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La ciudad y el campo en la historia de México. Memoria de la VII Reunión de Historiadores Mexicanos y Norteamericanos. Papers presented at the VII Conference of Mexican and the United States Historians

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México

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas

1992

466 + XII p.

ISBN 968-36-2347-6

Formato: PDF

Publicado en línea: 30 de noviembre de 2023

Disponible en:
http://www.historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/276-01/ciudad-campo.html

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The Elusive "Bottom Line": An Urban - Based Estate Owner in Durango, 1897 - 1911

Introduction

This paper examines the conflicts which developed in the late Porfiriato between a Mexico City resident and the administrators of his Durango estate on one side, and the estate's workers and nearby rural communities on the other. Rationalizing the estate's operations after he acquired the property in 1897, the owner raised productivity by reducing wages, eliminating surplus employees, increasing rents charged to tenants, and extracting maximum returns from sharecroppers. The hacienda enforced its property rights and raised additional revenues by charging local villagers fees for previously free access to resources such as water, wood, and pasture lands, or sometimes by ending such privileges altogether. Although the profitability of the estate rose sharply, the precipitous modernization of labor and property relations carried hidden costs.

The urban-based estate owner

When he purchased Santa Catalina del Alamo in 1897 from the bankrupt Mexican General Land Mortgage and Investment Company of London for £40,000, Pablo Martínez del Río was Mexico's foremost corporate lawyer, a notable representative of that Mexico City-based fraction of the Porfirian elite commonly referred to as the *científicos*. Like them, most of his income derived from his work as an intermediary providing foreign capitalists with access to Mexican resources and, like other científicos who usually disdained entrepreneurial risk-taking, he invested only infrequently in Mexican enterprises. Why then did he risk his own capital in Santa Catalina del Alamo, a failed scheme that had lost the English company hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling? Although he acquired the property cheaply, he needed to invest huge sums to make it profitable. To irrigate fields of cotton and wheat, the attorney spent $300,00 building the Mercedes dam and its network of canals and ditches. Martínez del Río spent $200,000 more to import pure-bred cattle and sheep to improve meat and wool production; to drill wells and erect windmills to water 16,000 head of cattle, horses, and mules and 100,00 head of goats and sheep; to enclose fields and pastures in protective walls of stone and barbed wire; to construct houses for administrators and peons; to build barns and store-rooms for the hacienda's produce; and to purchase machinery to thresh wheat and gin cotton.[1]

Given the enormous commitment required, Martínez del Río's purchase of Santa Catalina del Alamo was, in a certain sense, a case of conspicuous consumption. Not only did the Mexican urban elite treasure estate ownership for the social status it bestowed, but so did the British and North American elites like Lord Beresford and William Randolph

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[1]Unless otherwise noted, "$" denotes Mexican *pesos*; the 1888 sale is registered in Notary No. 4, 1888, fols. 91-100 (Mar. 27, 1888), Archivo General de Notarías, Mexico City (hereafter, AN); the 1897 sale is registered in Notary No. 4, 1888, fols. 199-208 (Jun. 3, 1897), AN; the total investment in improvements from 1897 to 1911 was $501,110.83, as shown in Notary No. 4, 1911, fols. 214-260 (Jul. 24, 1911).

Hearst among whom Martínez del Río plied his trade. Educated abroad in the prestigious English boarding school, Stonyhurst, the Mexican attorney knew many of his clients intimately and he shared their values. To be sure, Martínez del Río also had a good nose for profit. Although the attorney put most of his savings in mortage loans and urban real estate, he also understood that agricultural properties sometimes offered excellent security and great speculative value. A cautious and intelligent investor, he had the additional advantage of a thorough familiarity with Santa Catalina del Alamo because he arranged the sale of the estate to the English company in 1888 and served as its principal representative in Mexico. As member of the Board of Directors of railroad companies like the Mexican Southern Railway, the Interoceanic Railway, and the Mexican Central Railway, he knew that completion of the International Railroad extension which passed through the estate to connect Durango city with Torreón, a major rail junction on the Mexican Central, would radically improve the commercial possibilities of Santa Catalina del Alamo.[2]

To reduce the risks of developing Santa Catalina del Alamo, Martínez del Río used his social and political connections in Mexico City and in Durango City to defend the estate's property rights against unruly local elements which had occupied the English company's land without paying rent, or which had preyed upon its livestock. The attorney enjoyed an intimate fiendship with Porfirio Díaz, who relied upon him to find jobs for his cronies and clients and to extract other useful goods and services from the foreign companies.[3] Martínez del Río used his acquaintance with Díaz and his own prominence in Mexico City as the basis for developing useful relationships with powerful politicians in Durango like General Juan Manuel Flores and Esteban Fernández. To head the general administration of Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas, the attorney recruited one of Durango's leading citizens, Francisco Gómez Palacio. The son of the Reforma hero of the same name, Gómez Palacio was a capable administrator; his network of acquaintances was invaluable in protecting and advancing the owner's interests in Durango.[4]

The estate

A product of the gradual amalgamation of many smaller haciendas, ranchos, and labores in the colonial era, by 1897 Santa Catalina del Alamo still stretched across most of the partido of Cuencamé in eastern Durango. When its new owner purchased the adjacent Hacienda del Sobaco five years later and combined its lands (Guadalupe and Cruces) with those of Santa Catalina del Alamo, the latifundio--Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas--expanded to its maximum size, 418,193 hectares.[5] For administrative purposes, Martínez del Río divided his estate into six sections--the "haciendas" of Santa Catalina, Alamo, El Pasaje, Covadonga, Mercedes, and Guadalupe y Cruces, each managed by resident administrators, each fiscally separate of the others, but all subordinate to the principal administrator, Gómez Palacio, whose office remained in Durango City. As a matter of policy, Martínez del Río

[2]For the effects of rail transportation on rural estate economies, see John H. Coatsworth, *Growth Against Development: The Economic Impact of Railroads in Porfirian Mexico* (DeKalb, 1981).

[3]For Pablo Martínez del Río's association with Porfirio Díaz, see David W. Walker, *Kinship, Business, and Politics: The Martínez del Río Family in Mexico, 1823-1867* (Austin, 1987), pp. 225-227.

[4]The owner could count on his general administrator to be zealous in maximizing productivity on the estate because Gómez Palacio's remuneration took the form of a 15 percent commission on annual profits up to $50,000 and 20 percent on profits in excess of $50,000; contract terms for the administrator are described in a letter, Pablo Martínez del Río to Francisco Gómez Palacio, Mexico City, Oct. 28, 1904, Archive of Carlos Martínez del Río y Fernández Henestrosa, Mexico City (hereafter CMRFH). Although expensive, the arrangement helped to insure effective management. The sudden death of Pablo Martínez del Río from a heart attack during a visit to the United States in November 1907 did little to disturb the estate's operations or to jeopardize its profits. Gómez Palacio continued to administer Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas for the owner's widow and children through 1913.

