

Economics 496

3 March 2004

The Mexican Revolution of 1910

The Mexican Revolution was the turning point for the country of Mexico. It did not happen in a short span of time but built up during a century. The combination of controversial political methods, leaders, and laws ended up to be the cause of change in governmental structure, but most importantly for the lives of the citizens of Mexico and their economy.

Many events contributed to the cause of the revolution that would change the structure of Mexico. The chance to start a new in 1821 when Mexico declared its independence from Spain brought the country many challenges on the proper way to run independently. Many leaders, a civil war, the Mexican and American War, loss of land such as Texas and southern Arizona, and an extreme recession in the Mexican economy contributed to the need to take action.

The Mexican Revolution was brought on by, among other factors, disagreements between the Mexican citizens over the dictatorship of President Porfirio Diaz. He stayed in power for thirty one years. During those years, power was concentrated in the hands of only a select few groups of people. Otherwise, the citizens of Mexico had no power or way to express their opinions and had no chance to select their public officials. Both

rural and urban sectors of Mexico faced inequalities and people did not have the comfort of prosperity. (mexconnect.com).

Porfirio Diaz considered himself an open-minded politician, although he was a dictator. He was a young liberal general and had a great deal of history in the militia, most famous for being a hero in the French Wars. (Cambridge) He worked for many years to become the next person in power and failed many times, but finally in 1876 won over the position, not by election but by revolt. He served consecutively except for the years of 1880-84. To avoid ending his term in office again, he amended the constitution by annulling the 'no re-election' amendment that had been placed in the 1857 Constitution to keep him in office.

Diaz's motto was known as the 'bread or the club' meaning that if you became apart of his team he would offer you bread in the form of bribes, public office, land grants, promotions or pensions. If you opposed him, he would offer you the club in the form of assassination, forcing people into exile, and loss of access to public money. For many of the years of Diaz's rule, Mexico's economy was booming and therefore he was considered successful and won the likings wealthy supporters. The positive aspects of Diaz's term were that he maintained a balanced budget and developed a flexible and powerful tax system to finance development. (Cambridge)

The large group of people considered to be receiving 'the club' from Diaz lived in a poverty-filled environment. In 1910, the population of Mexico was 15,160,269. Of those, 410,345 were farmers but only 830 of them had the privilege to own land. Many people beyond the occupation of farming depended on rural wages. Mexico had

3,123,975 day labors that worked on 8,431 haciendas and 48,433 ranches. Therefore, 80% of the population relied on rural wages which were on average 18 to 25 cents per day. (Garfias M. p. 8-9) The few people that helped Diaz and gained his trust were allotted land, therefore enabling them to become extremely wealthy in comparison to the majority of citizens in the country.

Towards to the end of Diaz's time in power, he granted an interview with *Pearson's Magazine*, a popular US publication, and stated that he thought Mexico was now ready for democracy and he hoped to have serious opponents if he ran for the presidency in the 1910 election. He may have thought that few Mexicans would ever read the article or he might have been trying to encourage his rivals to declare their political intentions. The interview directly encouraged potential candidates to announce their presidential candidacies. Díaz could handle those in his support group, such as his finance minister, José Limantour, and General Bernardo Reyes, governor of the northern state of Nuevo Leon by sending them off on foreign missions.

(www.historicaltextarchives.com) However, he ran into trouble, when men caught wind of the interview that were not on his side.

One of the men that became interested by the article was Francisco Madero. Madero was the son of one of Mexico's wealthiest families. He was admired and studied political democracy in France and in the United States and felt very strongly that it was the best move for the government of Mexico. Madero made a bold move by running against Diaz in Mexico's first free election in 1910 but lost later to find that Diaz rigged it. Madero was thrown in jail on a technicality because he had angered Diaz. When

being released from jail, Madero fled to the United States where he started his plan to begin a revolution and declared himself the legitimate president.

