The Mexican Revolution: An Economic and Social Revival

By Anysse Lopez

The cropped portion features the images of Emiliano Zapata (left with sombrero), Felipe Carrillo Puerto (center), and José Guadalupe Rodríquez (right with sombrero) behind banner featuring the Zapatista slogan, Tierra y Libertad (Land and Liberty).

Introduction

"Join me. I rose up. I rose up in arms and I bring my countrymen. We no longer wish that our Father Diaz watch over us. We want a much better president. Rise up with us because we don't like what the rich men pay us. It is not enough for us to eat and dress ourselves. I also want everyone to have his piece of land so that he can plant and harvest corn, beans, and other crops. What do you say? Are you going to join us?"[1]

-Emiliano Zapata

The Mexican Revolution is defined in contemporary terms as a "genuinely national revolution"[2] because it impacted every possible aspect of Mexican culture and government. The Revolution began as a political crisis because for more than thirty years President Porfirio Diaz relentlessly imposed his tyrannical policies on the citizens of Mexico. He allowed the majority of Mexico's lands to be owned by a small elite class, thus leaving the Mexican peasantry impoverished and oppressed. The idea of an armed rebellion against Diaz was first proposed by Francisco Madero, but was later largely carried out by other revolutionary leaders, such as Francisco "Pancho" Villa and Emiliano Zapata. These leaders sought an abolishment of the Diaz dictatorship, but they also advocated for massive land reforms that would equalize ownership of Mexico's lands. This was significant to the overall foundation of the Revolution because it was based on the fight for land reforms. Thus, the Revolution developed into an era of "experimentation and reform in social organization."[3] This essay will analyze the implementation, execution and success of agrarian reform movements in revolutionary Mexico. Overall, these reforms allowed for a more equal distribution of Mexico's wealth. More specifically, land reform movements provided an allocation of lands back to ordinary Mexicans, which provided them means to make a comfortable living. However, the goals and outcomes of the Revolution came at a catastrophic cost. The Revolution claimed the lives of one-and-a-half million Mexican citizens. It also caused the abrupt fleeing of another one million people to the United States.[4]

Perhaps the reason why the Mexican Revolution is so widely studied today is because it is argued to be "the most important sociopolitical event in Mexico and one of the greatest upheavals of the 20th century."[5] One of the most prominent historians who has dedicated his career to studying the Mexican Revolution is Alan Knight. In his books *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 1: Porfirians, Liberals, and Peasants* and *The Mexican Revolution, Volume 2: Counter-Revolution and Reconstruction*, Knight follows the course of events during the Revolution that highlighted the distinct phases and transitions of power that took place. His analysis of the agrarian reform movements are emphasized throughout the series to show that they were indeed the basis of the entire Revolution. He methodically combs through the political, economic, and social spheres of Mexico to portray how land reforms affected various factions. He argues that revolutionary leaders, such as Francisco Madero and Emiliano Zapata, were largely supported because of their ideologies pertaining to land reform. Also the extent to which these leaders acted upon their ideologies affected the political stability of Mexico because power struggles ensued between these revolutionary leaders as well as between the people who supported them. In regards to the social dynamic of

Mexico, Knight argues that land reform movements defined the socio-political experiences of all people in Mexico during the Revolution.[6] Moreover, he uses the implementation of the land reform movements to prove that they contributed to the betterment of the Mexican people because they were no longer suppressed by the elite land owners. Knight focuses on analyzing the policy decisions and their outcomes that led to the distribution of lands allowed for better economic opportunities for ordinary people. Thus, Knight concludes that the reconstruction of Mexico revolved around upholding land reform policies because it was proven to improve peoples' lives.

Being that the economic and social constraints of the Mexican Revolution represent such large areas of study, many other prominent historians have furthered Knight's arguments. Stuart Easterling also discusses land reform movements during the Mexican Revolution. His argument picks up where Knight's left off because he analyzes the economic stipulations of land reform policies that occurred during and even after the Revolution. However, he uses the agrarian reform movements as a framework for the onset of militant involvement and political protests that were called for by well-known Revolutionary leaders, but ultimately carried out by ordinary citizens.[7] This combination of economic and social analysis allows Easterling to look at the Revolution from an economic standpoint while also offering an account of what life at the time was like for the people. This fulfills Easterling's goal of studying the Mexican Revolution in a way that would transform into a "people's history."[8] He also offers some discussion of the popular revolutionary leaders and their agendas. This ultimately furthers Easterling's argument that the Mexican Revolution gave rise to prominent figures who won the support of peasants through their social reforms and thus succeeded in creating a more socially and economically stable state.