[5]The purchase of the Hacienda del Sobaco was registered with the notary Manuel Puente in Lerdo, Durango on Jul. 19, 1902; the price paid for the property was $21,258; see also the listing for Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas in John R. Southworth, *The Official Directory of Mines and Estates of Mexico*, Vol. XI (Mexico City, 1910), pp. 196-197.

chose not to employ local residents as haçienda managers and he distrusted anyone with ties to nearby communities. He refused to employ Pedro Reyes as manager at Covadonga because Reyes had "many *compadrazgos*" with families in the adjoining town of Peñón Blanco.[6] Of the managers he did hire, Antonio Herrán, at Mercedes, maintained a family in Saltillo; Eduardo Trigueros, at Pasaje from 1902 to 1906, had ties of compadrazgo with the Martínez del Río family in Mexico City; Antonio Martínez, at Pasaje after 1906, was a Spaniard; and Wentworth S. Conduit and Thomas Fairbairns, at Guadalupe y Cruces from 1904 to 1911, were North Americans. The owner required his managers, aside from demonstrating considerable technical and administrative skills, to show toughness in their dealings with the estate's residents. Martínez del Río refused to hire Eduardo Trigueros' brother at Covadonga because Emilio Trigueros lacked the "maliciousness to manage ... above all in Covadonga, where there are many bad people".[7]

The division of the latifundio into six separate operating units was a response not only to the critical problem of size, but also reflected a functional organization of the estate's economies. Alamo and Covadonga raised cattle, horses, mules, goats, and sheep; Santa Catalina cultivated corn and beans; the irrigated fields of Mercedes and Guadalupe y Cruces were planted in cotton and wheat; and Pasaje had a mixed economy. The livestock-producing units supplied oxen and mules to clear and plant the lands of the cereals-producing units and, in turn, were supplied with grains to feed livestock and workers alike. All units produced marketable surpluses: horses and mules for mining and agricultural entreprises across the republic; meat for markets in Durango, Torreón, and Mexico City; corn and beans for haciendas in the Laguna district; and wool and cotton destined for factories in northern and central Mexico. Because of a critical shortage of rainfall and water for irrigation, and because the hacienda was situated in rugged mountainous terrain, 97 percent of the estate's lands were unsuitable for farming and could only be used for grazing purposes. Ironically, it was these arid wastelands which contained the property's most valuable resource--guayule.

The workers

The estate's work force was divided into two broad groups: *acasillados*, residents paid a daily wage for casual labor, and *acomodados*, who received a monthly salary for performing specialized tasks.[8] Until 1911, most acasillados earned a daily wage of $0.37. During the planting and harvest seasons, when the demand for labor increased sharply, the estate suspended the *raya* and paid piece rates. Although daily wages were supplemented with free housing and access to a small plot of land to grow corn and vegetables or to pasture their animals, workers paid for these 'extras' by contributing monthly to the hacienda several days of free labor called *fatigas*. Santa Catalina's acomodados included *vaqueros* and *pastores* as well as artisans such as carpenters and blacksmiths. Salaries for shepherds and cowboys ranged from $10 to $25 montly, including daily rations of corn, beans, and meat. School teachers received $20 a month, plus access to free land to raise cash crops of corn or beans. Certain other employees, such as coach drivers, received most of their salary as the use of rent-free land.

Both acasillados and acomodados might draw against future wages by purchasing food, clothing, and utensils on credit from the hacienda's *tienda de raya*. Since the wage scale at Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas was low by regional standards and hardly covered

[6]Pablo Martínez del Río to Francisco Gómez Palacio, Mexico City, Feb. 13, 1905, CMRFH.

[7]Pablo Martínez del Río to Eduardo Trigueros, Durango, Nov. 19, 1906, CMRFH.

[8]For an overview of labor relations on Porfirian haciendas, see Friedrich Katz, "Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 54 (1974), pp. 1-47. For a comparison with conditions on a Zacatecas hacienda in the nineteenth century, see Harry E. Cross, "Living Standards in Rural Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Zacatecas, 1820-1880", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 10 (1978), pp. 1-19.

essential subsistence needs, employees accumulated large debts at the tiendas. Although local hacienda owners and administrators generally cooperated in refusing to hire laborers indebted to other estates, there is no evidence of attempts to restrain physically the mobility of labor in the region.[9] Intense competition between employers seeking laborers would have made debt peonage unworkable in any event. Instead, indebtedness on this estate functioned as a disguised salary which discouraged the formation of a more competitive labor market. Wages remained low even though labor was scarce, and thus the threat of ending a peon's access to credit served as a powerful tool to discipline the work force. But the absence of debt peonage on this estate should not be taken to suggest that labor relations were harmonious. On the contrary, there is evidence that conflict, not collaboration, characterized relations between employer and employees at Santa Catalina del Alamo. The disaffected workers included not only the grossly-exploited acasillados, but also the more privileged acomodados. Evidence of discontent included movements to resist low wages, espisodes of theft by employees, and random violence.

When peons, shepherds, and cowboys at Pasaje demanded higher wages in November 1906, Gómez Palacio responded by ordering the resident manager, Eduardo Trigueros, to fire "the agitators of the people... and let them agitate somewhere else".[10] At the same time, because Pasaje was short of workers to tend livestock, the general administrator instructed the resident manager to appease the disgruntled acomodados if possible, not by increasing their wages, but by promising to pay more of their salary in cash. At the same time, Trigueros was to make it clear to the cowboys and shepherds that they should abandon the "dream that they will be paid entirely in money".[11] In January 1908, after Antonio Herrán succumbed to pressure from cotton pickers at Mercedes who refused to work until piece rates were increased from $0.015 per kilogram to $0.02 per kilogram, Gómez Palacio ordered the rates lowered to their old level and lectured:

> I cannot understand why now that the corn [harvest] is finished, and consequently the people who work in it are unemployed, it should be necessary to raise the [piece rates] ... It is necessary that we understand the necessity of exercising the greatest economies, if we want the business to give a profit, and not to imagine the advantages of spending more money, because such a system is ruinous, not only because it is more costly, but because of the influence it exercises on the workers, since if they understand that by making themselves lazy they can increase their wages, that is the way it will always be. For this reason, I judge the increase inconvenient, especially in the present circumstances, in which there is no reason to fear that the people will leave to look for better pay somewhere else.[12]

