' local, involved going around the

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<sup>336</sup> Yescas and Zafra, 26.

<sup>337</sup> Isaías Sánchez López, interview: "this movement arrives and órale, there we are all together, and then the federal teacher saw the indigenous teacher enter the movement with enthusiasm and more than just joining, according to them we are strong fighters in the struggles we've had in Mexico City because that is where many struggles happened and in Oaxaca City we were there as well. So we were accepted by the federal teachers, we were accepted at that point, of course it was slow, not fast, little by little, that idea that the federal teacher is over here and the indigneous over there has been erased, but it was a slow process, it wasn't overnight..that is what came to in a certain way favor equality..."

traditional structures of the union, activists organized mass assemblies and committees to demonstrate their power and ultimately oust the previous leadership. In this context, indigenous educators proved in practice their ability to organize and confront, often violent, institutional power. Indeed, the bilingual teachers working under Plan Piloto, who had already organized to defend their internal structure, provided crucial organizing skills and politics in the early days of Sección XXII's struggle.

The teachers involved in Plan Piloto exemplified the experience of the bilingual teacher as the vanguard of the union struggle. As they had already honed their skills at mobilizing, negotiating, and pressuring government officials to maintain their autonomy, they brought those skills to bear to the broader Sección XXII struggle. To this end they joined the CNTE, the reform caucus of the union, prior to their official formation as a delegation in the Oaxaca local.

The reform movement in the union had to confront a union culture based on top-down control that employed fear, intimidation, and increasingly violence. Dissident unionists developed new strategies and a democratic culture to break Vanguardia's control. Mass assemblies where votes were taken publicly and the practice of sending additional comrades to accompany delegates to regional and national congresses to ensure they did not betray collective decisions, were essential tactics of the insurgent teachers. The Plan Piloto teachers participated in the events of May 1980, and formally became a union delegation of Sección XXII in 1982, though they had functioned as a *jefatura de zonas* (no. 21) since November 1978.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> As the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary CMPIO newsletter stated, in 1980, "La Colación se incorpora a la marcha magisterial del 1 de mayo, sin ser una delegación sindical, y por vez primera se rompe el desfile tradicional de los maestros y prácticamente con este acto surge el Movimiento Magisterial Democrático Oaxaqueño como se conoce actualmente." "The coalition joined the teachers'

Sección XXII's mobilization and victory won broad support, both locally as well as nationally as a blow to corrupt PRI rule, yet it had a more ambiguous relationship to indigenous education reform. While the mobilization allowed for indigenous teachers to assert themselves as equals, this equality was based on a union culture that prioritized union activity and politics, often divorced from classroom practice or projects of alternative pedagogy. For many indigenous educators, the professional goal remained ascension to a zone supervisor or transfers to educación normal, i.e. non-indigenous schools. In contrast, Plan Piloto teachers through their political militancy, both commitments to union politics and opposition to the PRI, had achieved relative autonomy within the education system, in the form of a school zone, where they would later pioneer classroom practices focused on linguistic revitalization. Yet the broad experience of indigenous education continued to offer very little in terms of culturally relevant content for indigenous students. The Pátzcuaro program only trained two generations of ethnolinguists, whose valiant work amounted to a drop in the bucket in a dramatically expanded primary education sector. In addition, many indigenous teachers, while beginning to achieve a level of equality with their professional counterparts, continued to view their professional goal as one of individual advancement, often conceived of as a shedding or at least strategic employment of their indigenous selves.

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demonstration on May 1 without being a formal union delegation and for the first time the traditional teachers' march is broken and nearly with this act alone emerges the democratic Oaxacan teachers' movement as it is know today." Its official delegation number was D-I-211.

