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Christon I. Archer*

Surviving the Chaos of Insurgency: Urban-Rural Relationships in Mexico, 1810 - 1821

"...parece va haciendo duradera la rebelión más terrible y monstruosa que se verá en las modernas historias por no tener tipo en la antigua".[1]
Juan Joseph Domínguez Sandoval, Sombrerete, 1812.

To royalist observers, the 1810 rebellion swept out of nowhere to scorch the countryside, demolish towns, and threaten the largest cities of New Spain. If a region escaped the ravages of insurrection for a time, any feeling of security was short-lived. During eleven years of warfare, the scourge reached almost every province and district--subsiding and then returning to devastate regions time and again until much of the land lay sterile and villages were blackened ruins. Insurgency, revolution, and banditry became permanent features that altered the social, economic, and political future of the Mexican nation. To explain the complex phenomena of these years of chronic violence and warfare, both contemporary royalists and later generations of Mexican historians focussed their admiration or criticisms upon the great leaders such as curas Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos, and on other religious and secular chiefs who became symbols larger than life. They identified royalist commanders such as Felix Calleja and José de la Cruz as vile butchers of Mexicans who cut down the honest aspirations of a nation for freedom and independence. These white an black images of heroes and scoundrels formed an indelible reflection of the Mexican historical consciousness.

The reality of Mexican independence was quite different. If the heroes were less noble and the butchers less sanguinary, the revolutions of the Independence era were far more complex and perplexing than later observers were prone to admit. In their efforts to credit nationhood to the early martyrs of independence, Mexican historians neglected major elements of insurgency, social revolution, and counterrevolution. Indeed, many different revolutions and insurgencies ripped apart the fabric of New Spain. The nature, length and intensity of the movements depended upon a variety of factors such as geography, demography, the economy, the availability or scarcity of land, weather that influenced harvests, and even psychological and religious questions that affected the popular mood. Although no major leader emerged to make land reform a revolutionary cry of the period, insurgent populations replaced the hacendados, reorganized agriculture and stock raising, and occupied lands that had been uncultivated. They settled new agrarian communities, returned to local and district agricultural subsistence, and impressed many royalists with their ability to reestablish prosperity and good order. In many respects, the rural population engaged in agrarian activities that foreshadowed events that would take place a century later.

The revolutions of the Independence decade exhibited certain unique regional qualities dependent upon the above and other factors, but diffuse movements merged into larger

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[1]Juan Joseph Domínguez to Viceroy Francisco Javier Venegas, March 15, 1812, Archivo General de la Nación, México (cited hereafter as AGN), *Sección de Operaciones de Guerra* (herefater OG), vol. 218.

struggles, fragmented once again to the provincial and district levels, or simply went to ground altogether under the lash of effective counterinsurgency, only to recur years later. In each revolutionary center or focus such as the province of Veracruz, the Bajío districts, and the enormous region encompassed in the Dirección de la Costa del Sur, the ebb and flow of insurgency can be traced through a series of waves or stages that advanced, retreated, and advanced once again. The length of the insurgency became a significant factor on the rebel side. Battles or skirmishes won or lost over the years played no long term role in the eventual outcome of the conflict. There were catalysts to revolution such as charismatic leaders and slow-developing longer term changes that concluded the eleven-year struggle with a dramatic suddenness. However, the termination of Spanish rule shrouded a whole series of accompanying themes that matured during the years of revolution alongside the concept of independence.

In many respects, the Independence Period was one of struggle between rural countryside, small towns, and villages on the one hand and cities and provincial centers on the other. Rural communities and villages resented domination by outside forces that tended to be urban. Without any general plan, rural people used the chaos of insurrection to construct or to reconstruct their own forms of decentralized society based upon the milpa, small farms, and individual villages. They might be described as reactionary in the sense that often they wished to recreate the past or an ideal version of what they thought the past should have been. It was relatively easy for them to accept purges of absentee landowners and their agents, to raid commerce, and to evade unwanted taxation. From the beginning, they were led to believe that their cause was the just one. With the passage of time, military action, counterinsurgency, and other restrictive policies by the royalists entrenched rural resistance against outside controls. The complexity and multiplicity of the insurgent movements make it essential to identify examples drawn from a range of rural and urban relationships. If towns and villages fell into the orbit of Mexico City, Guadalajara, Puebla,Veracruz or other major centers, we can identify different forces at work than if one examines the more isolated regions of the Costa del Sur, Tierra Caliente, or the mountainous zones beyond the immediate reach of urban markets and influences. Because the royalist army occupied the cities and larger towns, and the insurgents held the rural countryside, smaller villages, and peripheral regions, we can identify insurgency reaching into urban centers and counterinsurgency reaching outward to suppress and to seek means of controlling the countryside. Some of these themes clarified after the Hidalgo and Morelos phases during years of desultory raiding and guerrilla warfare.

Veracruz city and province epitomized what on the surface appeared to be the anarchic qualities of the Independence decade. The port city was the gateway to the interior road network, import and export emporium, communications center, and the market for agricultural produce and livestock raised in its region. The city and province escaped the first stages of the insurgency until 1812 when the "devoradora llama de la rebelión" swept toward the coast from the mountain zones of Orizaba and San Andrés Chalchicomula. From this beginning the revolutionary message attracted the rural and village people who joined the insurrection to interdict roads and paths and to sweep right up to the porous defenses of the port city.[2] Because of dreadful climate and the presence of endemic yellow fever, malaria, and other tropical diseases, the royalists experienced chronic difficulties finding troops suitable to garrison the port or to implement effective counterinsurgency programs. Neither the unacclimatized uplanders nor the European expeditionary troops could resist these diseases and the coastal garrisons became a mortuary for those who were sent to eradicate revolt.