Dissatisfied employees at Santa Catalina y Anexas increased their income by stealing farm implements, grains, or livestock. When thefts of corn were detected at Santa Catalina in June 1905, Martínez del Río ordered the resident manager, Miguel Soto, to implement "with all energy the means that may be necessary to end the abuses... I want at any cost to maintain order and morality on the Hacienda, and I prefer not to have new residents than to have bad ones".[13] But like pilfering, the rustling of livestock by cowboys, shepherds, and foremen remained a chronic problem. In January 1905, the owner blamed Chen Soto, a *caporal* at Pasaje and a retired cattle thief, for an epidemic of cattle and mule thefts which struck the hacienda. He ordered his manager, Francisco Calderón, to fire the famous

[9]On the contrary, there were instances in which workers who left the estate owing money were invited to return and the old debts were forgiven. Other workers who left owing debts as high as $480 were punished by being barred from returning to Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas. The absence of debt peonage on Santa Catalina del Alamo is consistent with Katz's typology of regional variations in labor relations; see Katz, "Labor Conditions", pp. 31-37; for an extended discussion of the historiography of debt peonage, see Arnold J. Bauer, "Rural Workers in Spanish America: Problems of Peonage and Oppression", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 59 (1979), pp. 34-63.

[10]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Eduardo Trigueros, Durango, Nov. 19, 1906, CMRFH.

[11]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Eduardo Trigueros, Durango, Nov. 29, 1906, CMRFH.

[12]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Antonio Herrán, Durango, Jan. 4, 1908, CMRFH.

[13]Pablo Martínez del Río to Miguel Soto, Mexico City, Jun. 1, 1905, CMRFH.

rustler and rum him off the hacienda. Then he punished Calderón for exercising poor judgement by making him pay for fifty of the missing cattle. At the same time elsewhere on the latifundio, authorities arrested Domingo Mota, a pastor at Pasaje, for stealing sheep. Gómez Palacio complained: "It seems that in all parts the shepherds are taking from their own flocks and one has to watch them more than the outsiders".[14] In other instances suggestive of the fragile bond between the estate and its acomodados, a manager caught caporal Juan Bermúdez switching Alamo's fat goats for a Peñón Blanco butcher's skinny goats in October 1906, and three years later the local *acordada* jailed vaqueros at Covadonga and Alamo caught with stolen cattle in their possession.

The beatings, murders, and assaults which became increasingly common on the estate in the stressful years after 1906 are suggestive of the underlying social pressures and discontent which plagued resident workers at Santa Catalina. The pattern of this violence was random, directed internally, but not before 1911 aimed at the hacienda management. July 1907 witnessed the murder of one of Alamo's peons, killed in an argument with the resident of a nearby town. An elderly man who lived on Santa Catalina was brutally beaten without apparent reason in December 1908. In September of the following year, a deranged hacienda employee stabbed to death a child.

What accounts for this conflict and disorder on Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas in the years inmmediately prior to the Revolution? In part, it was a product of the fierce economic pressures the work force was subjected to after 1906. While nominal wages remained static or even declined, the cost of living rose sharply, especially for acasillados. The shift by this estate and other local haciendas away from subsistence crops such as corn and beans, towards cash crops such as wheat and cotton, and a succession of poor harvests because of floods, droughts, and frosts, combined to raise the price of corn and beans almost beyond the reach of peons without access to rations. Before 1906, these commodities wholesaled for $2 to $4 per hectoliter. After 1906, prices tripled. So serious were the shortages of corn that Gómez Palacio ordered his managers in 1908 and 1909 to ration corn to reduce the peons' consumption. Although acomodados were cushioned from the worst effects of the rise in foodstuffs, like other employees they were subject to the inflationary prices for other goods marketed by the estate's stores and by its competitors in nearby towns. Thomas Fairbairns, the administrator of Cruces, commented in February 1909 on the problems facing workers on his hacienda: "So far we have been unable to take advantage of the fatigas [the free labor] the peons owe, as they are barely living as it is on the 38 c. a day they get and if they don't work, they don't eat".[15]

The drive to rationalize labor management helped to lower operating costs, but it destabilized social relations on the estate. Under a traditional system of hacienda labor relations an estate owner formed durable social bonds with resident workers, especially with the acomodados.[16] Compadrazgo (ritual kinship) and clientelism (the exchange of goods and services between patrón and peon) retarded the development of class conflict of the sort which afflicted Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas on the eve of the Mexican Revolution. The patriarchal owner and his workers constituted an extended family, united in their defense of hacienda interests against hostile outsiders. The Patrón cared for workers and their families even when they were redundant. He lent them money not just to patronize the tienda de raya, but also to stage celebrations of births, marriages, and burials--money that neither side expected would be repaid. He served as godfather to his workers' children. On traditional haciendas, bonds between masters and servants might reach back several generations.

[14]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Eduardo Trigueros, Durango, Jan. 21, 1905, CMRFH.

[15]Thomas M. Fairbairns to Francisco Gómez Palacio, Cruces, Durango, Feb. 13, 1909, CMRFH.

[16]For hacienda social relations and regional variations, see Katz, "Labor Conditions", pp. 27-37; for the colonial hacienda, see Eric Van Young, "Mexican Rural History Since Chevalier: The Historiography of the Colonial Hacienda", *Latin American Research Review*, 18 (1983), pp. 5-62.

In contrast to this traditional model of hacienda social relations, the Martínez del Río family owned Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas only thirteen years before the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution. The owner lived hundreds of miles away in Mexico City and, because he was fully occupied attending to his law practice, seldom visited the estate. The general administrator resided in faraway Durango City and resident managers were strangers to their employees. With few exceptions neither the owner nor the administrators extended social ties of compadrazgo to their subordinates. Instead of positive sanctions, managers used punishments or threats of punishment, such as dismissal from the hacienda or criminal or civil prosecution, to discipline the work force. Gómez Palacio's philosophy of hacienda social relations revealed the great social void wich separated *sirvientes* from owners and managers:

> "Our Peons, by defect of education or be it an absolute lack of elucidation, do not have any trace of moral sentiment and the only control of their evil passions is the fear of punishment. Lacking this ... one must fear every class of excesses".[17]

Acomodados may have been especially sensitive to problems of status and security. As individuals with high status in their local rural communities, they more than other workers longed for social recognition from their superiors. But not only was this group socially estranged from the owners and administrators at Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas--they were also economically insecure. Carpenters, blacksmiths, pastores, vaqueros, and caporales faced repeated threats of redundancy and salary reductions as management sought to lower overhead costs after 1903. In 1907 and 1908, Gómez Palacio ordered Herrán at Mercedes not only to lower wages for acasillados, but also to fire carpenters, dismiss the blacksmith's helper, cut the pay scale for monteros to 75 centavos daily, and reduce his assistant's salary to $1.50 daily. As Gómez Palacio emphasized, these takebacks made good business sense: "The fact is that these general costs weigh on a very limited production".[18] Acomodados who tended livestock faced the additional worry of salary deductions for livestock lost or stolen while in their care.