(www.historicaltextarchives.com)

Madero had many political visions for Mexico. He promised to return all land which had been taken away from the peasants and he called for common voting rights and for a limit of one term for the office of president. Madero's call for an uprising on November 20, 1910, marked the beginning of the Mexican Revolution.

(www.mexconnect.com)

At this time, Diaz was 80 years old and was losing his touch politically. The joining of the peasants, workers, nationalists, anticlericals, and democrats fueled a fire to fight back and get what they deserved. In late 1910 and early 1911, various men such as Emiliano Zapata, Pascual Orozco and Pancho Villa raised the standard of revolt.

Mexico's army was not up to par to deal with the rebellions that were now occurring frequently across the nation. Diaz tried to negotiate with the Madero family, promising reform to stay in office, but it was downhill for him from there. Diaz resigned on May 25, 1911 which ended Latin America's longest dictatorship. (Gonzales) He is known as one of the great villains of Mexican history. (www.historicaltextarchives.com)

With the collapse of the Diaz regime, the Mexican Congress called for national popular elections. Victory was awarded to Francisco Madero from the constitutionalists' party as President and Jose Maria Pino Suarez as Vice-President.

(www.mexconnect.com) Madero was thought to be entering the perfect presidency, especially with his prestigious background and he was infamous as the man who defeated

the Diaz dictatorship. This was not the case entirely though, many people believed that Madero was not fulfilling the many promises that he has made prior to his election. It had been said that Madero entered an era that was used to the iron fist of dictatorship and did not know how to adjust to or use the concept of liberty. (Garfias p. 55) Madero's loss of rebel support and his reliance on the federal army made him vulnerable to counterrevolutionaries. (Gonzales p. 110)

Early in 1911, Madero appointed his cabinet and his regime was installed. In the little time that the Madero government was in place, people started to look upon him unfavorably. Zapata, one of the men that helped him overturn the rule of Diaz, did not trust him and he refused to recognize Madero as president and declared the Plan of Ayala. This plan proclaimed Francisco Madero a traitor and ordered a third of all hacienda lands to be redistributed to the peasants (www.historicaltextarchives.com/planofayala). General Bernardo Reyes agreed with Zapata and moved to San Antonio where he proceeded to make plans to overthrow the current government. He was quite popular and had many resources on his side but his plan was recognized by Madero and quickly shut down.

Similar situations arose with Pascual Orozco in the north. Many comparable situations were in store for Madero. (Garfias p.55) One of Madero's strongest military men was General Victoriano Huerta. In the uprising Huerta did many great things that essentially saved the Mexican Government. Upon return to Mexico City, Huerta was not promoted which was an enormous mistake on Madero's part. General Huerta developed a hate and mistrust for Madero. (Garfias) While the commander of federal forces for

Mexico, Huerta overthrew President Madero and began his own dictatorship. During his time in power, he was known as one of the most “ruthless and corrupt leaders Mexico had ever seen.” (www.webpages.marshall.edu)

The Governor of Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza, rose up in arms because he did not recognize Huerta as the nation’s president. His army was known as the constitutionalists because it demanded respect for the constitution and this marked the start of a new phase of the Revolution. (www.elbalero.com) Many men and women joined the war efforts and prepared for the battles ahead. Leaders such as Alvaro Obregon, Francisco Villa, and Emilio Zapata were among the elite. Huerta was under the impression that he would easily receive help from the United States of America but was rejected by President Woodrow Wilson who instead sent troops to occupy Veracruz. This upset Carranza because he felt that Mexico’s problems should be solved solely by Mexicans. (www.elbaro.com)

Many individual battles were fought and the Constitutionalists were gaining ground and rather quickly. The continuous revolts forced Huerta to resign and he went into hiding but was captured and imprisoned for several years. (www.webpages.marshall.edu) Huerta left the country in 1914 and Carranza entered Mexico City but unfortunately not all of the revolutionaries agreed that he should become the supreme leader, as he was calling himself. (www.elbalero.com)