## Conclusion

### ***Indigenista Legacies***

The growing gap between the official embrace of indigenous language instruction in the early 1980s and the quotidian practice of indigenous education was ultimately the product of development policy based on indigenous brokers, transnational discourses of anti-colonialism, and grassroots struggle with an authoritarian regime. The second generation of modern indigenistas, represented by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán and to a lesser extent Alfonso Caso, had marked a significant departure both from their nineteenth century predecessors as well as the early work of Manuel Gamio. In the mid-twentieth century, indigenista social scientific thinking combined with a consolidated central state to promote the modernization of its indigenous populations and regions. This project was tied to the politics of the Cold War, in which “un-integrated regions” were considered a threat to Western interests, and a Mexican political culture that relied on corporatist organization to integrate and establish centralized political control over regions with frequently hostile local elites. As shown through the preceding chapters, this process of state incorporation was not one of mere domination and resistance but rather contradictions within the indigenista paradigm played out through economic, social and political processes and their perception and management by state actors and native peoples.

In Latin America, the national projects of indigenista incorporation were, as Steven Lewis and Laura Giraudo have pointed out, “as varied as the Americas”

themselves.<sup>339</sup> In some countries, indigenista efforts remained confined to aesthetic and archeological efforts while others developed robust developmentalist programs. In countries suffering military dictatorships and civil war, such as Guatemala, indigenista dreams were cut short by mid-century. The coherence of a pan-Latin American critique of indigenismo in 1971 at the Barbados conference was a measure both of its prominence in applied social science but also a sign of its demise. In Mexico, the third generation of indigenista intellectuals attempted to implement a participatory indigenismo before the economic crisis of the 1980s undermined those efforts. While the state-led development project came to an end, the indigenista experience bore long-term results. As corporate systems of integration were undermined by neoliberal reforms, indigenous identity as such became a powerful mobilizing category, enabling actors to make demands as original peoples with uniquely valuable culture and language. This was not merely a product of neoliberal reforms, though it was shaped by it. Rather it was a product of the dynamic interaction between processes of state incorporation, development, anti-colonial politics, and indigenous peoples themselves.

Indigenista designs for the Mixteca Alta manifested themselves not only in concrete educational and development programs but also on an ideological terrain, in which invocations of the region's prehispanic past served to frame official understandings of the contemporary population. The notion of a degraded indigenous population, marked primarily through its use of non-western languages, meant that not only the region's imposing topography but also its human geography was to be overcome. The contradictions of this project were ripe. Indigenista attention, through the

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<sup>339</sup> Laura Giraudo and Stephen E. Lewis, "Pan-American *Indigenismo* (1940-1970): New Approaches to an Ongoing Debate," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 3 (2012): 4.

INI's development of a regional coordinating center, aimed to free indigenous populations from local exploitation and was partially successful in its efforts. At the same time indigenista thinking contributed to the notion of a degraded indigenous state, that indigenous language and culture, even while rhetorically celebrated, were something to be overcome.

### **The Mixteca Alta**

After three decades, what effect did indigenista policies have in the Mixteca Alta? What were the results of this project of incorporation? After three decades, the region's material impoverishment remained a reality for the majority of its inhabitants. Indigenista development policy contributed to the region's modernization in areas of basic infrastructure, roads and electricity along with its health and education efforts. Government schemes to address poverty through planned migration of the population largely did not work; there was no mass migration of Mixteca Alta communities to the coast as the INI had hoped for. Rather, during the second half of the twentieth century, growing numbers of Mixtecos would engage in labor migration, traveling to Veracruz, Mexico City, and northern Mexico and then increasingly to areas in the western United States for work in agriculture. Ultimately this migration experience may have had an equal to if not stronger effect in promoting pan-Mixtec identity and language revitalization than the efforts of indigenista intellectuals or education reformers.<sup>340</sup>

Federal and state governments expanded primary schooling dramatically under the period

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<sup>340</sup> See Lynn Stephen, "The Creation and Re-creation of Ethnicity: Lessons from the Zapotec and Mixtec of Oaxaca," *Latin American Perspectives* 23, no. 2 (1996): 17-37; Michael Kearney, "Mixtec Political Consciousness: From Passive to Active Resistance," in *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics*, edited by Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998): 134-146.

of study. The ex-district capitol, Tlaxiaco, while still marked by racial antagonisms in the early 1980s, was a far cry from the overt racism of the town's merchant elite, who in the 1950s forced indigenous men into forced labor for minor infractions. The INI's modernization efforts, alongside broader economic and political changes, constituted limited but valuable reforms for the region's indigenous population.