Many employees probably resented what they perceived as the hacienda's failure to fulfill its social obligations. Martínez del Río understood that workers expected the owner to be "a sort of living providence to supplement and relieve the shortcomings of their [the peons'] own improvidence".[19] Both he and the general administrator recognized the usefulness of providing services such as free housing and medical care to induce workers to migrate to the hacienda. In practice, however, market forces guided labor relations and fiscal considerations diluted the hacienda's capacity to deliver welfare services. Managers could seldom find teachers willing to staff the estate's schools for salaries less than those paid to cowboys. Church services on the estate were irregular, and sometimes discouraged because they distracted employees from their duties. Once a visiting bishop refused to say mass in one of the hacienda's capillas because of its poor state of repairs. Another time, the general administrator answered a priest's request for funds to buy wax for candles used in church services with the observation:

> ...this function is a devotion of the faithful, [so] the right thing is that they and not the hacienda be the ones who bear the costs, since the hacienda already pays its obligations, like the mass service. If the devout do not have the means to cover the costs, they must not do the devotion, because fundamentally it does not benefit them if done with someone else's purse.[20]

[17]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Barbara V. Martínez del Río, Durango, Mar. 20, 1911, CMRFH.
[18]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Antonio Herrán, San Lorenzo, Durango, July 19, 1907, CMRFH.
[19]Extract of a speech by Pablo Martínez del Río to the National Agricultural Congress, Ft. Worth, Texas, reported in *The Mexican Herald* (Mexico City), Dec. 18, 1898.
[20]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Miguel Soto, Durango, Dec. 6, 1909, CMRFH.

When building for workers, Gómez Palacio understood that residents preferred two-room adobe houses to one-room houses, but these cost 50 percent more so he instructed managers to construct only one-room houses. He judged that because houses with kitchens cost more, workers who wanted houses with kitchens should live in houses without doors.

Although the hacienda was conscientious in providing free medical treatment for its workers--in one case sending children bitten by a rabid dog for treatment at a special clinic in Monterrey--even here there were sometimes misunderstandings. In October 1906 Gómez Palacio scolded Valente Vargas for giving Ascención García $10 after the peon had injured himself with an axe. The general administrator reminded the manager of the Rancho of Alamito that hacienda policy was to provide the injured with free medicine and to give them loans until cured, but not to give them gifts of money--that "neither you nor I can be charitable with someone else's money".[21] Gómez Palacio's directive in 1903 that wages and rations be withheld from those who failed to report for work provoked a strong letter of protest from the shoemaker Jesús Doras on behalf of Pedro Ceniceros, the attendant for the shepherds' remuda who was ill with a shyphilitic lesion, Silverio Roza, a vaquero thrown from a horse who did not work for a week, and Isabel Ramírez de Espinoza, whose husband had died suddenly after a painful illness.[22]

The sharecroppers

The system of sharecropping which evolved on this estate was marvelously adapted to the agricultural conditions of the region. It provided a way around the chronic labor shortages which plagued estates in, and/or adjacent to, the Laguna. Cultivating five-sixths of the cotton, wheat, corn, and beans marketed by Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas, sharecroppers, not wage laborers, were the essential productive element. Sharecropping also served as a mechanism to recruit casual labor. To receive an allotment of land, *medieros* (sharecroppers paying rent with one-half of their harvest) were required to work a certain number of days of paid and unpaid labor. *Tercieros* (sharecroppers paying rent with one-third of their harvest) often brought their own peons to work the allotted lands. Sharecropping helped to reduce the capital needed to work the estate since tercieros were required to furnish not only labor, but also all draft animals, tools, seeds, rations, etc. Sharecropping shifted the risks of farming under often hostile climatic conditions onto the medieros and the tercieros while reserving most of the profits for the estate. A crop failure for the hacienda meant the loss of rent for a year and an increase in the indebtedness of medieros, while sharecroppers lost their labor and sometimes their investments in hired labor, seeds, and draft animals. Because it monopolized the local supply of arable land, the hacienda could dictate onerous terms in its sharecropping contracts. In exchange for the use of land, draft animals, seed, water, and credit, medieros delivered one-half of their harvest in kind, with an additional obligation to sell their remaining harvest to the estate at low prices. In 1906 medieros in wheat were obliged to sell their half of the harvest to the hacienda for $4 per hectoliter (after the hacienda had first deducted from this half debts owed to the tienda de raya). If the hacienda threshed wheat for the sharecropper, it received all the wheat straw free. The hacienda sold wheat for up to $0.10 per kilogram and made an additional profit by selling the straw as fodder. Medieros in cotton sold their half of the harvest to the hacienda for $0.87 to $1.00 per arroba of unginned cotton until they had repaid all credit extended; they could sell whatever remained for $1.25 per arroba. The hacienda sold ginned cotton for $35 per quintal and cotton seed for $37 per ton. The hacienda determined what crops would be grown. At Mercedes the hacienda refused after 1909 to provide fully-irrigated land for

[21]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Valente Vargas, Durango, Oct. 10, 1096, CMRFH.
[22]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Pablo Martínez del Río, Alamo, Durango, Jun. 15, 1903, CMRFH.

corn, preferring instead cash crops such as wheat or cotton. In 1911 Mercedes's tercieros were instructed to plant cotton in place of wheat.

Successive crop failures had brought relations between the hacienda and its sharecroppers close to the breaking pint by 1910. Especially hard hit were those who sharecropped corn and beans on dry or semi-irrigated lands. Floods in July 1906 destroyed Nazas' corn and bean crops, with many fields drowned under five feet or more of water. A drought the following year reduced the bean harvest by one-half and the corn harvest by two-thirds. In 1908 the hacienda sacrificed the last remaining water in the Mercedes reservoir to irrigate corn, only to lose that crop to an early frost. Conditions elsewhere were such that many sharecroppers simply abandoned their fields. The frost returned again the following year to claim one-fourth of the corn crop and one-half of the beans. 1910 was a drought year; one-third of the corn crop and one-half of the beans were lost. The hacienda had the consolation of high prices for those products which were harvested, but hopelessly indebted sharecroppers were forced to surrender all their produce at low prices. The estate paid sharecroppers in 1908 $6 per hectoliter for beans it then resold for $12.