This was the cause for a meeting to be held in Aguascalientes in October of 1914 at the Sovereign Revolutionary Convention with intentions to reach an agreement. Zapata created a program concerning the distribution of land to the peasants and the

representatives chose Eulalio Gutierrez as interim President of the Republic. Carranza was not in agreement even though the majority of others were. This turned the Revolution into a struggle between two opposing groups which were divided into the forces of Carranza against those of Villa and Zapata. (www.Elbalaro) Villa and Zapata were favored to win due to the fact that they occupied most of the land in Mexico and had the capital in their possession. However, Carranza's leading General, Alvaro Obregon, retreated to Veracruz and defeated Villa at Celaya in April of 1915. At this point, the United States recognized the Carranza government. (www.elbalaro)

The next step to Carranza's government was to politically consolidate with legality mandatory which included writing a new constitution and holding elections. At the convention to draft a new constitution, Carranza presented delegates with a draft for a new constitution. He recommended political, electoral, and judicial reforms but reiterated many of the basic principles embodied in the first constitution written in 1857, for example, separation of the church and the state. Important issues he failed to address included agrarian and labor reform. The convention convened on September 14, 1916, however there was not a clear resolution among the members present. This sprouted, once again, serious political and philosophical differences. (Gonzalez p. 163)

Those were the first of many steps that he took throughout his years in power from 1916 to 1920. Carranza made a series of policy decisions, but few were in compliance with the new constitution. He set new limitations upon foreign ownership of property, the elimination of special concessions granted to firms overseas and an increase in business taxes. However, Carranza, although he considered himself a liberal, opposed

a widespread agrarian reform and did not manage organized labor well. These departures from the revolutionary beliefs, as outline in the new constitution, created opportunities for Carranza's rivals within the Constitutionalist leadership. Ultimately, Carranza promised the citizens and country of Mexico more than he could actually do and this was not viewed favorably among his citizens. (Gonzalez p. 162-163)

One man that had lain dormant for some time was still causing trouble for Carranza. Although Zapata had been in hiding for quite sometime, he still wanted to get his revenge. After the constitutional meeting, General Obregon resigned from Carranza's cabinet and was persuaded to join forces with Zapata. In September 1917, Carranza responded to Zapata's new movement by reinforcing his statement to remain true to the Plan de Ayala. It was rumored that Carranza wanted Zapata dead because the peasant leader represented a "moral challenge" to his authority. (Gonzalez p. 166) With this in mind, Carranza arranged for an old acquaintance of his, Colonel Jesus Guajardo, to assassinate Zapata which was carried out in 1920. This, however, did not solve Carranza's problems because it is said to have immortalized Zapata in Mexican history for his beliefs on agrarian reform, which would remind others of the sacrifices that their forefathers had made to rebel in the first place. (Gonzalez p. 167)

In the final year of Carranza's time in power he made some key mistakes. The entire revolution had let loose a great number of injustices for workers and peasants. The new constitution was to be one of opportunity and equality for everyone and people were not seeing the results that they had expected. Carranza had first said that the president

should rule for only one term, but he had yet to give up his title giving the people a fear that he could potentially start a new dictatorship.

Over the years, General Obregon's presidential ambitions were growing stronger. His ties and history to the Carranza government were described as 'strained'. (Gonzalez p 178) In the few years since his involvement he gained international exposure by traveling to Cuba, Canada and the United States. He was known as the nation's most famous war hero and that was working in his favor. June 1, 1919 Obregon announced his candidacy for president. To run against him, Carranza picked Ignacio Bonillas as his candidate. In the election, Obregon had a tremendous amount of political support and was victorious. Obregon became president of Mexico in 1920 although Carranza was determined not to accept it.

Carranza formed the Obregonistas and gathered what supporters he had left. He established a base camp and attempted to organize a national campaign, repeating similar actions that he had originally taken in 1915. This time did not work for him however. Carranza became a wanted man and he fled to the hills by Tlaxcalantongo. That evening while he slept, President Carranza, the first chief of the Constitutionalist movement, was assassinated by forces loyal to Felix Diaz, nephew of Porfiro Diaz, which marked the end of the Mexican Revolution and the beginning of the restructuring of Mexico. (Gonzalez p. 180).

