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PHILLIPS TALBOT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEXICAN LAND REFORM

A Report by James G. Maddox

Mexico, D. F. July 3, 1957

Land and Liberty! was the most intense and often-repeated battle cry of The Revolution, which drenched Mexico in blood from 1910 to 1920 and then settled down to the arduous task of remaking the social organization of the country. political rallies, town meetings, guerrilla camps and village streets; wherever men dreamed of full stomachs and that age-old right to sit under their own vines and fig trees, the demand for Land, Land for the Peasants! resounded. Sometimes the cry was for land and liberty; sometimes it was for land and schools; later it was for land and roads. But always it was for LAND.

Thousands of men died in the hundreds of skirmishes and scores of fairsized battles in the fight for land. of their struggles has come a new country, with many of the characteristics of a modern commercial society. The marching, barefoot peones, with their rusty old rifles and glistening machetes, who were the unshaven and undisciplined soldiers of the bloody decade from 1910 to 1920, sounded the death knell of one kind of society -- an aristocratic, agrarian feudalism -- while at the same time they signaled the rise of modern Mexico. But these humble souls knew nothing of the great changes they were fathering. They were fighting for land. True enough, they wanted more than land. They wanted freedom from landlord domination. They wanted They wanted schools for their children. to become citizens of their country. to a remarkable degree all of these things

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were wrapped up in the desire for land. If only a man had his own land, the other things would somehow come to pass.

They won their battle. For more than 40 years now Mexico has had, and continues to have, a program of land re-The power of the hacienda (plantation) system has been broken. There are still haciendas and large landholdings of various types, but according to the 1950 census 44 per cent of the crop land of the nation was in ejidos, the peculiar landowning institution which the Mexicans set up as the mechanism for returning the land to the peasants. Most of this ejido land was once privately owned in large holdings. Moreover, throughout the past generation no government has dared forget the land reform laws. There have been many ups and downs in the battle for land. The laws have been changed countless times. Arguments have waxed and waned as to the speed at which land distribution should take Objectives have not been clear. place. Administration of the laws has often been weak and sometimes corrupt. The struggle still goes on. But to a much greater extent than in any other country of Latin America, Mexico has had her land reform -a full 40 years of it.

Now it is time to take stock; to try to strike some kind of a balance among the debits and credits of the land reform program. Land reform has been a potent part of the whole social-political-economic revolution that has swept the country in the last half-century. We need to see it in this context, and to try to get some answer to the question: "Is land reform a necessary or inevitable feature of the great social c'anges which come over a country in moving from feudalistic agrarianism to a modern industrial and commercial society?" This kind of question has important implications for many other countries, and for many different kinds of programs that are aimed at speeding up progress in the underdeveloped areas of the world. Second, we need to look at the Mexican experience with land reform in terms of the question: "What effects has it had on the production and

JAMES G. MADDOX is an agricultural economist who for 20 years has had a professional interest in the relationship of agricultural problems to national and international affairs, with special emphasis on Latin America, Holder of the Ph.D. degree in economics from Harvard University, he also has studied at the University of Arkansas, the University of Wisconsin, and the London School of Economics. He has held several senior posts in the U.S. Government. As special assistant to the Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, he was secretary to the American Delegation at the founding conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Immediately prior to joining the AUFS, he was for some years associated with two private agencies founded by Nelson Rockefeller and concerned with underdeveloped areas of Latin America: he served as assistant director of the American International Association and later as vice-president of the International Development Services.

distribution of wealth, and in what ways has it influenced Mexico's progress toward the twin goals of raising levels of living and achieving greater democracy in her political and social processes?"

Obviously, these are big, perhaps even pompous, questions. They are not subject to definitive answers as are the problems in an arithmetic book. I have no illusions about being able to say the last word on them. Yet, they are the kind of questions to which we need answers. Land reform has not been a piddling thing in Mexico. If there is any country in the democratic world where we should be able to see the effects of great changes in land-tenure systems on a whole society, Mexico is the place. Obviously, we must go beyond the task of describing what has happened. Yet, a bit of past history is necessary.