Knight and Easterling expressly argue that land reform movements were one of the major contributors to the onset of economic stability and social prosperity in Mexico during the Revolution. The combined work of Héctor Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer is very similar to that of Knight and Easterling. Aguilar Camín and Meyer recognize that Mexico's wealth derived from land ownership, and therefore it needed to be more spread out amongst the social classes. Their argument revolves around reinforcing the importance of the policies and reforms pertaining to land reforms established during the Revolution because they paved the way for Mexico's revived economy.[9] This argument is substantiated by the rising well-being of the peasantry because they had a newfound access to funds that were being accrued through land ownership. Aguilar Camín and Meyer offer statistical evidence that show how private family incomes gradually grew as a result of the land reforms

movements. Furthermore, Aguilar Camín and Meyer argue that the consolidation of lands led to "the Mexican economic miracle,"[10] which refers to the mass expansion of Mexico's economy in the twentieth century. Their economic viewpoint of the Revolution also compares to the approach of Knight and Easterling because it is an analysis of how the Revolution shaped Mexico's economic policies, and thus created economic stability in Mexico because it changed drastically and arguably altogether. Aguilar Camín and Meyer conclude that there was indeed a deeply intertwined relationship between the economic and social spheres of revolutionary Mexico.

The studies of Knight, Easterling, and Aguilar Camín and Meyer combined allow for an examination of the relationship between the political, economic and social impacts of the Mexican Revolution. This paper will expand on the arguments of the authors above because it aims to analyze the base ideologies, implementations, and success of the policies pertaining to land reform. The primary sources that allow for such examination are political pamphlets, speeches, and official government documents that discuss practical solutions on how to execute and achieve land reforms. The revolutionary process coupled with the execution of these reforms modernized the nation's economy and political system, as well as transformed the lives of ordinary Mexicans. I argue that the economic, political, and social spheres of Mexico were transformed by the land reform movements because they were instrumental to the overall success of the Revolution. Furthermore, land reforms benefited peasants, created a positive relationship between the government and the people, and established an economic nationalism. This essay builds upon other works in the field because it will ultimately show how the Revolution was a stepping stone that allowed Mexico to go from a largely rural and economically stagnant country into a productive and modern power.

In order to comprehend the importance of land reforms, it is imperative to understand why they were necessary, who proposed these reforms, how they were implemented, and whether or not the reforms were successful. The answers to these questions will be navigated in multiple sections of this essay. First and foremost, historical context of events leading up to the Revolution will display the need for land reforms and also the first proponents of such reforms. The main focus of analysis on land reforms will revolve around documents that were published between 1911 and 1917. These documents were written by different revolutionary figures, and therefore offer conflicting ideas on how to successfully implement the necessary land reforms. It is also evident in these documents that land reforms did not always progress in a straight line, which means that they did suffer set-backs and stagnant periods where no reforms were being executed. Nonetheless, analyzing these

documents will prove that the consolidation of land reforms were constructed by ideas from each of these documents. The essay will conclude with an overview of the success of land reforms that continued on for many years after the Revolution, and how they ultimately contributed to Mexico's revived economic and social spheres.

The Call for a Revolution

From 1876 to 1911, Mexico had been under the dictatorship of President Porfirio Diaz. He obtained control of Mexico by staging a coup against the government, thus displaying his militaristic power. In 1877, Diaz was elected the first President of Mexico, after running on a campaign of "no re-election."[11] This won him the support and trust of the people because they believed that their government would now function as a true democracy. However, when Diaz took office he swiftly had the constitution amended to allow consecutive terms in office, and then removed all remaining restrictions on re-election. His presidency kept up a facade of a liberal democracy by maintaining the structure of elections, although Diaz had no intention of giving up control of Mexico.[12] In order to secure his power, Diaz catered to the private desires of different elite interest groups. He refused to interfere with their wealth and *haciendas* (large plantations) at the expense of the peasants. Most of Mexico's lands were owned by the upper elite class, thus making it impossible for ordinary citizens to own any land, or make any kind of living off of the land.[13]Furthermore, those with large debts were essentially debt-peons to the landowners. Small farmers were also at a disadvantage because they could not get bank loans since the amounts were extremely small, and the bank did not deem the expense worthy of assessing.[14]Diaz's authoritarian regime kept civil society suppressed under harsh economic policies that ensured him the support of the wealthy estate owners, but left the peasants impoverished and desperate for change.