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14 April 2004

After the Mexican Revolution

There is no question that the Mexican Revolution is one of the biggest events in Mexican history. This revolution that spanned almost a decade and cost the country thousands upon thousands of lives was the turning point for government, agriculture and the typical lifestyle for the Mexican population. The end of the revolution did not mark the end of Mexico's problems, but set them at the beginning of a path, one that would help them to find out what works best for their country in every sense, a path that they are still walking down today. In the next few decades following the revolution, many strides were taken to figure out what was best for Mexico.

Direct Effects of the Mexican Revolution

The revolution had produced major changes in Mexico. The old political leaders had been swept away were replaced by new leaders. The revolution set in motion a trend toward political centralization, concentrating power in the national government, particularly in the role of the president. The creation and evolution of an official party solved the recurring crisis over presidential succession that had marked the years from 1910 to 1928 and this helped to promote the long-term political stability that Mexico later enjoyed.¹

The population at the end in 1910 was 15,160,000 and in 1921 it had fallen to 14,355,900. The economic opportunity cost of the Mexican Revolution, has been estimated by the experts at 37 percent in terms of GDP not produced. The global agricultural

¹ www.encara.msn.comencyclopedia_761588457_2/Mexican_Revolution/html

production of the country had grown at an annual rate of 4.4 percent between 1895-1910 and it fell at an average rate of 5.25 percent between 1910-1921, until it became half of what its maximum production had been. The agricultural exports which made up 31.6 percent of the total exports in 1910, fell to only 3.3 percent in 1921.² According to the labor profile of the postrevolutionary society, only 324 of every 1,000 Mexicans worked and, of them, 224 worked in the countryside.³

The result of the revolution also helped to start labor and social reforms that have had a lasting effect on the Mexican public. Peasants and workers, especially farmers, were given a larger voice in public affairs, although they were forced to operate within the limits set by the official party and government. The constitution that was composed in 1917 became a building block for the people of Mexico and gave them the right to organize and to strike, establish a minimum wage, an eight-hour workday, and limitations on child labor.⁴

These all encouraged the government initiative to improve the standard of living, especially in the poverty area which led the way for the development of a social security system and better health care. Land was a big issue after the revolution. This was the largest land redistribution effort ever attempted in Latin America and they were successful. This enabled the government to give land back to the peasants that had lost it during the Diaz dictatorship and to those farmers who had never owned property. Unlike later social revolutions in the 20th century, such as the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the Mexican Revolution was not portrayed by its leaders as a model for other countries.⁵

² Camin and Meyer, [In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution](#)

³ Camin and Meyer, [In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution](#)

⁴ www.encara.msn.comencyclopedia_761588457_2/Mexican_Revolution/html

⁵ www.encara.msn.comencyclopedia_761588457_2/Mexican_Revolution/html

The Lazaro Cardenas Era

There are two presidents in Mexican history that are considered to be the two most honest that Mexico has ever seen, Benito Juarez and the one that had a direct impact upon the time period directly following the Mexican Revolution, Lazaro Cardenas. Cardenas is known for many political movements and nationalization efforts and is said to have been partially paralleled to that of Franklin D. Roosevelt.⁶

Lazaro Cardenas del Rio was born May 21, 1895 in Juuilipan, Michoacan. His family was from the lower middle-class but he gained a tremendous amount of responsibility when his father died at the age of 16 and he became the head of his seven younger siblings helping out his widowed mother. At this time, he had only obtained six years of education when he became a printer's devil. Cardenas had always held a great respect for education and for the printed word, therefore this occupation fit him well.⁷

Cardenas was not known for favoring militarism and was known to describe himself rather as a teacher or a farmer, although he led a well-known military career.⁸ Vicotiano Huerta, at this time, had plotted and executed the death of Preident Francisco Madero. He did not agree with Huerta's actions and in 1913 he decided to join the staff of General Guillermo Garcia Aragon, one of the military leaders fighting to overthrow Huerta. Garcia's forces unfortunately were defeated in their first engagement and Cardenas was forced to go into temporary hiding.