INI educational efforts challenged the practices of state and federal education authorities in the 1950s and early 1960s and provided institutional and ideological support to the incipient project of employing indigenous, bilingual instructors. In the process, the INI came into conflict with local elites, those involved in coffee production as well as Tlaxiaco merchants who viewed INI efforts at price stabilization as a threat to their interests. In addition, the INI's work in the Mixteca triggered a strong Catholic opposition, demonstrating that in some parts of the republic Catholic anti-communism and opposition to federal agencies continued well into the mid-century. These efforts were indicative of an innovative period in which government anthropologists were empowered to shape federal policy in indigenous regions.

As both an ideology and practice, indigenista policies created generational cleavages as well. During the Cold War, indigenista policies constituted part of a liberal developmentalism that aimed to empower marginalized sectors through infrastructure and market reforms, among others. As such, it was open to Cold War ideological debates and in the beginning of the 1960s anthropologists at work for the INI called into question the previous generation's guiding assumptions. This cleavage was on full display in the spring of 1968, as Mexico hosted the sixth Inter-American Indigenista Congress. The debates at the congress reflected the politics of anti-colonialism and dependency theory



and as such shaped their understanding of the role indigenous culture and people in development efforts. Indigenista intellectuals were forced to reevaluate their ideas as indigenous peoples' themselves began to play a more prominent role in politics.

That third generation of indigenista intellectuals, in the main anthropologists, gained administrative positions in the SEP and the INI by the early 1970s. This generation's view of indigenous emancipation shaped a project begun in the state of Oaxaca in 1969, to create a research and development institution for the state's indigenous regions. Figures such as Margarita Nolasco spearheaded these efforts, alongside PRI officials aligned with the political *camarilla* of President Echeverría. The results of these efforts included the training of a generation of indigenous youth with a distinct political formation, one shaped by dissident ideas of not only agrarian reform or social justice of the Cárdenas-era but one with a global consciousness of revolution and anti-colonialism. The Oaxacan youth emerged as a militant minority within the education sector and engaged in creative community development projects with the communities they served. They formed part of a broad political dissident movement that included the infamous student protests in Mexico City but also locally rooted struggles on the Isthmus of Oaxaca and Oaxaca City. The dissident movement pressured Echeverría and later Lopez Portillo to both expand educational services and cater to indigenous demands.

### **Institutionalization**

By the end of the 1970s the critical anthropologists and indigenous activists had made significant gains in shifting government policy and rhetoric concerning indigenous education and development. As noted above, national education authorities had fully embraced what they termed bilingual-bicultural education by 1978. This was in part

accomplished administratively through the creation of a new indigenous education ministry, the DGEI.

The DGEI's own first assessment of indigenous education efforts underscored the gap between the reformers' intentions and reality. In May 1979 the DGEI reported that out of the estimated 700,000 indigenous primary-age children in the country, less than half of them were attending school and just 12,000 children had completed the sixth grade.<sup>341</sup> The DGEI considered Oaxaca the state with the largest demand for preschool and primary education and thus where the SEP spent the most money. The neighboring state of Chiapas received the second largest portion of funds.<sup>342</sup> In terms of teacher training, out of the roughly 11,000 bilingual teachers and promoters, 30 percent were said to have normal school training, 50 percent secondary education, and 20 percent with only a primary school education. The DGEI identified this severe lack of adequate teacher training as a problem, along with inadequate teacher supervision and distribution of didactic materials.<sup>343</sup> Inadequate teacher training was a longstanding problem in the education system. Particularly as the system expanded, teachers were contracted without sufficient training to meet rising demand. Due to this dynamic the SEP created in-service teacher training programs in Mexico City as well in state capitols.