With major routes to the coast blockaded and no available royalist operational units or light cavalry counterinsurgency pursuit forces (*divisiones volantes*) to open commerce or to garrison strategic points such as Puente del Rey, Alvarado, and other small communities,

[2]Cabildo of Veracruz to Venegas, July 4, 1812, AGN-OG, vol. 30

the acclimatized insurgents enjoyed considerable advantages. In reply to these difficulties, Viceroy Calleja ordered the application at Veracruz of his general counterinsurgency program, the *Reglamento Político Militar*, which had been issued first in June, 1811.[3] This plan was designed to mobilize and to solidify both rural and urban populations through the creation of royalist militia companies that would protect their own jurisdictions against insurgent and bandit incursions. The idea was to free royalist regular army forces for operations against larger rebel assemblies that threatened cities, districts, and provinces. Although in 1811 Calleja's plan was premature to counter the military threats in many regions, over time the presence of counterinsurgent forces permitted cooperative action between urban militia companies and rural units of hacienda and rancho guards. Indeed, the operational forces and regular garrisons came to depend upon the militias to provide a crucial first line or base for counterinsurgency. When these local forces failed to serve in this function, the royalist cause faltered.

In Veracruz province, which will be used as a major source of illustrations in the present essay, the royalists lacked the advantage of sufficient troops to garrison towns, watch the coastline, and protect convoys between the interior towns and the port city. By 1813, excessively high mortality rates among Spanish regular expeditionary battalions stationed at Veracruz convinced Viceroy Calleja to return to earlier dependence upon the acclimatized population. He ordered the acting Intendant of Veracruz, José de Quevedo, to conscript all able-bodied local inhabitants into new royalist patriot companies.[4] Preventing compliance with this order was the fact that most of the coastal village and interior populations of Veracruz had aligned themselves with the insurgency. Although the intendancy was sparsely settled, absentee land holders owned enormous tracts and kept the campesinos tightly controlled on the haciendas. The intrusion of the insurgency into Veracruz province permitted landless villagers to escape existing leases, rental situations, and other agreements. They moved away from the existing villages--sometimes to escape the increased levels of violence--and sought to establish small communities in isolated mountain zones where they could not be recruited into royalist militias or suffer the attacks of either insurgent or royalist raiders. In Veracruz, Calleja's *Reglamento Político-Militar* was an ineffective response to insurgency. Without a strong army presence in permanently garrisoned towns and mobile counterinsurgency divisiones volantes, it was impossible to return the rural populace to their former residences or to enforce rural discipline. Difficult mountainous terrain, immunity to disease, and lengthy traditions of contraband trading combined with the desires of the provincial people to escape all forms of close government supervision.

In large part, the royalists were responsible for the dispersion of the Veracruz population that caused them so much trouble. In April, 1813, troops from the port garrison attacked rebel-held Medellín, burning the village and a nearby hamlet called Rancho de Tejar.[5] Royalist troops from Alvarado suffered hunger and other hardships to pursue the Medellín insurgent population that established new communities in the swamps and dense vegetation of the Llano de Mosquitero. When the troops apprehended about 50 rebel women and children, the men under insurgent chief Manuel Figueroa offered to surrender in exchange for amnesties, arguing that without a negotiated deal the soldiers never would track them down in the bush. The royalist commander, naval lieutenant Gonzalvo Ulloa, accepted the offer and then sent his men to burn out 17 ranchos.[6] Because of the extreme need to restore agriculture, Intendant Quevedo settled the amnestied rebels at Boca del Río, close to the walls of Veracruz. This pattern of chasing

[3]Reglamento político militar que deberán observar bajo las penas que señala los pueblos, haciendas, y ranchos..., June 28, 1811, AG-NOG, vol. 186. For applications of Calleja's plan, see Brian R. Hamnett, "Royalist Counterinsurgency and the Continuity of Rebellion: Guanajuato and Michoacán, 1813-1820," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 62 (1982), pp. 19-48. Also see Hamnett's, *Roots of Insurgency: Mexican Regions, 1750-1824* (Cambridge, 1986).

[4]Calleja to José de Quevedo, April 5, 1813, AGN-OG, vol 692.

[5]Quevedo to Calleja. April 4, 1813, AGN-OG, vol. 692.

[6]Quevedo to Calleja, July 19, 1813, AGN-OG, vol. 692.

down insurgents and resettling them under royalist protection became a familiar aspect of counterinsurgency up to independence in 1821.