During the presidential elections of 1910, Porfirio Diaz decided to allow Francisco Madero, an elite liberal, to run against him.[15] Madero was a wealthy landowner who had very similar economic ideologies as Diaz, but politically he felt that Diaz' presidency was not a democracy. Eventually, President Diaz had Madero jailed. Despite this, the elections continued. Madero was confident in his campaign because he was able to gather much of the popular support even while incarcerated. But when the government announced the official results, Diaz was re-elected almost unanimously. Madero instantaneously questioned the validity of these results, and the rumor of electoral fraud aroused widespread anger throughout Mexico.[16] In response to the illegal elections and President Diaz's regime,

Madero published his *Plan of San Louis Potosí* on October 5, 1910. The plan accused Diaz of conducting a conspiracy of fraudulent elections, and Madero thereby declared them null and void. The plan states that "such conduct was indispensable to show to the whole world that the Mexican people are fit for democracy, that they are thirsty for liberty, and that their present rulers do not measure up to their aspirations."[17] Madero's plan called for an armed rebellion against Diaz's authoritarian regime. He compelled the Mexican people to rise in arms against Diaz's illegal presidency on Sunday, November 20, 1910, at 6:00 pm, thus prompting the official start of the Mexican Revolution. Madero declared himself President of Mexico, and called for the restitution of lands from the wealthy landowners to be given to villages and communities.[18] His plan acknowledges that small landowners had been exploited and essentially run out by the government that was supposed to protect them. He states that " it is in the interest of justice to restore these lands to the original owners, and as such anyone who has acquired land by immoral and illegal means must return it to the original owners."[19] This won him the support of the people because the Revolution now had agrarian reform goals that benefitted them over the elites.

Land Reform Takes Center Stage

Madero's presidency marked a new hopeful era for the Mexican people. In an attempt to reconcile the nation, Madero even employed some of Porfirio Diaz's cabinet members in his own cabinet. This caused other revolutionary leaders to question Madero's true ability to run the country. Madero briefly proved his intention to restore Mexico by publishing a reform program. This program introduced some agrarian reforms, such as restructuring the credit system for

rural farmers, which was to be facilitated by the banks who had previously refused to give out loans to the small landowners. Although this was helpful, it did not revert lands back to the people. Instead, the wealthy *hacienda* owners who had been propped up by Porfirio Diaz remained in control of most of Mexico's land. They demanded small farmers to buy back their lands with loans from the bank.[20] This furthered the notion that Madero was being too lenient on Diaz's former constituents, and thus, was not living up to the promises he made in his *Plan of San Louis Potosí*. Thus, on November 25, 1911, Emiliano Zapata, who became a prominent leader later on in the Revolution, published his *Plan of Ayala*, which accused Madero of being unconcerned with pursuing the mass land reforms that he had originally promised to the people.[21]

In order to further Zapata's own ideas of land reform, which were in complete contrast to Madero's tactics of implementation and execution, his political pamphlet titled, *Plan of Ayala*, included seven key points that outlined his approach to achieving the desperately needed land reforms. Perhaps the most influential point that Zapata makes is as follows:

In virtue of the fact that the immense majority of Mexican pueblos and citizens are owners of no more than the land they walk on, suffering the horrors of poverty without being able to improve their social condition in any way or to dedicate themselves to Industry or Agriculture, because lands, timber, and water are monopolized in a few hands, for this cause there will be expropriated the third part of those monopolies from the powerful proprietors of them, with prior compensation, in order that the pueblos and citizens of Mexico may obtain ejidos (village lands), colonies, and foundations for pueblos, or fields for sowing or laboring, and the Mexicans' lack of prosperity and well-being may improve in all and for all."[22]

This quote is significant because it highlights the grievances of the people. He acknowledges that the ordinary citizens of Mexico had no means of obtaining any kind of personal property, and therefore, they are condemned to remain in poverty because they could not make a living. Zapata blames this on the wealthy elites in Mexico who had been able to consolidate their power over the agricultural and economic spheres of Mexican society.