An independent assessment of the institutionalization of indigenous education reform conducted in 1982 raised fundamental questions regarding the reformers' vision indigenous resurgence. Sponsored by the Centro de Estudios Educativos (CEE) and the Grupo de Estudios sobre el Financiamiento de la Educación (GEFE), Stefano Varese lead the study along with a handful of other researchers including the Argentines Nemesio

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<sup>341</sup> DGEI-CID, *Informe anual 78-79*, 25.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid, 26.

Rodríguez and Maria Ines Laje. Varese, no enemy of indigenous education reform, had helped denounce the SIL's work in Mexico and was part of the intellectual milieu of the critical anthropologists. The researchers focused on both quantitative and qualitative assessments of the indigenous education sector, producing a host of national statistical information as well as case studies of classroom practice. The general assessment of education reform, albeit just four years after the creation of the DGEI, was grim. The researchers noted that bilingual instructors continued to emphasize *castellanización*, were often assigned to communities outside their language variant, and that the official bilingual texts were mere translations of Spanish language textbooks and therefore not culturally relevant. In addition, the reformed residential schools run by the DGEI and INI were still in effect breaking the cultural connection of grade school children with their home communities. Perhaps more damning, the researchers went on to note:

Los maestros de las escuelas del sistema bilingüe, expresan una especie de minusvalía por pertenecer a esta modalidad, cuyas premisas teóricas e ideológicas no comprenden del todo. Esta autopercepción y el paradigma de escuela que ofrece la formación normalista, incide para que los maestros tiendan a reproducir las características de la escuela federal genérica, supuestamente superior. Este proceso de mimetización del maestro bilingüe derrota en sus propias raíces la intención de una educación especializada para las poblaciones indígenas.<sup>344</sup>

This critique was said to be valid both for general DGEI teachers as well as Oaxaca's Plan Piloto teachers. The general problems described above were perhaps not surprising given the broader history of rural education in Mexico that for decades stressed *castellanización* at the expense of local language. Yet the specific criticisms also point to

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<sup>344</sup> Varese, 124: "The teachers of the bilingual school system express a type of lack of self-worth for belonging to the system, whose theoretical and ideological premises they do not fully understand. This self-perception, combined with the paradigm offered by normal school training, mean that the teachers tend to reproduce the same dynamics of federal schools in general, perceived as superior. This process of minimization on the part of the bilingual teacher upends from its own roots the very purpose of specialized education for indigenous populations."

a more fundamental problem advocates of truly bilingual education faced, namely the ‘inverse relation’ between so-called ethnic consciousness and formal schooling.<sup>345</sup> The authors noted that indigenous educators with higher levels of formal schooling had less appreciation for local language and culture. In other words, the very people most formally capable of carrying out bilingual education had little interest in doing so.

Despite the numerous examples of individuals such as Cruz Bautista or Julián Caballero, or of particular communities who found a new sense of themselves through revalorizing indigeniety, indigenous education reform’s fundamental weakness lay in its inherently top-down nature. Whatever pluralist ideas and programs the reformers were able to implement through state agencies ran up against larger dynamics of society that persisted in associating indigeniety with cultural backwardness and poverty. While there were persistent problems of capacity in the indigenous education sector, i.e. a deficit of both production and distribution of culturally relevant didactic materials and insufficient teacher training and support, these alone could not have successfully challenged persistent anti-indigenous sentiment.

This was particularly true for the Mixteca Alta, where little material basis existed for ethnic resurgence and membership to a particular community or town often proved more salient than any pan-Mixtec subjectivity. While there were substantive differences between Mixteca Alta’s town’s language practices, in one town Mixtec might only be spoken in a whisper by town elders, while in another it was spoken with pride by its youth, the Mixteca Alta differed substantively from regions such as the Isthmus where being and speaking Zapotec experienced a resurgence during the period under study. The Mixteca Alta’s persistent material impoverishment meant that during the early 1980s

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<sup>345</sup> Varese, 27.

large-scale migration proved to be one of the few routes to financial stability. In addition, the teacher trade union movement, which facilitated indigenous teachers' participation and professional development, did little to facilitate a project of ethnic resurgence in a context where the profession was often viewed as a route out of community impoverishment, through individual advancement and often migration to urban centers.