1909 marked the beginning of agitation by sharecroppers demoralized by successive reverses. Although there had been isolated protests on Santa Catalina in 1906, now the hacienda was confronted by complaints, demands, and threats of walkouts from sharecroppers at Cruces, Mercedes, and Pasaje. In May 1909 the medieros of Cruces addressed a collective letter to the general administrator protesting the attempt to charge them against the current wheat crop for advances they had received for the failed crop of 1907. Because the hacienda took all their harvest in 1908, the sharecroppers considered that this "made it square for them". Gómez Palacio advised his manager at Cruces, Thomas Fairbairns: "I don't suppose they will carry out their threat to abandon the labores; but in case some of them should do it, let them go and do the harvesting with hired labor, which I suppose will not be hard to get at the present time".[23] Upon learing that the medieros had given in, Gómez Palacio counseled restraint: "I think it would be a good policy to slacken the rope on their necks a little bit, rather than have it too taut [sic] and break it. We can afford to do it this year, considering the good price of wheat".[24] In practice, however, Gómez Palacio relied more often on forceful coercion. In August 1909 the general adminstrator received an anonymous letter signed by "Various Pasajeños" denouncing abuses by the resident manager, Antonio Martínez. Rejecting pleas for an investigation, Gómez Palacio dismissed the charges as the work of troublemakers and instructed Martínez to seek out and punish the letter's author.[25] Two months later, sharecroppers on the labor of San Pablo at Mercedes refused to accept their obligation to clean irrigation canals and ditches without pay. Stating "I do not wish to establish a bad precedent", Gómez Palacio instructed Antonio Herrán to deliver an ultimatum to the protesters--to clean ditches or surrender their lands.[26] This time all but one sharecropper abandoned their fields and moved off the estate.

The operations of the tienda de raya--the hacienda store through which many employees received all or most of their wages as food, clothing, or utensils--served to focus the frustrations and resentments of the resident workers and sharecroppers. Here peons and sharecroppers, in emotionally-charged circumstances, came into close personal contact with the resident managers, who tended the stores and shared in the profits. The prices charged for goods were not appreciably higher than those charged in stores in nearby towns, but in the tienda de raya the effects of static or falling wages and successive crop failures could be measured tangibly in deepening levels of indebtedness and in the rising costs of "candles, matches, blankets, soap, sugar, cotton cloth, cutlery, tools, enamelled-ware and

[23]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Thomas M. Fairbairns, Durango, May 13, 1909, CMRFH.
[24]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Thomas M. Fairbairns, Durango, May 21, 1909, CMRFH.
[25]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Antonio Martínez, San Lorenzo, Durango, Aug. 7, 1909, CMRFH.
[26]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Antonio Herrán, Durango, Oct. 30, 1909, CMRFH.

what-not" which the stores marketed.[27] When Gómez Palacio learned that Fairbairns had closed the tienda de raya at Cruces in August 1909, Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas' general manager chortled: "Well and good that you shut off the Tienda de Raya, and have instead a simple, modest, poor little tiendita, for the sake of economy in taxes. We can afford to let alone the high-sounding Tienda de Raya, remembering that a rose by any other name smells as sweet".[28] The tiendas de raya (by any name) were useful to the estate because they lowered real labor costs (by exchanging wages for goods delivered at retail prices) and because they eliminated the need to maintain a large cash supply on the estate.[29]

The towns

Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas was ringed by small towns and villages. The *municipio* (town) of Peñón Blanco lay sandwiched between Alamo on the east and Covadonga on the west; the municipio of Nazas extended north above Covadonga and Guadalupe y Cruces; the *congregaciones* of La Uña and El Conejo squatted on the western perimeter of Guadalupe y Cruces; and the congregación of Sauces pressed against the eastern limits of Santa Catalina. The town of Cuencamé did not border the estate, but as *cabecera* its courts had juridiction over those parts of the hacienda lying within the *partido* (district) of Cuencamé. Conflicts with the residents of each of these communities festered in the period 1897 to 1910. Although this hostility originated with and fed upon disputes over property rights, contests between the hacienda and local non-estate residents to control town governments intensified the bitterness. The estate sought to protect its property rights by using its influence with the state government to remove hostile local officials and by maintaining the *acordada*, a mounted rural police force commissioned by the state and financed by local hacendados. Because the caciques and middle-class residents of these towns challenged the political and economic controls imposed by Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas, the estate's power was never hegemonic, and its owner and managers sometimes lost political skirmishes to individuals with greater social standing in their local communities. Even where the estate won before 1910, it suffered mortal wounds once the Madero revolt shifted power decisively towards local residents and away from state and national governments.

After purchasing Santa Catalina del Alamo in 1897, Pablo Martínez del Río acted resolutely to assert his property rights. Disputes with local residents occupying hacienda land illegally were resolved by force, litigation, stealth, and negotiation. In most of these encounters, the hacienda won and local communities lost. Although they possessed no titles, the people of Sauces, El Pasaje, Covadonga, Peñón Blanco, Cuencamé, and La Uña claimed as their own the land their families had lived on for generations. Many were descendants of military colonists who garrisoned presidios in the area until the eighteenth century. When extensive estate agriculture in northern Mexico broke down after independence, Santa Catalina del Alamo was virtually abandoned by its absentee owners and no one questioned the gradual occupation of scattered ranchos and labores belonging to the estate until the Mexican General Land Mortagage and Investment Company attempted to take possession of these properties after 1888.

When the residents of Sauces, El Pasaje, and Covadonga continued their refusal to acknowledge its ownership of these lands or to pay rent, the English company tried to evict them in 1895. Counseled by what the company charged were "agitators", the community of Sauces obtained court injunctions to prevent the evictions and appealed to President Díaz for protection. Although Díaz refused to intervene (after Martínez del Río protested

[27]Patrick O'Hea, *Reminiscences of the Mexican Revolution* (Mexico City, 1965).
[28]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Thomas M. Fairbairns, Durango, Aug. 19, 1909, CMRFH.
[29]For the role of the tienda de raya in the hacienda economy, see also Cross, "Living Standards", p. 16.

the attempt to make Sauces a municipio) and instead referred the matter to the Governor of Durango, the residents did win a partial victory--they were not evicted by force.[30] Instead, Martínez del Río turned their town into a no-man's land. To emphasize his property rights, the hacendado constructed a fence cutting across the center of the congregación along the property line with the adjacent hacienda of Juan Pérez. To speed up the dismantling of the community, the owners of the two haciendas signed a pact pledging in 1903 not to employ residents of Sauces or to permit them to collect wood or pasture their animals on hacienda lands until the residents agreed to vacate their homes and to move into hacienda housing at a different location. Competition for scarce labor resources, however, made it impossible for the two estates to cooperate. Each accused the other of hiring peons from Sauces. After a year, Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas abandoned the scheme and began to devise more subtle tactics to use against Sauces.