In reviewing these actions, Viceroy Calleja supported the removal of rural insurgents from their isolated ranchos. However, while he agreed in principle with the burning of Medellín or any other rebel towns, Calleja's views on this question had altered since he practised the same draconian punishments in 1811-1812 while commander the Army of the Center at Zitácuaro and Cuautla Amilpas. Longer term experience with insurgency moderated his approaches. As viceroy and as the most experienced counterinsurgency leader in New Spain, Calleja saw almost no advantages in destroying villages in thinly settled provinces such as Veracruz. By 1813, he argued correctly that this punishment served only to turn the country into a "frightful desert" and to increase the implacable hatreds of the populace.[7] Quevedo, new to the area of counterinsurgency, responded by describing himself as a man with a propensity to piety and opposition to performing sanguinary acts without provocation. At the same time, however, he rejected Calleja's view, arguing that repeated abuses by "perverse people" of the towns outside the port city left him no acceptable alternatives. The sight of their towns, homes, and crops being immolated was the only way to compel them to sever their ties with the insurgents.[8]

If the Veracruz royalists were successful temporarily in crushing rebel activities in the immediate proximity of the port city, this was not the case further into the rugged provincial hinterland away from army garrisons. Insurgents operating out of agricultural settlements in the barrancas and mountains interdicted commerce on the principal routes from Jalapa to the coast. Travellers had to pay a small rebel transit tax and muleteers paid three pesos per mule-load of merchandise for safe passage. As might be expected, these contacts also permitted the dispatch of messages between guerrilla bands and allowed them to gather military intelligence about royalist activities at Veracruz and other locations.[9] Through 1814 and 1815, insurgent forces exercised controls over the rural districts, taxing the owners of haciendas and sometimes confiscating portions of crops. Those who resisted had their buildings burned and livestock stolen. These rebels entered towns such as Córdoba at will to commit crimes and to obtain supplies. At Córdoba, the urban patriotic militia company feared retribution if it took any action and nothing was done to control even small numbers of insurgents. The local army commander, Lieutenant Colonel Miguel Paz, blamed the rebel intrusions upon the small communities of San Juan Cosamatepec, Jonatlan, Chocoma, and Huatusco, which always had been "lairs" for bandits who infested the jurisdiction. At Huatusco, for example, the insurgents had fortified the village with trenches and a parapet, and had additional defensive works under construction.[10] On the Jalapa-Veracruz road, even more audacious rebels occupied and fortified Puente del Rey and Plan del Río, threatening to cut off totally communications and commerce between the coast and the interior.

The successes of the Veracruz insurgent bands operating out of their home territories were such that on April 14, 1814, Viceroy Calleja suspended unregulated commercial traffic between the interior and the coast. Instead, he decreed a mandatory system of convoys and military escorts. To strike at the root of the problem, Calleja introduced a plan to construct a fortified *camino militar* that could protect commercial traffic passing through a region populated by disease-hardened guerrillas. Before long, however, the royalists had to admit that they lacked the military strength or organizational capability to actually implement the project. In 1814, insurgent assaults delayed the October convoy from Mexico City at Jalapa for five and a half months. Marooned passengers had to pay for their own subsistence and housing, merchants incurred losses when they sold off perishable goods, and many of the muleteers drifted into bankruptcy because they could

[7]Calleja to Quevedo, May 2, 1813, AGN-OG, vol. 692.
[8]Quevedo to Calleja, June 20, 1813, AGN-OG, vol. 692.
[9]Calleja to Quevedo, January 28, 1814, AGN-OG, vol. 697, and Quevedo to Calleja, March 27, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 699.
[10]Lieutenant Colonel Miguel Paz to Brigadier José Moreno y Dáoiz, Córdoba, March 1, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 536.

not afford to pay high prices for animal fodder. At Veracruz some merchants suffered financial difficulties while they awaited a shipment of 2.7 million pesos in silver that was stalled inland with the convoy. Seamen and officers aboard the warship *Prueba* ready to sail for Spain when silver shipments arrived, fell ill with dysentery and yellow fever.[11] To make matters worse, Colonel Luis de Aguilar, commander of the convoy escort detachment at Jalapa, appropriated 139, 382 pesos to pay his troops while they waited for the roads to open. The Veracruz consulado complained bitterly about the "mortal paralysis" of trade, condemned the "rule of the bayonet" implemented by army regulation of commerce, and concluded that Calleja's policy was akin to "cutting down the orchard to get rid of an insect that is eating the trees". The Veracruz merchants opposed any regulation of trade that required dependence upon military-escorted convoys. Already, the army placed too much emphasis upon the export of silver and not nearly enough on bulk merchandise of ordinary consumption. Indeed, the first five convoys sent to Veracruz in 1815 illustrated these difficulties. The army commandeered mules from private merchants, delayed commerce, failed to crush a small rebel fortification at Zopilote, and did not overrun the enemy parapets at Antigua. Rather than engaging the insurgents along the major trade routes, the royalist escorts employed time-consuming detours and even cut new trails. While army intelligence reported large insurgent concentrations, more accurate information available to the merchants indicated that there were fewer than 600 rebels in the entire region near the port.[12]

Not only had the Veracruz rebels interdicted trade and communications with the interior of New Spain, but the imperial government lost vital administrative links essential for colonial governance. By 1815 the Madrid authorities lacked even a rough idea about the progress of the Mexican revolt and the deployment of royalist army units. Aware that communications must be restored, the crown appointed Venezuelan-born Brigadier Fernando Miyares y Mancebo to command an expeditionary force of 1,718 Spanish troops that would open the Veracruz-Jalapa roads, introduce a via militar guarded by fortifications and garrisons, and construct a manual telegraph system to transmit urgent messages to Mexico City.[13] In addition, Miyares received special powers to relieve from office any army commander in New Spain who was not doing his duty--including the governor of Veracruz. The expedition sailed from Cádiz April 14,1815, arriving at Veracruz June 18 following a very rough voyage. Avoiding normal delays at the port during which European soldiers often contracted yellow fever, Miyares marched his troops inland for Jalapa, brushing aside harassment by the small bands of rural insurgents.[14]

Embarrassed by the impotence of the royalist forces against the Veracruz rebels, Calleja blamed a variety of factors. While he argued for the establishment of permanent garrisons to guard critical locations along the routes inland and two divisiones volantes to chase down insurgent formations, the governor of Veracruz, José Dávila, preferred to attach strong army escorts to the convoys. Clearly, disagreements of this sort on how best to deploy troops weakened the defensive system. In broader terms, however, Calleja attributed the insurgent successes in Veracruz province to the climate, the almost impenetrable mountains and forests, the innumerable biting insects, and the lack of acclimatized royalist troops needed to operate in such an enormous theater of war. Not only had the insurgents been able to prevent royalist trade and communications, but they occupied much of the tobacco-growing region, appropriating well over two million pesos in annual income from the treasury.[15] Calleja encouraged Miyares to attack the guerrilla bases and to punish the small towns and villages that supported them.