In 1915, Cardenas obtained the title of lieutenant colonel and joined forces with General Plutarco Elias Calles, a soon to be president of Mexico. At this point, Huerta was in exile and Alvaro Obregon and Venustiano Carranza were in a deep battle with their former

⁶ http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

⁷ http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

⁸ http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

ally Pancho Villa to obtain the right to call themselves the new president. Carranza became president but was not successful in his attempt to set up strong government. In 1920, Calles joined Obregon in overthrowing Carranza as president and took over the title. With this turn of events, Cardenas became a 25-year-old general, which was quite remarkable for the time.

To the uneducated, it may seem that Cardenas was always in the right place at the right time and that is the reason he became so successful in the Mexican military but he had other things that added to his experience. Cardenas had campaigned against Zapata, put down the anti-Obregon revolt of Adolfo de la Huerta, and led forces against the Catholic cristero rebels and an anti-Calles military junta led by General Jose Gonzalo Escobar.⁹ Cardenas did seem to associate with the right people that brought him success, but the projects that he became involved with would give him invaluable experience that he would need in the very near future as he became closer to earning the title of president.

It was said that Cardenas was famous for his rigid honesty.¹⁰ Later in 1920 while serving as a military commander in the Huateca area, which was rich in oil, he rejected many bribes, including a new car, from representatives of foreign oil companies that were operating in the area at that time.¹¹ Mexico is well-known for its petroleum supply and many people wanted to be a part of it. It is possible that these influences are what drove him to nationalizing Mexico's oil deposits during his presidency.¹²

Cardenas was known for being civil rather than for his military accomplishments. He was appointed into the position of governor in his home state of Michoacan in 1928 by Calles. His major projects included building roads and schools and developing irrigation projects. He

⁹ http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

¹⁰ http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

¹¹ Gonzalez, *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*

¹² http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

was also passionate about social progress and spent much of his time gathering peasant farmers, laborers, and students into a united front and was very successful, this also would help him later with the support that he gained so that he would be able to pull away from Calles's influence when the time was right.¹³

Calles and Cardenas had never cut ties. Although he was no longer president, Calles continued to control Mexican politics by using a series of pawns. From the people that were close to Calles, he decided to choose a new presidential candidate due to the flack that he receiving and he chose Cardenas because he felt that he had the best reputation and would be the easiest to work through to carry out his ideas and tasks.

In 1933, Mexico's ruling party, the National Revolutionary Party (today known as PRI) held a convention at Queretaro. It was an obvious choice for them to choose Cardenas as their candidate. At this same convention, they outlined a six-year plan to accomplish political and social reform. The Plan's principal features called for: 1) Restoration of the system of ejidos (common lands) through a strong agrarian program to combat the combination of large haciendas. 2) Modern secular schools that would teach rationalist doctrines and combat the "fanaticism" of the Church. 3) Worker's cooperatives to oppose the excesses of industrial capitalism. These decisions were based upon the constitution of 1917.¹⁴

If this could be accomplished, it was realized throughout Mexico that Cardenas was the man to do it. He was in fact elected and became one of Mexico's youngest presidents in 1934. This did, however, set the scene for many future problems between himself and Calles,

¹³ Gonzalez, The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940

¹⁴ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/C/CardenasL1.asp>

but also gave to the opportunity to execute his and that National Revolutionary Party's social and political reform ideas.