The residents of El Pasaje and Covadonga were less successful in maintaining their identity as rural communities. Witnesses charged that in 1898 Martínez del Río, "assisted by the public forces of the Acordadas of Durango, and taking advantage of the dissimulation and complicity of the superior authorities of the same State", evicted Pasaje residents and seized their land, livestock, crops, and homes.[31] Afterwards, some residents of Pasaje stayed on the hacienda, and as workers and sharecroppers continued to lead resistance to the demands of the owner and managers. The displaced families took refuge in the *barrio* of Pasajito in Cuencamé and waited for an opportunity to recover their lands. Relations between this town and the estate worsened in 1905 when Martínez del Río completed construction of fences to keep livestock from Cuencamé out of hacienda pastures. There were frequent incursions, however, and as late as 1909 Cuencamé residents continued to invade hacienda lands to graze their animals. In retaliation, the estate refused to employ Cuencamé residents, "given the hostile attitude that the majority of these people have assumed against Santa Catalina".[32]

Residents of the rancho of Covadonga and of nearby lands said to belong to Peñón Blanco's ejidos alleged that Martínez del Río, aided "with armed men", evicted them and committed "every class of depredations".[33] The townspeople appealed their evictions to the Supreme Court, but lost an October 1900 judgement. In 1903 the disputed lands around Peñón Blanco were enclosed in fences of stone and wire and the estate began posting guards to charge fees to residents who collected wood or pastured animals on hacienda land. Town officials attempted in June 1906 to persuade the estate to honor a pledge by the English company to cede lands in the Mesa del Peñón to the community, but Martínez del Río insisted the "vague promise" had no legal value and instructed his general administrator: "what is best is to give a full and energetic refusal in order to put an end to gossip".[34]

The estate's conflicts with the congregaciones of La Uña and Conejo began after the purchase of the Sobaco lands in 1902 and the organization of the new hacienda of Guadalupe y Cruces. Gómez Palacio outlined his strategy for doing away with the villages in 1904:

> The way is none other, in my judgement, than that which I have in mind for Sauces: that is to say, to build houses on Guadalupe and bring the people there. I have recommended much prudence and have not let it be known that this is an attempt to end the congregación... I have indicated .. the convenience of not angering the people by refusing them pasture for their animals, but on the contrary,

[30]Pablo Martínez del Río to Porfirio Díaz, Mexico City, Dec. 30, 1895, fols. 17621-17624, Porfirio Díaz Collection (Hereafter, PDC), Mexico City.

[31]Francisco O'Reilly to National Agrarian Commission, Mexico City, Nov. 16, 1920, leg. 705-23 (724.1), fol. 705, Archivo de la Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria, Gómez Palacio, Durango (hereafter SRA-GP).

[32]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Antonio Alemán, Durango, Aug. 19, 1907, CMRFH.

[33]J. Froilan Reyes to Governor of Durango, Peñón Blanco, Aug. 14, 1917, leg. 705-25 (724.1), fol. 714, SRA-GP.

[34]Pablo Martínez del Río to Francisco Gómez Palacio, Mexico City, Jun. 2, 1906, CMRFH

> by providing them with everything, by means of a contract, to go about obtaining recognition of the property [rights]...[35]

Here the plan worked less effectively than in Sauces. Claiming the land where their houses stood was their own, residents steadfastly refused to sign contacts. Four years later, on the eve of the Revolution of 1910, La Uña's people were building new adobe houses, expanding the village, and ridiculing attempts by Conduit to exercise control.

La Uña and Conejo survived and flourished as independent rural communities because they had powerful friends like Mariano Arce, the owner of the Rancho de San Agustín across the Nazas river from Guadalupe y Cruces. Arce's interest lay in the bounty of guayule growing wild on lands belonging to Guadalupe y Cruces. His friendly relations with residents made it possible for him to contract to buy guayule cut clandestinely on these lands, an activity which the owners and administrators of Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas strongly opposed but were powerless to stop. The estate also found it difficult to contend with the resistance of community leaders like Eduardo Franco, José García, and Cipriano Molina. The latter presented so many problems that Martínez del Río counseled his manager, Conduit, in April 1905: "[Molina] has been quite a troublesome element to us for some time... wonder if you could not get around him with perhaps a little money".[36]

Gómez Palacio, himself the owner of the Hacienda de San Lorenzo near Durango City, appreciated the need to cultivate peaceful relations with local men of substance. By offering generous rental terms on an adjacent rancho in 1903, he pacified the cacique of Sauces, Jacinto de la Joya. The administrator also warned his manager at Pasaje to use tact when collecting rent owed by José Bori, "because this is one of the most considerable and influential persons in Nazas, and it is not convenient for us to break ties with such caciques".[37] When the hacienda began to enclose its pastures in Peñón Blanco, it did not attempt to fence lands claimed by powerful local hacendados and factory owners like Juan Francisco Flores. Despite its attempts to please individuals deemed consequential, too many persons of above-average economic and political means saw their interests damaged by the estate's monopoly of pasture and farming lands in the partido of Cuencamé. In two separate proceedings in 1907 and 1908, respectively, Pedro Sosa and Severino Ceniceros of Cuencamé and Simon Yiverino of Peñón Blanco denounced Santa Catalina del Alamo's lands as *baldíos* and promised to share these lands with local residents if they won possession of them. Although Gómez Palacio beat off the legal challenges in court, he could not silence a growing public clamor for a division of the hacienda's lands.

Nowhere did the hacienda find relations more difficult than in the town of Cuencamé, where the owners and the administrators found themselves occupied in constant battles with local residents for control of the town hall and the municipal courts. In November 1904 Gómez Palacio advised Martínez del Río that because the jefe político of Cuencamé was supporting the congregación of Ocuila in its dispute with the estate and with the neighboring hacienda of Sombretillos, "we must procure the placement in the cabecera of the partido of a jefe who will be our creature, and if you approve the idea, I will set to work on this when Esteban Fernández returns".[38] Already, the jefe had angered Gómez Palacio by refusing to deal harshly with Ocuila residents accused of taking livestock from the estate. Subsequently, when a new jefe, Miguel Breceda, replaced the complacent Santa Marina, the newcomer's first act in January 1905 was to address a letter to Gómez Palacio putting himself under the "orders" of the general administrator. His second act was to organize an armed search of houses in Ocuila, where two mules belonging to the hacienda were recovered. The following year Breceda was rewarded with rental of the rancho of

[35]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Pablo Martínez del Río, Durango, Jan. 15, 1904, CMRFH.
[36]Pablo Martínez del Río to Wentworth S. Conduit, Mexico City, Apr. 27, 1905, CMRFH.
[37]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Eduardo Trigueros, Durango, May 20, 1903, CMRFH.
[38]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Pablo Martínez del Río, Durango, Nov. 29, 1904, CMRFH.