[11]Consulado of Veracruz to Calleja, April 13, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 216.
[12]Consulado of Veracruz to the Secretario de Estado, June 23, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 216.
[13]Inspector General de Indias Xavier Abadía to Fernando Miyares y Mancebo, Cádiz, April 7, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 573.
[14]Miyares y Mancebo to Calleja, June 27, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 573.
[15]Calleja to Miyares y Mancebo, July 17, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 573, and Fernando Moreno y Dáoiz to Calleja, no. 615, September 15, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 538.

Miyares established the camino militar between Jalapa and the coast by constructing fortified blockhouses at El Encero, Plan del Río, Puente del Rey, and Antigua. While these changes restored the movement of commerce, the creation of the defended posts did little to reduce insurgency. Even with counter-guerrilla "chase" forces to root out "escaped" communities in the mountains and barrancas of Veracruz province, the royalists had not discovered how to pacify revolution permanently. Simply to track down the isolated rebel agricultural settlements and to prevent the small guerrilla bands from coalescing under chiefs such as Guadalupe Victoria, the royalists had to maintain total dedication to their cause. In 1816, Miyares assigned several excellent commanders such as Juan Topete and Pedro Zaragoza to lead forces against the bands of El Chino Claudio and other rebel leaders. Miyares understood that the dispersed insurgents had to be tracked down and then resettled in protected villages "bajo campana" where they could be guarded by royalist forces and kept separated from contacts with other rebels. By constant harassment, burning of crops, and killing of livestock, the insurgents might be deprived of sustenance for their numerous families and eventually forced to accept royal amnesties.[16]

When royalist enthusiasm for active counterinsurgency waned, the insurgents returned to their mountain retreats and renewed raids on commerce. Until the appointment in 1819 of Field Marshall Pascual de Liñán to the interim governorship of Veracruz province, the royalists failed to discover any method except force to deal with chronic insurgency. However, in response to a renewed phase of guerrilla attacks against communications and trade, Liñán proposed a new policy that combined active counterinsurgency with a new type of amnesty. Rather than simply pardoning rebels and then releasing them to drift back into their barrancas, Liñán understood that the key to pacification lay with settling them in agricultural communities. Because almost all arable land in Veracruz province was privately owned and there were no crown lands vacant, he approached landowners whose estates had been left fallow and unproductive during the years of insurgency. Liñán asked Viceroy Apodaca to grant settlers five years of tax exemptions and he pressed the hacendados to make similar concessions regarding rents.[17] Under Liñán's program, the army destroyed the isolated mountain hamlets and resettled communities that had been abandoned during years of guerrilla warfare. Black slaves and workers from sugar plantations who had escaped to occupy lands were sent back to their original employments. The only major area of difficulty in achieving concentration of the rural population into villages was in the tobacco-growing districts where soil conditions required that the crop be rotated regularly on different ground.[18] In this case, tobacco growers received more freedom than other farmers, but the agents of the Renta de Tabaco were to keep close track of them and to make certain that no unknown persons entered the region. Regular army detachments checked these workers and patrolled the isolated barrancas and mountain zones to apprehend illegal settlers and to frustrate any attempts at agriculture.[19]

To implement his policy of population concentration and resettlement, Liñán appointed a dynamic young officer, Sublieutenant and acting Captain of the Infantry Regiment of Veracruz, Antonio López de Santa Ana, who was commander of the Realistas Fieles de Extramuros de Veracruz, a unit composed almost entirely of recently amnestied insurgents. Even at this early stage in his career, Santa Ana was a thoroughly controversial figure. Liñán, one of Santa Ana's benefactors, described him as "active, zealous, indefatigable in the royal service, and of fairly good training". Responsible for rural pacification and highly dedicated to the pursuit of insurgent commander Guadalupe Victoria, already Santa Ana

[16]Miyares to Viceroy Juan Ruíz de Apodaca, January 9, 1816, AGN-OG, vol. 572.

[17]Pascual de Liñán to Viceroy Conde de Venadito (Apodaca), January 21, 1819, AGN-OG, vol. 495. One of the first to accept an arrangement of this sort was José Domingo Elizaguirre, owner of the Hacienda de la Tunilla at Tincón de Parras, three leagues from the city of Veracruz. He agreed to assist the settlement of amnestied insurgents who would be conceded a rent-free period of five years. Prior to the revolution, Elizaguirre's hacienda had been a major source of vegetables and fuit consumed in the port city.

[18]Liñán to Venadito, no. 107, March 20, 1819, and no. 112. March 22, 1819, AGN-OG, vol. 490.