LAND DISTRIBUTION IN 1910

Modern Mexico dates from The Revolution of 1910. Out of the turmoil of that Revolution the land reform program was born and nurtured. At the beginning of our descriptive sketch it is, therefore, well to take a brief look at the distribution of land ownership at the end of the Porfirio Diaz regime which had governed the country for 34 years, and which was toppled from power by Francisco I. Madero, the first of the revolutionary presidents.1 Data are, of course, insufficient to provide an accurate picture. However, as Simpson says: "It is clear that there were three principal forms of land tenure: the hacienda, or large, landed estate, the rancho, or small farm, and, finally, the landholding It is also clear that the bulk of the land was held by relatively few haciendas, a much smaller area by a relatively large number of ranchos, and perhaps a still smaller area by the villages." From figures which McBride worked out, based on the 1910 census and a few other sources, it appears that from 90 to 95 per cent of the heads of rural families in Mexico did not own any land. In all but one state the proportion who were landless was greater than 92 per cent. At the other extreme, a few families had really tremendous landholdings. McBride estimated that there were 8,245 haciendas in Mexico in 1910 of over 1,000 hectares each. (A hectare is equivalent to 2.47 acres.) "Many of these properties were known to be of very considerable extent -- thus, it is estimated that 300 of them contained at least 10,000 hectares; 116 around 25,000 hectares; 51 had approximately 30,000 hectares; while 11 are believed to have measured not less than 100,000 hectares each. "2 Tannenbaum says: "Three haciendas occupied the

¹ The two classic works in English pertaining to the Mexican land problem and the early phases of the land reform program are:

McBride, The Land Systems of Mexico; and Simpson, The Ejido,

Mexico's Way Out. I have relied heavily on the latter for the material in this section.

²Simpson, ibid., p. 32.

186 miles between Saltillo and Zacatecas. The properties of the Terrazas family in Chihuahua were comparable in extent to Costa Rica. In the state of Hidalgo the Central Railroad passed through the Escandón estates for a distance of 90 miles. In lower California foreign companies owned seventy-eight per cent of the land, an area greater than Ireland. The haciendas of La Honda and Santa Catalina in Zacatecas contained about 419,000 acres. The state of Morelos belonged to thirty-two families...."

Regardless of the exact accuracy of the figures -- and the data can be viewed only as rough approximations -- the Mexico of 1910 was a country in which most of the people were landless, while a relatively small number of rich families owned fabulous areas of land. Moreover, the workers on the haciendas, the peones, lived in animallike poverty. They were kept illiterate, were paid extremely low wages, and were customarily in debt to the hacienda store. The laws were such that a peon was not allowed to legally leave the hacienda unless he could pay his debts. This was a form of debt servitude which bordered on slavery. The peones were never bought and sold as chattels, but they were effectively bound to the hacienda by debts. Although many of the hacienda owners spent most of their time in the cities and left the direction of their properties in the hands of hired managers, many of them maintained luxurious homes on their haciendas -- places of such sumptuousness that not a few have been turned into hotels and clubs within recent decades since the land has been taken away from the owners.

In this report we need not be concerned with the various ways and means by which the land of Mexico had been gobbled up by a relatively small number of large holders. This story has been well written by McBride, Simpson, and others, and its highlights can be found in most of the books on Mexican history. One point, however, is relevant. Before the Spanish conquest, the typical landholding unit was the Indian village. Although private property in the sense of individual private ownership was not unknown, the villages were the principal landowners. Sometimes the land was worked in common, but generally some sort of a village council assigned small tracts of the village property to individuals to cultivate. This system of village ownership continued during the early years of the Colonial period. As the years went by, however, and particularly from about 1860 until the end of the Diaz regime in 1911, great numbers of villages were deprived of their lands. The residents of the villages, many of whom by this time were mixed-bloods (mestizos), became dependent on the new landholders for jobs. Their lands had been taken away from them; they were now wage earning peones bound to the hacienda by the debts they incurred for their meager rations of food, clothing and pulque (a cheap alcoholic drink made from the fermented juice of the maguey plant). Since the land had

³Tannenbaum, Mexico, The Struggle for Peace and Bread, p. 137.

been taken away from the villages, much of it illegally, the early arguments for land reform were little more than the straightforward contention that the land should be returned to its original and rightful owners -- the villages. The promotion of individual, private-farm ownership, as we know it in the United States, has been a minor feature of the Mexican land reform program. Mainly, land reform has called for a return to the original Indian system of village ownership of the land. The name given to the land owned by a village is ejido. Thus, an ejido is a tract of land owned by a village, and usually operated in individual tracts by the families who live in the village.