Marqueseña. In 1906 Breceda was succeeded by Gómez Palacio's first choice as jefe, Angel Morales, a former police chief of Durango City. But Morales, like other officials, soon proved a disappointment to Gómez Palacio. Because Cuencamé residents kept cutting fences, and because of the jefe's lax attitudes towards livestock rustlers and a failure to prosecute residents of the community of Ocotillo for stealing wood from the hacienda, the administrator was again using his influence in 1909 and 1910 to persuade the state government to replace the jefe político.

The estate experienced similar problems in its attempts to control the judges of Cuencamé. There were repeated episodes--in 1904, 1905, and 1909--in which local courts freed hacienda residents accused of rustling. In February 1909 Gómez Palacio attempted to prosecute the *juez conciliador* of Cuencamé after he released pastors from the hacienda of Alamo caught stealing cattle. Previously, Judge Bocanegra had jailed Manuel Castellanos, employed by Gómez Palacio to supervise an armed security force that patrolled hacienda pastures. Juan Badillo, a Cuencamé resident described by Gómez Palacio as "one of the most recalcitrant ones", repeatedly challenged the estate property rights by grazing his animals on its lands. When Badillo refused to pay a fee for "damages" to the pasture in January 1909, Castellanos seized the trespassing livestock and was arrested when Badillo complained to the court in Cuencamé. Convinced that "with this class of people hardness is what works best", the administrator had Bocanegra fired and replaced by a more understanding judge, Guillermo Castillo. Gómez Palacio acknowledged this was only a temporary victory: "From here [Durango City] there is not much one can do to counteract the influences of the *tinterillos* with the local judges, who generally move to their whims in the small towns".[39] Gómez Palacio was no more successful in controlling the courts of the other principal town in the partido, Peñón Blanco. Without the cooperation of these courts, Gómez Palacio could not always punish the cattle rustlers and trespassers that his acordada apprehended.

The bottom line

Why were urban investors in Porfirian Mexico eager to own rural estates? Consider the appeal of the bottom line--profit. In 1911, Gómez Palacio estimated the market value of Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas at $5.3 million.[40] Apart from appreciating 700 percent in value over the cost of acquisition and improvements ($743,379.76), the estate was the principal income producer in the portfolio of properties inherited by Martínez del Río's wife and children. In the nine months between December 1910 and August 1911, Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas contributed 85 percent ($401,027.13) of the family's gross income ($473,991.25) earned from diversified investments acquired for $3.7 million. By way of contrast, while the Durango estate generated a 54 percent return on capital invested, $30,000 in shares of the Compañía Cemento de Hidalgo gave 18 percent returns; $18,436.73 in shares in a tobacco company, El Buen Tono, paid 4 percent; $19,047.50 in the Compañía Expendidora de Pulques produced dividends of less than 2 percent; $25,020 in a mining company, Soledad de Pachuca, returned 6 percent; and massive investments in Mexico City land, rental housing, and mortgage loans gave returns averaging 6 to 9 percent.[41]

Looking more closely at Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas, one can detect a steady growth rate of about ten percent annually in the volume of net profits for the years between 1903 and 1911. Profits for the 1903 fiscal year totalled $57,964.09; profits for the 1911 fiscal year totalled $657,400.35. A major contributor to the trend towards soaring

[39]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Antonio Herrán, Durango, Jan. 5, 1909, CMRFH.
[40]"Valor estimativo de las Haciendas de SCA...", Oct. 15, 1911, CMRFH.
[41]Calculated from data reported in Notary No. 4, 1888, fols. 214-260 (Jul. 24, 1911); and Notary No. 25, 1913, fols. 226-233 (n.d.), AN.

profits were sales of guayule which in 1911 produced gross income of $743,913.82, compared to the $92,828.76 in gross revenues from the estate's other operations. In more normal years, when sales of livestock, grains, and cotton were not disrupted by revolutionary violence, these operations yielded gross revenues ranging from $150,000 to $227,000 annually. Following the general trend, the hacienda of Guadalupe y Cruces developed into one of the most productive of the estate's properties. Its net profits, based on the sale of wheat and cotton, increased four–fold from $7,294.08 in 1907 to $28,399.77 in 1909. The record of the Compañía Aparcera, formed by relatives and friends of Pablo Martínez del Río to work lands on Santa Catalina, demonstrated that under the right conditions sharecropping by tercieros could return good profits. This company paid $1,400 and $600 dividends on each of the six $1,000 shares subscribed for the 1906 and 1910 harvests. Even the mundane operations of the tienda de raya at Guadalupe y Cruces produced higher net returns (10 to 12 percent) than investments in many mining or manufacturing establisments.[42]

Not itemized on the 'bottom line' of Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas' accounts (nor listed in the ledgers of any of the great estates in Porfirian Mexico) were the hidden social and political costs incurred as the vast agricultural enterprise conducted its affairs in a business-like fashion with the residents of rural Durango. These cumulative costs–the grassroots reaction of rural people against the forced modernization of labor and property relations–came due beginning in 1911. Seeking to redress the grievances of the preceding thirteen years and exploiting the opportunities which accompanied revolutionary (or even counter-revolutionary) pronouncements in the name of Madero, Vázquez Gómez, Reyes, Díaz, Zapata, and Orozco, the workers and sharecroppers of Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas joined the residents of local rural communities in more than a dozen major assaults, uprisings, and occupations which by 1913 effectively destroyed the estate's territorial integrity and its capacity to produce income for its urban-based owners.

In the partido of Cuencamé, the content of national political programs and movements was largely irrelevant; the context of local social relations shaped the Revolution there. The people of Peñón Blanco occupied the lands of Covadonga and Santa Catalina while residents of Cuencamé and hacienda workers and sharecroppers took possession of Pasaje and Mercedes. The cascos of Guadalupe y Cruces, Covadonga, Alamo, and Santa Catalina were looted, livestock and produce carried off, and the main houses, stores, barns, and equipment destroyed. Along with the resident managers, hacienda records and the tiendas de raya were favorite targets for vengeance. Armed assailants shot and killed Antonio Herrán, the administrator of Mercedes; a gun battle at Pasaje left Antonio Martínez severely wounded; and attackers at Alamo beat Dionisio Salas and then dragged him behind a horse. Other managers narrowly escaped similar fates. From Guadalupe y Cruces Patrick O'Hea frantically wired Gómez Palacio in February 1912: "A party of men this place rose last night... money, horses, equipment, and store goods taken. A faithful employee shot dead by my side. My life also attempted. Everything is lost if I leave, but fear I cannot remain..."[43] The more visible leaders of the assaults on Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas were caciques like Calixto Contreras of Ocuila, Severino Ceniceros of Cuencamé, and Antonio Castellanos of Peñón Blanco, but the anonymous collaborators that helped them carry the day were acomodados like the machinist, Severo García, and the caporal, Julián Martínez, at Cruces or the blacksmith, Pedro Hernández, at Mercedes. Gómez Palacio lamented after an attack on Santa Catalina in June 1912: "It is sad to say, but it is a fact without any doubt that the greatest enemies the hacienda has are its own sirvientes".[44]

[42]Pablo Martínez del Río to Francisco Gómez Palacio, Mexico City, 28 Oct. 1094; Francisco Gómez Palacio to Miguel Soto, Durango, Jul. 3, 1907; Thomas M. Fairbairns to Francisco Gómez Palacio, Cruces, Durango, Mar. 15, 1909, Apr. 6, 1910; Guadalupe y Cruces Account, Dec. 31, 1908; Francisco Gómez Palacio to Barbara V. Martínez del Río, Durango, Jul. 14, 1912, CMRFH.