[19]Liñán to Venadito, March 29, 1919, AGN-OG, vol. 490.

was recognized for his highly unorthodox methods. On one occasion in 1818, he tracked down and captured a notorious local rebel commander named Francisco de Asís. Rather than following normal procedures requiring an indictment and judicial niceties, Santa Ana declared Asis guilty and had him executed by firing squad near the city walls of Veracruz. The governor of the port frowned on arbitrary justice of this sort that made the royalist amnesty program a mockery. Tired of Santa Ana's abuses of army regulations and disregard for his own orders, the governor dismissed Santa Ana from his militia command.[20]

Refusing this decision by his senior commander, Santa Ana travelled to Mexico City where he laid his case before the Viceroy, demanding recognition rather than reprimand. He argued that on numerous occasions rebel bands raided with impunity within sight of the plaza of Veracruz. Aware that there were insufficient soldiers to engage them, they simply mocked the sedentary royalist defenders. It took Santa Ana and other officers so long to mobilize their militias that the mounted insurgents escaped without any difficulties. Aware of these royalist weaknesses and of the refusal of the governor of Veracruz to dispatch pursuit forces from the city garrison, Santa Ana organized a small "ready" cavalry unit composed of militiamen of his own command who would pursue insurgents or bandit raiders who attacked property and rustled livestock.[21] Except in the case of Francisco de Asís, whom he considered to be an incorrigible bandit, Santa Ana offered amnesties rather than arbitrary executions. Most of this mobilized squadron of 70 cavalrymen used to run down the rebels came to the royalists from the insurgent band of Marcos Benavidez. They captured 230 mounted rebels who served the rebel chiefs Manuel Salvador, Félix González, and Mariano Cenobio.[22]

Liñán appointed Santa Ana to resettle amnestied insurgents in suitable agricultural villages. Even Governor Dávila of Veracruz recognized Santa Ana's impressive knowledge of the countryside and his "dexterity and intelligence" in gaining the confidence of the amnestied rural inhabitants who looked to him for leadership. Under an Instrucción issued by Liñán that granted him wide-ranging powers over his wards, Santa Ana rebuilt Medellín and Jamapa before he established new agricultural communities at San Diego and Tamarindo.[23] In each settlement he constructed a small fort or blockhouse defended by 50 militiamen from the community, and barrack sheds to house 100 soldiers so that troops would not have to be billeted on the civilian population. Each family received an allotment of land to meet its needs and was required to construct a house, kitchen, and corrals. Santa Ana organized the communities so that in case of danger residents could be mobilized quickly from the fields. Pastures and crops were not be situated further than a league and a half from the blockhouse. To regulate the inhabitants, no resident was to leave the community without a special license from the local army commander. Any man who needed firearms for hunting had to submit a pre-planned itinerary indicating the direction he planned to take and the length of time he would be absent.[24]

Life in Santa Ana's agrarian communities was restrictive, but probably much safer and more productive than the populace had enjoyed for years. Each resident received common pasture rights to graze livestock and an allotment of arable soil for crops of maize, beans, and rice. In addition, the communities supplied sugarcane, bananas, and garden vegetables to the markets of Veracruz. Dislocations caused by the lengthy insurgency had left the port chronically short of fresh provisions. As a result, the resettlement program was

[20]Liñán to Venadito, no. 82, March 3, 1819; Antonio López de Santa Ana to Venadito, December 4, 1818, and December 10, 1818, AGN-OG, vol. 490.

[21]Santa Ana to Ciriaco de Llano, October 8, 1818, AGN-OG, vol. 490.

[22]Liñán to Venadito, no. 13, January 18, 1819 AGN-OG, vol. 495. This operation took five days of marches and counter-marches through the Campos de Baja, Banderas, Tamarindo, Paso de Fierro, Soyolapa, Paso de Naranjo, and points between. Also detained was the chaplain of Mariano Cenobio's band, Fray Francisco Mansilla.

[23]Liñán to Venadito, no. 19, January 21, 1819, AGN-OG, vol. 495. See particularly the "Instrucciones para el restablecimiento de las poblaciones arruinadas de Medellín y Xamapa, y para el establecimiento de una nueva en la loma de Santa María". Severe water shortages at Santa María caused the settlement to be transferred to a better site.

[24]José Dávila to Venadito, May 10, 1821, AGN-OG, vol. 259.

extremely popular in the city as well as in the rural districts. San Diego, with a population of 287 families, soon grew to become the largest community on the camino militar to Jalapa. By July, 1820, Medellín had 112 resettled agricultural families, while 140 families were assigned to Jamapa and 54 to Tamarindo. To solidify his work, Santa Ana ordered each community to build a church and he hired schoolmasters who were to educate the children so that they would grow up as good royalist citizens.[25] Healthy men between 16 and 50 years of age served in militia companies of fieles realistas designated to defend their communities and to patrol nearby barrancas and mountains. As military commander, cacique, and land reform benefactor of the amnestied Veracruz rebels, Santa Ana established a following and a growing constituency that later propelled him to power when the Spanish regime collapsed. During May, 1821, Santa Ana was able to use his pacified former insurgents to occupy Alvarado and all of the towns and districts surrounding the city of Veracruz.[26]

The counterinsurgency program of concentrating the scattered rural population was by no means confined to the province of Veracruz. In June, 1815, Agustín de Iturbide informed Viceroy Calleja that army commanders "...deben reconcentrarse todos los habitantes de sus distritos".[27] He recommended the destruction of numerous small hamlets established in mountains and forests unless they could be viewed directly from royalist garrisons. Any persons who resided outside of official demarcations were subjected to summary sentences at forced labor. Iturbide identified the province of Michoacán as a particularly difficult region to pacify. When the insurgents were not actually under arms, they went to ground and appeared to be normal campesinbs. Their captains, colonels, and even brigadiers assumed non-violent poses with their hoes or other agricultural implements in their hands. But Iturbide saved his most vituperative language for the curates who lived outside of the direct control of royalist garrisons. In his view, they preached support for the revolutionary junta, collected tithes for the insurgents, celebrated their holidays, and mourned their lost dead.[28]