As a solution to Mexico's economic problems, Zapata suggests that Mexican citizens should have the right to access funds that would allow them to purchase lands of their own. These private lands would be used for harvest, thus bringing in a new source of income for the new landowners. Zapata concludes this point by asserting that these reforms would bring success and well-being to all Mexicans. His supporters believed that "the Revolution was an opportunity to settle scores with their betters and to raise themselves up socially and economically."[23] This new social standing for the people would be attained through provisions made in Zapata's plan. He said that "any usurpers who claim the right to lands must argue their case before special courts to be established at the victory of the Revolution."[24] This clause took aim at any elites who had confiscated lands from the lower classes. The elites would now have to go to court to prove they had a right to the land. Zapata was essentially revoking their authority over lands that they had come to possess because the plan reinstates property rights back to the *campesino* (farm worker).[25]

While Zapata's plan offered theoretical solutions, he needed to be sure that his plan also offered attainable solutions for achieving the type of land reforms that he believed were necessary. He addresses this issue within the *Plan of Ayala* by saying that "in order to execute the procedures regarding the properties aforementioned, the laws of disamortization and nationalization will be applied as they fit."[26]Disamortization was the confiscation and prompt selling of lands that belonged to the Catholic Church within Mexico. This was proposed by Zapata because the Catholic Church was extremely rich in land, and they also played an instrumental role in state conflicts during the Revolution. Zapata saw this as a problem because the Church was not conducting or portraying itself as an ally to the people; and therefore, he planned to take away their power by limiting their ownership of vast lands. Nationalization was also fundamental to Zapata's plan because it allowed private assets to be converted into public assets by bringing them under the ownership of the national government.[27] This provided the revolutionary government a legitimate means of revoking lands belonging to Mexican elites and bringing the land under the control of the government, whose stated goal was to eventually disperse it among the land-deprived citizens of Mexico. This was a crucial revolutionary measure because it transformed rural property relations and reversed established property laws.[28]

Emiliano Zapata's popularity was growing at an astonishing pace because he was garnering vast support from the people based on his ideas for achievable land reforms. It was only a matter of time until the federal government, or what was left of it, realized that the brutal Revolution was being spurred on by those who demanded land reforms. Luis Cabrera, a leading social reformer in the Mexican Congress, even said that "the agrarian issue is the Achilles' Heel of the Revolution."[29] Furthermore, Cabrera believed that without real change the Revolution would carry on and therefore prevent lasting social peace.[30] In an attempt to align the government with the ideals of the Revolution, Cabrera delivered a speech to Congress entitled, "*The Restoration of the Ejido*." In this speech he argued that "the restoration of peace should be brought about by economic reforms that will bring conflicting social groups into a relative state of equilibrium."[31] He proposed restoring the *ejidos* of Mexico as an economic reform because they would be overseen by village governments instead of the small elite class. This would allow the peasantry to be rescued from the overbearing stipulations of the elite because the lands would now be facilitated by the local governments. In order to assure that lands are fully restored, Cabrera said that "true restorations aim to recover the lands that have passed into the hands of large landowners, some of whom are protected by their influential families."[32] In essence, Cabrera is advocating

for the lands of Mexico's most prominent and wealthiest families to be taken away.

The propositions that Cabrera makes in his speech accuse the elites of usurping lands through unjust and violent tactics, thus furthering his argument that they have no legitimate rights to own them. He continues his speech by asserting that the restoration of the *ejidos* would be economically advantageous because it would grant the peasantry new financial opportunities. Cabrera describes these opportunities as "having land where they could plant freely, even a small plot, workers could augment their salaries without relying on *haciendas* (large estates owned by elites)."[33] The peasantry would not have to rely on the *haciendas* because they in theory would no longer exist. Those private lands would be reverted to public use, which was to be overseen by regulations that would be enforced by the local governments. Cabrera especially advocated for this measure because he believed it could potentially resolve political issues within Mexico as well because it "required unprecedented social relationships through co-operative effort and government assistance."[34] This meant that the government and the people would have to work together to make sure that this new system of communal lands was beneficial to everyone, but especially for the peasantry because they had been oppressed for so long. In order to ensure their success, regulations that divided small plots within the large communal lands for subsistence farming would be enforced. This would allow small farmers to grow enough to support themselves, thus relieving them from a reliance on poor wages that were afforded to them when they worked on the *haciendas*. Cabrera reiterates that this would bring social and economic equality because one class would no longer be higher up than the other. Cabrera concludes his speech by saying that "when a time of revolution arises, we must apply pressure to resolve the problem; we must cut, we must demand sacrifices, because these are the times when people are willing to make those sacrifices and changes can be made easily."[35] It can be assumed that Cabrera was referring to the sacrifices that the citizens would have to make in order to usher in a greater good for all of Mexico.