A SKETCH OF THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM

Francisco I. Madero, the son of a wealthy landowning family in northern Mexico, launched his revolution against Porfirio Diaz in 1910 and won the Presidency in 1911 with the slogan: "Effective Suffrage and no Re-election." His was a political program. He is reported to have said in a speech in 1910, "The people do not ask for bread; they ask for liberty." His fight was against the continuing reign of Diaz. He thought that if the people were allowed to have honest and free elections, and if presidents were prevented from succeeding themselves in office, the other problems of Mexico would somehow take care of themselves. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. Madero had hardly taken office before one of his earlier supporters, Emiliano Zapata, an illiterate mestizo sharecropper, became convinced that he would do nothing about the land problem and started a revolt against him. Zapata was the real father of Mexico's land reform. His whole revolutionary career was built around the one simple idea of returning the land to the people. When he revolted in the fall of 1911, against Madero, he immediately had thousands of fellow peones ready and willing to fight for his cause which, more than any other issue, was their cause. Within a few weeks the Zapatistas had control of a large area of the country just south of Mexico City. When Madero sent troops to the state of Morelos, the center of Zapata's area of operations, to put down the rebellion, Zapata published his Plan de Ayala, which Simpson says was, "one of the most famous documents of the revolution and the first crystallization of the real aims of the struggling masses." A part of its preamble reads as follows:

"Let Señor Madero -- and with him all the world -- know that we shall not lay down our arms until the ejidos of our villages are restored to us, until we are given back the lands which the hacendados stole from us during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, when justice was subjected to his caprice. We shall not lay down our arms until we cease to be the unhappy tributaries of the despotic magnates and landholders of Morelos..."

ASimpson, op. cit., who quoted it from Helen Phipps, Some Aspects of the Agrarian Question in Mexico.

Zapata's Plan de Ayala was little more than a battle cry; an important statement of the peon's readiness to fight until he got his land. It insisted, however, that people and villages should immediately be given the lands of which they had been illegally deprived if they could show title. And for those who had neither land nor title the Plan proposed that private properties be expropriated and given to individuals and villages who would farm the land for their own benefit. The owners would be paid one-third of the value of the land thus taken. Moreover, Zapata backed up his ideas with machetes, guns and troops -- troops of untrained, undisciplined peones, who roamed high and wide throughout south central Mexico, killing a few landlords, despoiling hacienda headquarters, stealing horses to ride and cattle to eat, taking church ornaments for sale, and generally creating havoc, until the spring of 1919, when Zapata was lured into an ambush and shot.

In the meantime, Madero had lasted in office barely 15 months before he was replaced by General Victoriano Huerta, who managed to stick it out for about 18 months. During most of the period from early 1912 until late 1914, the country was in turmoil. In August 1914, Venustiano Carranza assumed executive power as First Chief of the Constitutionalist Army and began to bring a little order out of the chaos and bloodshed. He took office as Constitutional President in May 1917, following elections which had been held in the preceding month. He was the first of the revolutionary presidents to show any understanding of the social forces that had been unleashed with the downfall There is little evidence to indicate that Carranza approached the status of a great statesman, or that he had in mind a program of social reform for the country, but he at least appears to have recognized that he needed the support of the land hungry rural masses and the few organized laborers that existed in Mexico at that time, if he was to hold power. knew that he couldn't get and maintain this support without doing something about the land problem. He had hardly taken office, in the summer of 1914, before both Zapata and Pancho Villa took up arms against him. Zapata and his followers were clearly fighting for land. Villa may have been fighting for the pure joy of the chase and the plunder that he could get, but many of his followers wanted land. Zapata's and Villa's armies forced Carranza out of Mexico City in the fall of 1914, and with his back to the sea he issued his famous Plan de Veracruz in December 1914. "This pronouncement, among other things, announced Carranza's intention to restore the communal lands to the villages unjustly deprived of them; to enact laws which would break up the latifundia and encourage small rural properties; to establish free municipal government as a constitutional institution; to inaugurate an equitable system of taxation for rural property; and, in general, 'to expedite and put in force all of the laws, measures and means...and to effect the reforms necessary for the purpose of establishing a regime which will guarantee the equality of the Mexicans among themselves. 195

⁵Simpson, op. cit.