As the years of insurgency continued, more and more amnestied rebels gave up insurgency to return to their villages and rural communities. Since there were few land settlement schemes such as that introduced by Liñán at Veracruz, unemployment and other grievances often drove them back into banditry and rebellion. Some men managed to obtain five, six, or even more royalist amnesties without facing firing squads. In June 1820, for example, Brigadier Domingo Luaces dispatched two divisiones volantes into the mountains of Agangueo to halt insurgent bands from raiding into Maravatio jurisdiction. Since they lived off the resources of their communities at Agangeo, Tlalpujahua, Yrimbo, Singuio, San Pedro, San Felipe, Obraje, and other small settlements, haciendas, and ranchos located near Puerto de Medina, his plan was to deprive them of provisions and force them to seek royalist amnesties. In Luaces view, many of these communities had to be burned to the ground and their residents transferred to the towns and haciendas of Agangueo near Tuxpan, which could be fortified and made the base for a strong detachment of royalist cavalry and infantry.[29] What really worried Luaces, however, was the fact that amnestied insurgents were not as a rule willing to return to dull lives of drudgery as rural workers. They had been fighting for so long that either they accepted pardons and continued military duty as royalists or quickly returned to insurgency and banditry.

For years the major towns and cities under royalist control defended themselves against rural-based bandits and guerrillas. Each community tapped available manpower and decided on taxes (*arbitrios* or *contribuciones militares*) to fund local militia defense forces. At Pachuca, raids by rural bandits in 1812 damaged morale and left the town and the

[25] *Ibid.*
[26] José Dávila to Venadito, May 10, 1821, AGN-OG, vol. 259.
[27] Agustín de Iturbide to Calleja, Silao, June 20, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 431.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Domingo Estanislao Luaces to Venadito, Querétaro, June 15, 1820, AGN-OG, vol. 511.

neighboring communities of Actopan and Zempoala exposed to significant rebel incursions. Throughout New Spain, the regular army could not afford to garrison soldiers permanently in each urban center. Compelled to fall back upon local resources, the *comandante de patriotas* at Pachuca, Francisco de Paula Villaldea, petitioned the Viceroy for permission to raise companies of *carbineros volantes* of 40 militiamen equipped with lances, machetes, pistols and carbines. They were to patrol the roads and haciendas, escort convoys, and protect agriculture and stockraising.[30]

As was the case throughout New Spain, the enlistment of militia companies placed an immediate and continuing strain upon all financial resources. Since funds were not available from the viceregal treasury, new ways had to be found to tax the population. At regional towns such as Pachuca, Actopan, and Zempoala the district subdelegados and army commanders established juntas to levy new militia support taxes and to administer regional defense. In each of these communities the *comandante militar* worked with a planning and administrative committee composed of the local priest, subdelegado, treasury official, mining deputy, two well known civilian residents, and one delegate from each of the other towns. The juntas decided upon taxes which in mining regions were levied upon silver mining, refining, and district commerce. In agricultural towns, taxes might be placed on grain, other agricultural produce, and on local shops. Much to the disgust of almost all Mexicans, the cities and towns compiled very detailed census reports that estimated the net worth of inhabitants. To underwrite defense expenditures, royalist civilians had to pay *contribuciones obligatorias* levied upon each resident depending upon his or her total income and assets. As might be expected, these military taxes were disliked universally and their long-term exaction placed an extremely heavy burden upon most urban and rural residents who lived under royalist controls. Although insurgent activities greatly reduced or even negated the real values of properties, the hacendados, miners, and merchants had to pay taxes based upon appraised worth of their assets. The levies to support the militias affected wealthy and poor equally and complaints about the unfairness of these taxes formed one issue about which almost everyone could agree.

Returning to the Pachuca jurisdiction for examples, some communities managed to collect their militia support taxes while others for a variety of reasons encountered difficulties. At Tezontepec, a village dependent upon Pachuca, by 1814 the population could not generate a monthly militia tax allotment of 50 pesos. Successive droughts destroyed most crops and marauding insurgents ruined commerce. The *gobernador* of Tezontepec, Jorge Alexandro, attempted to use force, but discovered that poor women had to sell the clothing off their backs to make their payments. In a town that suffered epidemic disease as well as rebel raids, the people had no means of finding basic sustenance let alone to supply surplus funds to pay militia taxes. Lacking other food, many residents wandered off into the hills to gather tunas and nopales.[31] While Comandante Villaldea agreed that no-one liked to pay taxes, he was not convinced by the woes of Tezontepec; he pointed out that the district possessed pulque ranchos and grain fields that were capable of supporting the taxes levied. In his view, the militia tax amounted to only three or four reales per inhabitant--a sum that could be generated by a weekly market.[32]

By 1816, throughout Mexico there was growing resistance to militia obligations and taxation. At Pachuca, quite large numbers of recently amnestied insurgents served under Comandante Villaldea in the urban companies. Former rebel chiefs became royalist militia subaltern officers and all forty members of the local company were pardoned insurgents. Ex-rebel leaders Ciriaco Aguilar and Francisco Islas respectively became captain and lieutenant of the Pachuca company. While Aguilar had to be paid a salary from the militia tax fund, Villaldea supported him since he exhibited "military talent" and was vigorous in