Calles was wrong when he thought that Cardenas could be influenced by him. He was not happy with Cardenas decisions and actions, or lack of, towards striking workers, and began to develop ways to remove him from the presidency. To fight back, Cardenas ordered Calles and twenty of his top supporters to be rounded up and sent to the United States on April 9, 1936. This action reassured the Mexican people that their president meant business because they were not in favor of Calles's track record and Cardenas gained strong public support. He was now free to make his contribution to history by reclaiming Mexico's oil.¹⁵

On March 18, 1938, Mexico expropriated the assets of seventeen foreign oil companies that had been doing business in the country. Although this action was favored greatly by the Mexican people, it was not going to favor the Mexican economy. As a result, several nations imposed a boycott on Mexican oil. Josephus Daniels, the sympathetic U.S. ambassador wrote that "out of resentment for the expropriation...markets for Mexican oil in the United State and Britain suddenly dried up. Without markets the Mexican would be drowned in their own oil and expropriation would fail."¹⁶

At this same time as the drama with the oil industry, Carranza was doing many things with small farmers, working on agrarian reform. Large landholdings were broken up and distributed to small farmers on the ejido system, and many foreign-owned properties, including and going beyond the oil fields, were expropriated. In a four year span, Cardenas distributed 141,663 hectares among 181 villages in Michoacan alone, compared to the

¹⁵ http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

¹⁶ http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

131,283 hectares given to 124 pueblos by his predecessors in the earlier years.¹⁷ While president, Cardenas created ejidos on an unprecedented scale and introduced collective farming involving profit-sharing and self-management. One of Cardenas strongest visions was to make Mexico a modern democracy. He became abominated to large landowners, industrialists, and foreign investors, but – himself a mestizo – became a hero to native peoples and the Mexican working classes.¹⁸

Cardenas did many unique things in office from the years of 1934-1940 that had never been done before by any Mexican president. He refused to live in the traditional president's palace, Chapultepec Castle, and he also cut his salary in half to provide more money for governmental programs. When he was inaugurated, he was sworn in wearing his suit rather than the traditional military uniform. To pay tribute and patriotism to him, 50 busts of him were cast in bronze to be displayed throughout the country, but Cardenas saw this as an unnecessary expenditure and told them to melt them down and use them for something productive. These gestures were a true reflection of the direction that he took the government during his six-year presidential term and he was highly favored by the Mexican public, something that no president had been able to accomplish during their entire term since before the revolution. Cardenas relinquished his office at the end of his term, acting in accord with his desire for democratic and orderly constitutional processes.¹⁹

Though Cardenas's oil decisions did not economically work out during his presidency, the event that saved the country was World War II. As oil became increasingly limited, the United States and Britain lifted their embargo which was a great boost to have a demand for a

¹⁷ Gonzalez, *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*

¹⁸ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/C/CardenasL1.asp>

¹⁹ <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/C/CardenasL1.asp>

product that they had such a great supply of. In 1942, a compensation agreement was reached in which Mexico agreed to a settlement which brought its debt to \$130,339,000.00.²⁰

Lazaro Cardenas was recalled to public service as Minister of National Defense for the term of 1942-45. He passed away in 1970 and is one of most famous past presidents in Mexico.

Ejidos and Land Reform

One of the major projects that Lazaro Cardenas was known for was his land redistribution project that gave land to small farmers on the ejido system. The ejido was not a new concept. The theory of the ejido can be traced back to Aztec capulli, therefore the modern ejido is a tradition in Mexican history. The nahuatl word, capulli, mean “barrio” or “neighborhood” and its attached communal lands.²¹ Many land redistributions happened throughout the centuries, a major one happening during the period that the Spaniards were in control when they gave much of this land to military heroes and the Catholic Church.