Here at last were promises which began to make sense to the peones who made up Zapata's and Villa's armies. Neither of these two guerrilla chiefs was able to govern the country, mainly because they were more nearly akin to bandits than to statesmen, and Carranza's promises began to weaken the allegiance of their forces. As Simpson puts it, "Carranza finally spoke in the tongue of the true revolution." Soon afterward he began to win battles. He followed up his Plan de Veracruz with the famous decree of January 6, 1915, which became the Magna Charta of the subsequent land reform program. This decree, issued by Carranza more than two years before he was elected president (though he was presumably exercising the executive power by virtue of having declared himself the "First Chief of the Constitutionalist Army Charged with the Executive Power") provided: "...first, that all alienations of village lands, forests and waters affected by the misapplication of the law of June 26, 1856, through illegal acts of surveying companies, through enclosures, or other illegal means are null and void...second, 'villages which needing them, do not have ejidos or which cannot secure their restoration because of lack of titles, difficulty of identification, or because they have been legally alienated shall have the right to obtain a sufficient portion of land to reconstruct them [the ejidos] in accordance with the necessities of the community, the National Government expropriating the necessary lands [terrenos indispensables] to that effect from those immediately adjoining the communities in question. ""6 This kind of language acted as a strong sedative on the peones who were fighting with Zapata and Villa against Carranza. Within two months after the issuance of this decree, Carranza's leading general, Alvaro Obregón, had defeated Villa and was driving his forces back to the north of the country.

The issuance of this decree, which later was incorporated into the famous Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, might well be called the beginning of the political-economic-social revolution from which modern Mexico sprang. It was the first semblance of a revolutionary program. Before it, The Revolution had no doctrine, no ideology, no 'ism, no program. Simpson puts the point well when he says, "Up to 1915 it was nip and tuck, an even chance, whether or not out of the tangle of events, the conflicts of personalities and purposes, and the spilled blood of endless battles, there was to be brought forth a real social revolution or another one of those military abortions which had so often disfigured the pages of Mexican history. After 1915, although at times leaders (and not the least of them Carranza himself) faltered and traitors betrayed the cause, generally speaking, the social and economic objectives of the revolution were definitely in the ascendancy. The decree of 1915, although it long remained a paper victory, was a triumph nonetheless; for it became a standard against which thenceforth the acts of the revolutionary leaders were to be measured. * It is very much

Simpson, op. cit., p. 57.

worth noting that Carranza was forced into issuing his <u>Plan de Veracruz</u> and his decree of January 6, 1915. He had launched his revolt against Victoriano Huerta, the man who had brought about the arrest and subsequent murder of Madero, in March 1913. However, he had been unable to gain the support necessary to govern the country until he at least promised to carry out a land reform program. When he made these promises, his going became easier.

Moreover, there is little reason to believe that Carranza held any firm convictions about social reform. He saw the problems of Mexico largely in terms of politics, as had Madero, the first of the revolutionary presidents, but Carranza was more of a political opportunist than Madero. Even when he made his second bid for popular support by calling a constitutional convention in the fall of 1916, from which came Mexico's novel -- even radical --Constitution of 1917 Carranza was not the proponent of the liberal ideas which went into that famous document. They sprang from a few of his intellectual advisers and from army officers fresh from the fields of battle with Villa and Zapata. The major provisions of the 1917 Constitution have been described in various publications. 7 For the purposes of this report it is sufficient to point out that the new constitution retained the democratic precepts of the old Constitution of 1857, such as, freedom of association, worship and speech, representative government, universal suffrage, periodic elections, separation of powers, rights of trial by jury, and the independence of state and municipal governments. In addition, it took some bold steps forward: in Article 27, which pertained to land reform and the right of the government to expropriate private property; in Article 123 which pertained to the rights of labor and provided the basis for an extensive labor movement; and in Article 130, which restricted the rights of the Church. These articles contained some very potent social medicine, and to quite an extent were in conflict with the individualistic ideas retained from the Constitution of They embodied in the Constitution itself not only the legal basis for The Revolution, but also its principal aims and objectives. Here, at last, was a full-fledged revolutionary program, the beginnings of which had appeared with Carranza's Plan de Veracruz and his land reform decree of January 6, 1915.