[30]Francisco de Paula Villaldea to Venegas, Pachuca, March 23, 1812, AGN-OG, vol. 894.
[31]Francisco Xavier Viera, cura of Tezontepec to Villaldea, Tezontepec, August, 1814; and report of Jorge Alexandro, gobernador of Tezontepec, to Venegas, August, 1814, AGN-OG, vol. 894.
[32]Villaldea to Venegas, August 24, 1814, AGN-OG, vol. 894

the pursuit of his former rebel comrades. While some royalists were more suspicious, Villaldea felt that the amnestied insurgents showed at least some "religious sentiments and gratitude toward the government".[33] Viceroy Calleja was less optimistic: he agreed with the employment of former rebels, but proposed that no more than fifty of these men should be permitted to enlist in any one company. Surrendered rebel tradesmen, artisans, and any other valuable workingmen were to be sent back to their civilian pursuits where they were of much more use than as additional royalist soldiers.[34]

Insurgent pressures upon the larger cities, as well as on smaller urban centers, made the local royalist militias essential supporters for the regular army even if there was growing opposition to wartime taxes. Indeed, with audacity even small insurgent bands made the royalist defenses look weak. In 1815 rebel horsemen penetrated the fortifications of Puebla and rode through the city unimpeded. Their contempt for the defenders might have been little more than an act of boisterous bravado, but they also demonstrated the difficulties for royalist officers who sought to seal off the cities from contagion.[35] During 1816, just when some royalists believed that they were curbing insurgency, rebel bands attacked the royalist powder magazine at Chapultepec just outside the capital, and raided the Hacienda de los Morales and some houses in Tacubaya.[36] In many of these incidents, the royalist militias were the first line of defense against raiders. The urban companies in smaller centers performed valuable guard duties and protected the major roads from bandits and rebels. At San Juan del Río, for example, urban dragoons from the town chased *ladrones ambulantes* out of the surrounding region. Local haciendas that produced among them over 70,000 fanegas of grain and 1,500 head of livestock annually provided a tempting target. While they were active, the San Juan del Río militia companies granted protection to a wide area and kept these kinds of marginal insurgents at a considerable distance.[37]

But even in towns such as San Juan del Río where royalist forces performed obvious tasks in the suppression of insurgency and banditry, over the years opposition to militia taxation increased. By 1819, rebel pressures appeared to have decreased sufficiently in the region to permit a reduction of the urban militias from five companies to four. The real reason for the proposed demobilization, however, had more to do with growing resistance to the contribuciones militares. After nine years of insurgency and no end in sight, the royalist campaigns to evoke loyalty and continued service were wearing thin. Anticipating trouble with wartime taxes, on July 1, 1818, Viceroy Apodaca approved the use of harsh forms of compulsion to collect the required sums. When the administrator of the royal mail at San Juan del Río, Juan González Garay, refused to pay more than 600 pesos in back militia taxes owing from his hacienda, he was arrested and thrown into jail.[38] In smaller communities the burden of taxation upon the poor had become intolerable. The *ayuntamiento* of Miacatlán reported in 1820: "It is not possible to describe the supreme rigor that the contribucion militar has exacted in these provinces". Some Indians who did not have a real or half-real to pay their taxes were despoiled of their few "miserable rags" and left in shameful nudity.[39]

The restoration of the Spanish Constitution in 1820 gave ayuntamientos throughout Mexico the excuse they needed to abolish the contribuciones militares. In theory the royalist militia companies were to have been replaced by a new *milicia nacional*. In fact, the whole royalist local defense system collapsed. Army commanders in the major provinces watched in horror as the defensive system crumbled and disappeared. Very few ayuntamientos could or would continue taxation unpopular with all classes of the

[33]Francisco de Paula Villaldea to Calleja, Pachuca, August 17, 1816, AGN-OG, vol. 895.
[34]Calleja to Villaldea, August 20, 1816, AGN-OG, vol. 536.
[35]Moreno y Dáoiz to Calleja, February 15, 1815, AGN-OG, vol. 536.
[36]José Mendívil, Sargento Mayor de Mexico, to Calleja, February 22, 8186' and Mendivil to Calleja, May 29,1816, AGN-OG, vol. 596.
[37]Gaspar de Reina, Comandante de San Juan del Río, to Venadito, January 9, 1819, AGN-OG, vol. 980.
[38]Reina to Venadito, December 22, 1819, AGN-OG, vol. 980.
[39]Ayuntamiento of Miacatlán to the Presidente y vocales de la Exma. Diputación Provincial de México, November 4, 1820, AGN-OG, vol. 455.

populace. In Puebla jurisdiction, only Izúcar and Tlapa kept their urban militias. Elsewhere, towns were left wide open just at the moment when Agustín de Iturbide declared for independence.[40] In many regions, units of amnestied insurgents changed sides once again to embrace the new rebellion.

The rapid collapse of the urban royalist forces came as a near spontaneous reaction to the oppression of a decade of war. From a military point of view the loss of local forces introduced a process of rapid implosion that saw regular army units abandon strategic positions and fall back upon the provincial capitals and then to Mexico City. As this occurred, desertion of both Mexican and Spanish soldiers wracked the army and permitted Iturbide's followers to take control with very limited bloodshed.[41] In many respects former royalist officers were able to forestall conflicts between the old insurgents and new-minted supporters of Iturbide's Army of the Three Guarantees. In a number of cities and towns rumors of new governments during March, 1821, were sufficient to launch the populace into an outpouring of exaltation with church bells ringing and rockets being fired. At Puebla, Brigadier Ciriaco de Llano had to authorize three artillery salvos of celebration to avoid a general riot by excited townspeople and soldiers. The city musicians were called out to give impromptu public concerts.[42] Although actual independence was still some months in the future, it was as if the Spanish regime had ceased to exist.