The Mexican government's default on its external debt in August of 1982 marked the collapse of the authoritarian developmentalist state. The postrevolutionary state of Cárdenas had shifted to promote industrialization under the presidencies of Avila Camacho and Miguel Aleman. Part of the post-World War II alliance, Mexico pursued a policy of development that was not hostile to private industry but marshaled the state's resources to facilitate modernizing reforms in regions considered "un-integrated." While there was significant internal variation in this project, it lasted from roughly the 1950s until 1982. The post-1968 PRI attempted to marshal state resources to inspire what it termed "shared growth" but equally important, to reformulate its own rule, which was coming undone. It aimed to do this through a host of reforms and state spending, and as has been shown, indigenous rights rhetoric and policy were fundamental to this project. As rural corporate groups such as the CNC could not handle the population boom, the PRI initiated new spaces and organizations to meet new needs. These efforts were also quite clearly a response to new actors pressing for changes and access to state resources.

While the PRI dealt with mid-century armed opposition swiftly and decisively, its calculation was to welcome as many new members into the revolutionary family as possible.<sup>346</sup> For a moment in the 1970s, one could be a Maoist agrarian militant in the

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<sup>346</sup> See, Tanalis Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: the Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priista, 1940-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); and for the

south and a conservative businessman in the north and both form part of the revolutionary family. This was an impressive political feat that should not be understood as mere domination and resistance but rather as a political culture, born out of a revolutionary process, that sustained itself for decades precisely through its ability to respond to pressure groups and social mobilization with a combination of negotiation and selective violence. Under the Echeverría presidency the progressive rhetoric of the Cárdenas-era returned but the political culture of PRI institutions had not altered dramatically in the intervening years.<sup>347</sup> Rather, President Echeverría adeptly led a reformulation of PRI rule in dialogue with the growth of third world politics internationally. This was no small feat and Echeverría incurred fierce domestic opposition for his reforms (described in chapter four). President López Portillo continued this path with some alterations but ultimately could not financially sustain the state apparatus built up over six years.

1982 in this sense marks the end of an era. Not the collapse of an authoritarian political project in toto but a death knoll in terms of its ability to offer a political and social solution based on the PRI's decades old strategy and tactics. In the coming years, the Mexico City earthquake of 1985 would further erode the legitimacy of the PRI. To be clear, this did not mean the end of the PRI as a party or political force but rather the end of a political project that combined an authoritarian political culture with state-led economic growth.

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regime's response to armed opposition in the neighboring state of Guerrero, see Alexander Aviña's chapter, "Neopopulism, Counterinsurgency and the Dirty War in Guerrero, Mexico, 1969-1976," in *Populism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Mexico: The Presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas and Luis Echeverría*, eds. Amelia Kiddle and María L.O. Muñoz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 106-121.

<sup>347</sup> Benjamin Smith's work on Oaxaca during the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s underscores this point. See, Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements*.

Within that project and political culture, the back and forth of indigenista politics created something new. A robust defense of indigenous rights and linguistic diversity in particular emerged out of the dynamic relationship between intellectuals, activists and indigenous communities in the Mixteca Alta and more broadly in Mexico and Latin America. The outcome of this interaction was not predetermined. It was often not even the stated goal of the major participants in this process. Those initially motivated by ideas of radical social transformation in the post-1968 era did not see their utopias fulfilled but they did contribute to the formation of new subjectivities and spaces for indigenous revival. Government initiatives, often aimed at shoring up state legitimacy, either in the 1950s from provincial opposition or in the 1970s from demographic explosion and dissidence, had unintended consequences as they empowered indigenous actors with new platforms and languages to articulate their own demands.

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