But the whole thing was on paper, and Carranza didn't believe in what was written. Although he was elected president a few months fter the 1917 Constitution was proclaimed, he did practically nothing to implement its new and potent provisions. Even before the new constitution was written, Carranza had dictated decrees which began to pull the teeth of his famous decree of January 6, 1915. He was a man constantly torn between the Old and the New. His allegiance was to the Old, but he could stay in power only by making obeisance to the New. He was

⁷Among the sources in English see: Tannenbaum, Mexico, The Struggle for Peace and Bread; Whetten, Rural Mexico; Simpson, The Ejido, Mexico's Way Out; and Cline, The United States and Mexico.

sufficiently agile at carrying water on both shoulders to serve out most of his term before he was killed in May 1920, when he was attempting to flee from Mexico City in a train loaded with the public treasury. For six months Mexico had a provisional president until elections were held and Alvaro Obregón took office as constitutional president on December 1, 1920. It was Obregón who began to put into practice the promises which Carranza had made and the program which had been written into the Constitution of 1917.

Some students suggest that The Revolution was over when Obregon assumed power. Others call it the end of "the epic Revolution." The point is, most of the internal fighting and bloodshed stopped after Obregon began to carry out the program written into the Constitution of 1917. Of much greater importance is the fact that the old agrarian aristocracy had lost political control of the country. The rich, landed families had not yet lost all political power, but they were now a minority group. Many of them had fled the country, leaving their children or younger relatives behind to try to salvage the family fortune. Political control had been won by representatives of the people, and it was being backed up and supported by the army. Obregon had been a popular general, from a middle-class background, and he could count on army support to carry out a program which would move in the general direction of the objectives which the liberal to "left-wing" intellectuals had written into the Constitution of 1917.

Three points about the bloody decade from 1910 to 1920 should not escape us: first, the wresting of political control from the hands of an elite group by representatives of the common people was the great and obvious achievement; second, this accomplishment was not brought about by resort to purely political objectives, such as Madero's slogan of "Effective Suffrage and no Re-election," but rather by a leadership which promised to alter the economic organization of society through land reform, the organization of labor unions, the control of monopolies, and similar lines of action; and, third, it took a full decade between the time Francisco I. Madero launched his revolt against Porfirio Díaz, in October 1910, until Álvaro Obregón assumed office, in December 1920, for the groundwork of the transition to be laid. Let us remember that very little more than the laying of the groundwork had been accomplished. By 1920, little land had been distributed; not even a start had been made on the educational problem; labor had not been effectively organized; and levels of living had not been significantly raised. The country was, in fact, still confused and disorganized from the internal civil war, even though some order had been brought into the picture during the Carranza period. The Old had been partially crushed and the New had risen to political power. In fact, the economic and social revolution had just started. This revolution has proven to have many facets, and from time to time first one feature and then another has been pulled into the foreground to receive special billing, but land reform has always been one of

the major supporting beams of the revolutionary structure. Moreover, it seems quite safe to say that no other single idea or
objective gave as much steam and fighting power to the revolutionary cause. The promise of land was more nearly than anything
else the crucial commitment on which the new political leadership
rose to power.

This, however, did not mean that large numbers of haciendas were rapidly broken up, and that hundreds of villages with thousands of peones immediately began receiving land. On the contrary, progress was quite slow. Although Obregon distributed more land during his first year in office (1921) than Carranza had done during the preceding five years, thus showing that he at least believed in the program of land redistribution, he nevertheless acted with considerable caution. There were no operating plans available to guide the program. There were objectives, as written into the decree of January 6, 1915, and later incorporated into the Constitution of 1917, but nobody had an operating program for reaching the objectives. Moreover, there was strenuous opposition on the part of landholders and many people of a generally conservative bent. No opportunity was overlooked for throwing up roadblocks to any kind of action program aimed at destroying the haciendas. Some kind of answers had to be given to questions such as:

What type of village or settlement was to be eligible to receive land grants? Which people within a village were to be entitled to receive parcels after land had been given to the village? What were to be the rules of tenure for the individuals? How was the land to be acquired? Was it to be paid for? If so, with what?