A Brief Setback

Although Emilio Zapata's *Plan of Ayala* and Luis Cabrera's speech, "*The Restoration of the Ejido*," brought forth solutions to the agrarian nature of the Revolution, a collapse in government threatened to derail their progress. Venustiano Carranza consolidated power over what was left of the Mexican government in 1915.[36] He was a rich landowner and was extremely conservative. He also did not advocate for such widespread land reforms as

Zapata and Cabrera. Because of this, he was soon met with disapproval from the people because they knew that he was unlikely to continue the efforts of land reforms. In order to appease them, Carranza and his top aides issued an Agrarian Decree, but this only promised lands to those who could prove that they needed it.[37] This was completely unattainable for Mexican peasants because they had no documentation or proof of their low incomes, mainly because they barely had an income at all. This infuriated the people, and a resurgence of support for Emiliano Zapata and his new ally Pancho Villa took place. These political enemies of Carranza, who were capable of recruiting and leading large armies, began to forcefully confiscate lands from the rich elites. In response, Carranza set up "The Administration of Confiscated Lands," which was responsible for negotiating the return of lands back to their rightful owner.[38] This was an astounding political move for Carranza because the wealthy elites had to petition the government for the return of their lands, thus making them loyal to Carranza. He was able to restore thousands of acres of lands back to elite landowners, much to the dismay of the Mexican people as well as Zapata and Villa. Carranza knew that Zapata and Villa would not cease their revolts; and therefore, he would have to do something in order to retain his power over Mexico.

In 1916, Carranza called for a Constitutional Convention. He invited conservative members of government who he knew shared his ideals and visions for Mexico. However, he also invited radical delegates who insisted that this new Constitution include sweeping land reforms.[39] After much consideration and deliberation, the Constitution was ratified in early 1917, which is also the same year that Venustiano Carranza became President of Mexico. Article 27 of this new constitution is by far the longest and most detailed section because it specifically deals with land reforms. The Article expressly states that:

Ownership of the lands and waters within the boundaries of the national territory is vested originally in the Nation, which has had, and has, the right to transmit title thereof to private persons, thereby constituting private property. Private property shall not be expropriated except for reasons of public use and subject to payment of indemnity. The Nation shall at all times have the right to impose on private property such limitations as the public interest may demand, as well as the right to regulate the utilization of natural resources which are susceptible of appropriation, in order to conserve them and to ensure a more equitable distribution of public wealth.[40]

In simplified terms, the article says that all lands are to be overseen by the National Government who will determine how lands will be awarded. If one is

awarded a plot of land,,it will constitute his private property, and therefore, he must maintain it. This required land owners to utilize all their lands for production. If they did not do so, the National Government maintained the right to confiscate and redistribute these lands to someone who could produce them. The elite land owners of Mexico disapproved of these clauses because it eliminated their ability to accrue overwhelming amounts of land that allowed them to bring in extremely large profits. Instead, the Constitution now accorded a fixed amount of land to anyone who asked for it. Of course they would also be held to the same requirement of utilizing all the land that would be granted to them.

Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution allowed for a redistribution of Mexico's lands, and therefore Mexico's wealth, but at the oversight of the federal government. Ordinary citizens would now have an unprecedented source of income, thus diminishing the social and economic gap between the elites and the peasantry.[41]Article 27 concludes by declaring null and void all previous transactions of lands, waters, *rancherías*, *ejidos*, or lands of any other kind belonging to villages that were sold or taken by private entities.[42] This measure ensured that all lands would be redistributed according to new policies stated within the Constitution that allowed unprecedented access to lands amongst all Mexican citizens. This means that the Constitution was not meant to be seen as taking away from the elites and giving to the peasants, but was a basis for equality of all peoples of Mexico. Therefore, the Constitution was not only a political foundation for government, but also a social institution for the citizens.[43]