Iturbide's guarantees of independence, religion, and union disguised the basic grievances that had opened the urban-rural rifts. While there was a general wish to be rid of the contribuciones militares, this came in part from recognition that the guerrilla war simply could not be ended and that there was no end in sight to the oppressive military presence. The restoration of the Constitution and the end of the noxious taxes reflected only one aspect of war weariness. Indeed, before Iturbide offered a new means of salvation it appeared that conditions might grow worse rather than better. The Constitution opened the way to criticism of officials who had enjoyed authoritarian powers. More important, the demobilization of urban and rural militia forces increased the danger of rebel and bandit incursions. Some towns feared rebel terror campaigns if they took the step of attempting to elect constitutional ayuntamientos.[43]

Many administrators believed that the Spanish Constitution could legitimize the escape of subject communities--particularly those populated by Indians--from the central controls of subdelegados and provincial intendants. From Santa Ana de México for example, Subdelegado José María Torres complained that the Constitution"...was a printed patent that authorizes them [towns] to violate the laws with impunity and to evade any recognized authority". He could not dispatch patrols to all of the communities in his districts all of the time. The worst outbreaks of violence occurred on fiesta days when drunkenness and quarrels became a major source of irritation. The churches were almost empty, pulque was sold before mass, and school masters reported that they suffered continual insults from Indians who had lost all respect for authority.[44]

Isolated complaints of this nature might be dismissed, but there were numerous signs of a breakdown in public order. In January, 1821, the Subdelegado of Huejutla, Francisco Ortiz, informed the Intendant of Mexico about similar problems with Indian pueblos. Taltocán and Ixcatlán, towns of over 1,000 inhabitants each, were reported to be living in a vacuum, refusing to recognize superior authority, and drifting without any form or order. Residents refused to pay legitimate taxes, wandered about without discipline of any kind,

[40]Ciriaco de Llano to Venadito, Puebla, no. 1050, September 11, 1820, AGN-OG, vol. 461; Llano to Venadito, no. 1292, March 28, 1821, AGN-OG, vol. 326; and Juan Rafols to Venadito, Toluca, March 29, 1821, AGN-OG, vol. 814.

[41]One of the best examples was Puebla, where Ciriaco de Llano sought to protect the city and at the same time fought a losing battle to keep roads open to Veracruz, Oaxaca, Tehuacán, Orizaba, and Córdoba; see Llano to Venadito, no. 1225, March 6, 1821, AGN-OG, vol. 326.

[42]*Ibid.*

[43]José Joaquín Abalía to Ramón Gutiérrez del Mazo, Indendant of Mexico, Toluca, July 1, 1820; and Jose Maria Garcia Figueroa to Gutiérrez del Mazo, Sinacantepec, July 10, 1820, AGN-OG, vol. 391.

[44]José María Torres to Venadito, Santa Ana de México, November 23, 1820, AGN-OG, vol. 457.

drank to excess, and withheld their children from schools. Ortiz wanted to introduce modified ayuntamientos that would be constitutional in form, but would function more like the old *repúblicas* that met the needs of internal government and the local economy. He rejected any possibility of implanting truly constitutional ayuntamientos since the people did not comprehend the principles of the new system, lacked sufficient knowledge of the Castilian language, and depended entirely upon their old superiors.[45]

For the colonial bureaucracy, the army commanders, and others exhausted by war and taxation, Iturbide promised salvation from anarchy unleashed by guerrilla warfare and by the Spanish Constitutional system. It is not remarkable that many officials of the colonial regime made the transition to independence and kept their posts as if there had been no severing of the imperial ties. By joining Iturbide they saw a means to end the insurgency and the erosion of authority. Army officers, many of them European Spaniards who had made lucrative careers in Mexico, believed that they could continue in their positions. With some of the old insurgent leaders, they subsumed the rural bands and the much-amnestied rebel soldiers. Exhausted by a decade of warfare, both rural and urban populations viewed Iturbide as a savior who would restore peace and prosperity. Commanders such as Antonio López de Santa Ana already enjoyed provincial power bases for the future. Although Iturbide ended the truly revolutionary aspects of the Indpendence period, all of the issues remained to be resolved. Regions such as the Dirección del Sur, that had emerged as a center of insurgency, remained committed to revolution. The desire of the rural population for land and freedom from controls remained unfulfilled. The real revolution or revolutions in the Independence Era were invertebrate struggles that took place beyond the will of a single leader or of any philosophy. What appeared to royalist officers as banditry was often an effort by landless peoples to break free of established restrictions and to move away into the barrancas and mountains where they could live by subsistence agriculture. Rigorous counterinsurgency and campaigns to concentrate the population worked to a limited degree, but without reforms such as those introduced in Veracruz by Liñán and Santa Ana, amnesties did not end insurgency. Iturbide's panacea proved to be no better solution, but revolution could be postponed. The elements remained in place only to reappear a hundred years later.

[45]Francisco de Ortiz to Gutiérrez del Mazo, Huejutla, January 22, 1821, AGN-OG, vol. 455.