[43]Patrick O'Hea to Francisco Gómez Palacio, telegram, Cruces, Durango, Feb. 13, 1912, CMRFH.

[44]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Barbara V. Martínez del Río, Durango, Jun. 23, 1912, CMRFH.

Santa Catalina y Anexas and the Mexican Revolution

In the immediate aftermath of the Madero Revolt, Gómez Palacio assessed in July 1911 the hopelessness of defending Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas against its workers and local residents. He understood correctly the implications of the revolution in political relations which had taken place and he struggled to devise a strategy to cope with the new reality. Religious pacification was one of his more novel ideas:

> Being that our civil resources are exhausted, and not having at our disposition military resources, I am thinking about recourse to the religious ones, having already taken the steps necessary with the Archbishop in order that they come missionize to the hacienda and the nearby towns. The idea has had a good reception and they are already taking the necessary steps to put it into practice. I do not think that the missions can make the usurpers of the lands return them; but I do believe they will serve to moralize the people... and make the robberies of animals diminish, at least...[45]

Although this plan failed, as did schemes of a very different nature to create a hacienda self-defense force, it does reveal a belated attempt to redress the imbalances in hacienda social relations described in the preceding pages. It was probably a step in the right direction. Material conditions on this estate were harsh, but other estates paid workers less and took more from sharecroppers without provoking rebellion. The workers of Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas were starved in terms of symbolic gratification. Missing was the patrón who gave a hacienda its sense of community. In the absence of a patrón, there developed a pattern in which labor-management relations were mediated by third parties, often artisans in nearby towns, as illustrated by the intervention of a shoemaker of Peñón Blanco, Jesús Doras, on behalf of sick or injured acomodados. Similarly an outsider, Julio Fierro, represented the medieros of Cruces in their attempt to prevent the estate from taking all the 1909 harvest. In other circumstances where the Church had a greater presence, as in the Bajío, one might have seen the clergy acting as mediators between rural enterprises and disaffectd employees. In Peñón Blanco, Cuencamé, and Nazas, the grassroots leaders of the community were neither hacendados nor priests, but small property owners or artisans like the tinsmith Severino Ceniceros, who became jefe político of Cuencamé after the Madero revolt.[46] Carrying out many of the clientelistic functions of a patrón, they bridged the social differences between hacienda workers and local residents. So long as the hacienda had a monopoly of force, its penchant for using negative sanctions to discipline workers and sharecroppers was effective. Once the Madero revolt revealed the weaknesses of the state and national governments that Martínez del Río and Gómez Palacio had used to enforce the estate's property rights, the hacienda was defenseless as its workers and sharecroppers joined or sympathized with local militias commanded by "that Indian from Ocuila", Calixto Contreras. The tutelage begun in the late Porfiriato by small town artisans like Severino Ceniceros ripened into bold compaigns by armed revolutionaries to indoctrinate and politicize hacienda residents. After 1913 the partido of Cuencamé became a stronghold of Villismo (as it had been under different names since 1911).

The relations between resident hacienda workers and the absentee owner of Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas, which were described in the preceding pages, do not fit easily into the model of worker-owner harmony proposed by Friedrich Katz.[47] Instead of helping the owner defend Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas from attacks by outsiders, resident workers actively participated in rebellions against the hacienda. Elsewhere, in

[45]Francisco Gómez Palacio to Barbara V. Martínez del Río, Durango, Jul. 13, 1911, CMRFH

[46]Alan Knight, "Peasant and Caudillo in Revolutionary Mexico, 1910-1917", in D.A. Brading, ed., *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 42.

[47]Katz, "Labor Conditions", pp. 44-47.

Sonora, Tamaulipas, Guerrero, western Durango, and Coahuila, the Maytorenas, the Figueroas, the Maderos, and other rancheros and hacendados (who were not urban-based or absentee estate owners) commanded the unswerving allegiance of their workers (and in some cases the support of nearby rural communities). There was between Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas and towns like Cuencamé a conflict similar to that described by John Womack, Jr. and others between sugar haciendas and villagers in Morelos, except that in eastern Durango there was little friction between hacienda workers and local townspeople or villagers and fewer residents of these towns sought communal occupation of hacienda lands.[48] Most of the occupied lands of Pasaje, Mercedes, Covadonga, and Santa Catalina were divided among individual property owners and except for grazing lands were not given over to communal ejidos.

New micro-studies of haciendas in Durango and Chihuahua may reveal a pattern of social relations which nurtured the development of Villismo, that is, highly-commemrcialized estate agriculture based on sharecropping; modernized "non-traditional" labor relations managed by cost-conscious, absentee, urban-based estate owners; conflict with land-hungry local communities with historic claims to estate lands; and the emergence of middle-sector artisans and caciques who forged estate workers and town residents into powerful revolutionary coalitions. These combinations gave Villismo its characteristic social heterogeneity. Villa, himself a native of Cuencamé, worked as a mediero there before moving on (most likely with Gómez Palacio's acordada in hot pursuit) to polish his skills as a professional cattle rustler in Chihuahua.

While settings like Cuencamé were the great breeding grounds of Villismo in Durango, the experience of Santa Catalina del Alamo y Anexas may also reveal one of the movement's great weaknesses–its provincialism. The people of Cuencamé had won their revolution by the end of 1913–they had confronted and overcome the problems posed by urban-based estate owners like Martínez del Río in the late Porfiriato–and they had little to gain by joining great national crusades. Like the Zapatistas of Morelos, they may have been reluctant to extend their revolution beyond local borders. Moreover, in moving outside Chihuahua and Durango they would discover that other rural peoples had political agendas based on very different experiences with Porfirian haciendas. Nowhere else would Villa's representatives be able so effectively to bridge the social and economic differences that separated townspeople and hacienda workers. Fatally, Villismo may have relied upon a geographically narrow social base created by special circumstances of the sort chronicled in this essay.

[48]John Womack, Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York, 1968); for hacienda-town conflicts, see also Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1970).