While the new Constitution of Mexico provided the provisions needed to achieve land reforms that would usher in economic success and social prosperity for the people, the implementation of these clauses was very slow and sometimes even nonexistent. The lack of executing the Constitution is accredited to Carranza because he was displeased that the Constitution itself turned out to be more radical than he had wanted.[44] The accusation of Carranza's hesitant compliance "suggests that what Carranza and his colleagues chiefly wanted was a Constitution, the hypothetical contents of which could be later reviewed, rewritten and ignored (all of which happened)."[45] This shows that Carranza had little or no intent of actually institutionalizing the clauses within the Constitution, especially those in Article 27. His Presidency was therefore known as being corrupt, as well as being unable or unwilling to achieve change. This was a major problem for the Mexican people, as they were misled into believing that they had actually achieved the overall goal of the Revolution. With little hope for Mexico, the Revolution took a turn for the worse. Armed revolts and fighting between

revolutionary factions resumed at a more destructive pace. Carranza's political enemies, especially Pancho Villa, promised to continue mounting uprisings against him throughout his Presidency.[46] While this was good for uniting the people under prominent revolutionary figures, the constant fighting completely decimated Mexico's economy and damaged the nation's food supply.[47] By the end of Carranza's Presidency in 1920, the Mexican people were left hopeless, much like they were when the Revolution first began in 1910.

Post-Revolutionary Reconstruction (using a title case here)

In modern definitions, the Mexican Revolution lasted from 1910 to 1920. However, Mexico was still largely in the same economic and social levels of despair well into the 1920's. One could even suggest that while the Revolution was successful in removing their dictator, the rest of the Revolution's goals, particularly land reforms, were nowhere close to being fulfilled. Revolutionary leaders as well as the Mexican people were unwilling to secede their demands because they did not want the mass destruction committed during the height of the Revolution, nor the deaths of more than one million Mexicans to be in vain. Therefore, the 1920's in Mexico was coined as an "era of reconstruction."[48] For the first time since the Revolution began, Mexico was under a stable government that was spearheaded by a new president, Alvaro Obregon. He won the Presidency with an overwhelming vote by promising the people that he would listen to their grievances, and come up with viable solutions for success. To the Mexican people's relief, he kept this promise by making land reforms the most prominent point on his political agenda. He ardently pushed state governors to carry out the land reforms that were articulated in the Constitution of 1917.[49] By 1921, 427,000 square kilometers of lands were redistributed to 44,000 peasants.[50] While this was a slow process, Obregon had advocated more for these reforms than any other president or national governmental leader during the Revolution. This was a huge ornamental victory for Emiliano Zapata's cause because he had advocated for sweeping land reforms all throughout the Revolution, and was, interestingly, one of Obregon's political enemies earlier in the Revolution.[51] Being that Zapata was still a prominent figure (even after his death in 1919) in post-Revolutionary Mexico, his approval of the implementation of Article 27 was the basis towards unification and nationalization. Zapata's home state of Morelos saw the most rapid undertaking of Article 27, so much so that it became a model for other Mexican states.[52]

The Revolution Pays Off

In 1934 Lazaro Cardenas won the Presidency of Mexico. He was a socialist, and he immediately dedicated his presidency to empowering the citizens of Mexico. He aimed to abolish the *hacienda* system that was still in place because of previous elite-friendly governments. This demonstrates how land reforms had never been truly fulfilled since the end of the Revolution, and therefore Cardenas decided to focus on the redistribution of lands. He consulted Luis Cabrera's ideas in "*The Restoration of the Ejido*" and incorporated them into his plan that was legally upheld by Article 27 of the Constitution. With these two templates of how to achieve land reform, Cardenas enacted these reforms that were said to be "sweeping, rapid, and, in some respects, innovative."[53] He created *ejidos*, just like Luis Cabrera had advocated. Cardenas believed that "the *ejido* offered the best solution to the problem of the landless poor, as large communal holdings parceled out to individual farmers often combined access to land with the advantage of farming on a large scale with shared resources."[54] This did help the economic and social standing of the peasantry because they now had stable work and incomes, thus making them productive citizens of Mexican society. Prior to the Revolution, *ejidos* were not a popular form of land possession. However, Cardenas was so effective in creating and granting fair access to these lands that they became "a cornerstone of Mexican agriculture."[55] This new extent of land reforms not only affected small farmers, but also caused a boost in commercial agriculture.[56] Particularly, the regions of Northern Mexico, Yucatan, Baja California, Sonora, Michoacán and Chiapas were the highest profile areas of expropriation because they were the center of production of commercially grown cotton, hemp and grains. Thus, the farmers of these regions engaged in the mass production of these crops, but they were still able to farm and produce enough food for their own domestic use. Farmers who produced different crops also began participating in a system where they would either trade or sell their yield to neighboring areas.[57] This allowed for a change within the social sphere of Mexican society because the people began to interact with one another in a positive and productive manner.