Throughout the centuries the sole purpose of ejido land is mostly for farming but a small amount is used for ranching. They are not to be sold as an industrial, commercial or residential site.²² Things significantly changed during the time period of the Diaz dictatorship from 1876-1910. The land that originally had been owned by the Indians at this time period was taken from them and purchased by non-Indians. There was no limit on the amount of land that an individual could privately own, therefore the ejido land was in great demand. Despite the Indian opposition, they lost their land. The effect in 1901 was that 50 land owners owned 50 million acres and controlled the labor of 100,000 Mayan laborers who were

²⁰ http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/history/jtuck/jtlcardenas.html

²¹ http://www.pmexc.com/pmc/educational_tours/fieldtrips/ejidos/brief_history.htm

²² http://www.cascoinc.com/new_page_27.htm

virtually slaves in Henequen plantations which produced rope and other products sold primarily to the US.²³

There were three phases of the Mexican Revolution: The political led by Madero and Carranza (1910-1913), the Agrarian, led by Zapata and Villa (1913-1917), and the Nationalist which embodied elements of the latter two.²⁴ The Agrarian Revolution focused on the redistribution of land which was embodied by the Plan de Ayala developed by Emiliano Zapata. The plan ordered the land that had been taken from the peasants by the current large landholders (haciendas) to be returned. During the Zapatistas movement, the group conquered many states in the pursuit of land. At the same time, Luis Cabrera entered social legislation in the Mexican Congress in 1912 to establish all haciendas as ejido land. In January of 1915 under the pressure of the Zapistas force President Carranza proclaimed a law to restore the ejidal land and that same law now serves as the foundation for the Modern Ejido System that is still around today.²⁵

Zapata was assassinated in 1919 by Carranza's forces but his work led to General Francisco Mugica to write Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution which states that "The wealth contained in the soil, the subsoil, the waters and seas of Mexico belongs to the nation. The right to land ownership and to exploit the subsoil may therefore only be granted by the nation. Land may also be expropriated whenever deemed necessary."²⁶ This article made it possible to control the activities of mining and oil companies, and to distribute the land of the large estates among the peasants. Church property was expropriated first and private lands followed closely behind.

²³ http://www.pmexc.com/pmc/educational_tours/fieldtrips/ejidos/brief_history.htm

²⁴ http://www.pmexc.com/pmc/educational_tours/fieldtrips/ejidos/brief_history.htm

²⁵ http://www.pmexc.com/pmc/educational_tours/fieldtrips/ejidos/brief_history.htm

²⁶ www.encara.msn.com/encyclopedia_761588457_2/Mexican_Revolution/html

Each ejido is a land grant held in trust by the Mexican government for a peasant group of 20 or more families. They are required to have a governing body made up of representatives to the church (mayor-domo), a representative to local and state government (delegador or comisariado) who is aided in his duties by a group (consejo) of village elders.²⁷ This group of people are responsible for distributing to the land appropriately to the members of the ejido and to enforce the laws that consist of: not being able to sell or rent their plots of land, each ejidatario has an average of no more than 12 acres of land that is irrigated by nothing more than seasonal rains, and that they consume all that they produce.²⁸

Land was distributed over a long period of time, 1920-1935, and it greatly increased when Cardenas became president in 1934 because that was one of his major political projects under the social and agrarian reform. At that point, owners could keep 150 hectares and 60% of Mexico's agricultural land was given to the ejidos.

There are two basic types of ejidos. The most frequently found type is that where the land is distributed in small plots where each farmer is responsible for the production and allocation of crops grown on that plot. The other less common type of ejido is where large plots of land are used in order to use large machinery, fertilizers and chemicals which are not available to small scale farms due to economies of scale.²⁹

During the years 1876-1940 the Mexican agricultural economy had not been fully formed and production had remained almost unchanged, although there were small increases in the level of cash crop production, but a decrease in subsistence crop production. In 1940 there were 35 million acres under cultivation in the ejido system.³⁰

²⁷ http://www.pmexc.com/pmc/educational_tours/fieldtrips/ejidos/brief_history.htm

²⁸ http://www.pmexc.com/pmc/educational_tours/fieldtrips/ejidos/brief_history.htm

²⁹ DeWalt, *Modernization In a Mexican Ejido*

³⁰ http://www.pmexc.com/pmc/educational_tours/fieldtrips/ejidos/brief_history.htm

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