Cardenas' implementation and execution of the *ejido* system was able to fulfill his goal of decimating the *hacienda* system. However, this did not come easily. Cardenas had to be very meticulous and thorough because he was dealing with mass amounts of land that would eventually be turned into many smaller holdings. In order to ensure that the individual *ejidos* would be successful, Cardenas made sure that at least two of the three following circumstances were present: the land was fertile and irrigated, its production had commercial value, and that labor organizations were requesting to run the land.[58] These tactics proved instrumental to creating successful and

functional *ejidos* because Cardenas was able to redistribute a total of 49,580,203 acres.[59] These lands went to 771,640 peasant families that were grouped within 11,347 *ejidos*.[60] Furthermore, each beneficiary received an average of 63.7 acres.[61] These numbers are made even more significant because Cardenas used the ideas of revolutionary figures to achieve these successful land reforms. This shows that although land reforms were difficult to attain during the Revolution, the determination of the people as well as the government allowed the revolutionary agenda to continue well beyond the revolutionary years. The lives of the Mexican citizens had drastically changed because Cardenas provided them economic stability through access to good land. Because of this, he had also won himself the admiration and unconditional support of the farmers and ordinary citizens of Mexico. The total economy of Mexico also changed because Cardenas also nationalized industries and supported commercial agriculture. Therefore, Mexico became an economic mix of social farming and industrial capitalism. This coalition of economic forces set the tone for modern Mexico, especially when it came to its modernization period.

Conclusion

The Revolution in Mexico was arguably one of the most destructive and devastating eras in Mexican history. People were fighting a brutal civil war, the peasants were being hopelessly oppressed, and the government was so unstable that many power struggles contributed to the long, drawn-out events of the Revolution. While all this negativity encompasses the Revolution, revolutionary and political leaders such as Francisco Madero, Emiliano Zapata, and Luis Cabrera openly supported the demands of the people for land reforms, which allowed for a discussion on how to achieve these reforms to permeate all aspects of Mexican society. The Revolution without a doubt brought on the inspiring efforts to restore the lands of Mexico. Credit is also given to post-revolutionary leaders, like Lazaro Cardenas, for continuing the effort for land reform. After twenty years of trying to achieve the land reforms that the citizens so adamantly demanded, much more had transpired from these reforms. The people gained relief from their economic troubles because they had been granted good lands to farm, which allowed them to bring in stable incomes. Their social status had also changed because there were no longer such obvious distinctions between the wealthy and the poor. Landless peasants now finally had the opportunity and means to become landowners, all thanks to land reform. The initial goal of the Revolution was fulfilled by the Cardenas presidency because Mexico now had a democracy that was run by leaders who supported the betterment of all people in Mexico. Therefore, through land reforms that were proposed during the Revolution, and carried

out for many years after, the Mexican economy was revitalized and political leaders invested their efforts in creating a stable society. Further research on the capitalist nature of Mexico's economy should follow the modernization era of the 1950's to 1980's. It is within this time in Mexican history that further reforms were made, though some in the interest of the elites, which allowed Mexico to currently become the 12th largest economy worldwide. In just about 100 years, Mexico has been completely revived.

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Footnotes

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[3]Mary K. Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) page #

[4]Robert McCaa, *Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution* (*Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 19, no. 2, 2003), page #s. Citation needs to be formatted for a journal entry rather than a book entry.

[5] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*. Abbreviated citation needed with page number(s).

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[21] Emiliano Zapata, "The Plan of Ayala" in *Mexican History: A Primary Source Reader*, eds. Nora E. Jaffary, Edward W. Osowski, and Susie S. Porter (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010)

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[59] Joseph and Buchenau, 127.

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Photograph

Part of Diego Rivera's "History of Mexico" mural at the National Palace in Mexico City. The cropped portion features the images of Emiliano Zapata (left

with sombrero), Felipe Carrillo Puerto (center), and José Guadalupe Rodríquez (right with sombrero) behind banner featuring the Zapatista slogan, Tierra y Libertad (Land and Liberty).The photographical reproduction of this work is covered under the article 148, VII of the Mexican copyright law (Ley Federal de Derechos de Autor), which states that
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