Answers had to be given to these and hundreds of similar questions. But nobody had the answers. Or perhaps it is more correct to say that everybody had an answer.

Moreover, even among the revolutionary leaders themselves there was no body of crystallized opinion as to some of the fundamentals. For instance, was the ejido pattern -- the village ownership of land and the granting of tracts to individuals -to be visualized as a permanent tenure system prevailing over a large and significant part of the total land of the nation? Or was this system of tenure merely a steppingstone to individual private ownership? Or were the individual peones to have small subsistence tracts assigned them from ejido land while they still remained hired laborers on private haciendas with the latter constituting the principal form of landownership and the main source of the nation's agricultural production? Even to this day some of these questions are still being debated. In the meantime, however, great strides have been made in breaking up the hacienda system of agriculture and replacing it with the ejido pattern of tenure. At the same time, the increase in the number of individual, small farms has been significant.

During the Obregón and Calles administrations (Plutarco Elías Calles succeeded Obregón and served as president from 1924 to 1928 and continued to dominate the Mexican political scene until Lázaro Cárdenas became president at the end of 1934) the mechanics for land distribution were worked out and put into practice. In general terms, they were as follows:

- 1. The basic unit for receiving land was the village or rural settlement. Each village seeking land had to petition a special unit of the government and ask that its former lands be restored or that it be given land if it could not prove previous possession. After the necessary investigations, hearings, and surveys, the final decision was made be the President of the Republic and published as a presidential decree.
- 2. The land which could be distributed to any given village had to be taken from public or private holdings within a radius of seven kilometers from the center of the village. If suitable public land was available it was to be taken in preference to private holdings, but the latter were expropriated when suitable public land was not available. Generally, this meant expropriation of private holdings.
- 3. The private owners were allowed, of course, to keep a part of their land. Not all of it could be legally taken from them, but there were hundreds of cases, particularly during the period of internal civil war, when whole haciendas were taken over by the neighboring peones. Usually, however, an area not to exceed 100 hectares of irrigated or humid land, or 200 hectares of seasonal land or its equivalent, was exempt from expropriation. For land devoted to cotton, certain other crops, and to livestock ranching the size of the exempt acreage was larger.
- 4. The private owners were allowed to choose the land which was to be exempt. Usually they chose the best land, and that with buildings or irrigation dams, wells, canals and similar hydraulic works.
- 5. Until 1931, the private owners were paid for their land, usually months after it had been expropriated, in special agrarian bonds. These bonds soon became practically worthless, except for the payment of certain taxes, and since 1931 the government has not even gone through the mechanics of issuing them. Although a few men gathered up large amounts of these bonds for a few cents on the dollar and succeeded in getting them redeemed at a value considerably higher than they paid for them, thus reaping a sizeable speculative gain, most land owners have never been paid for the land which went into ejidos. Theoretically, they still

have claims against the government. Practically, their land was confiscated.

- 6. After the land was surveyed and transferred to a village, the pasture lands and the woodlands remained the collective property of the ejido, which now became a landowning and land-managing agency. Likewise, the right to use irrigation water was vested in the ejido. The crop land may be farmed either collectively or as individual holdings. There are some collective ejidos (about 600 of a total of 18,000 in 1950), but usually There are some collective ejidos the crop land was divided into individual tracts and given to the villagers for their use. If, in a given village, there were too many eligible families for the land which was available, the distribution of tracts was made through the simple lottery system of drawing numbers out of a hat. No attempt was made to select the best qualified farmers, and fit land to their needs and abilities. The eligibles who did not receive land were given certificates entitling them to land in other areas if and when it became available.
- 7. The individual who has received a tract of the ejido land is called an ejidatario. He has the right to use the parcel assigned him, and he can pass this right of use along to one of his heirs. The tract cannot, however, be fragmented and passed along to several heirs. Neither can the ejidatario legally sell, mortgage or rent his parcel of land. According to law, if he fails to work it for two years in succession he loses his rights to it, and it reverts to the ejido for assignment to some other eligible ejidatario or for use by the ejido as a part of its common property. In actual practice, this feature of the law is loosely enforced. In some poor land areas, there are many abandoned tracts that have not been reassigned, and in good land areas it is not uncommon for an ejidatario to make some sort of a rental arrangement for someone else to work his tract while he himself has a job as a day laborer, sometimes as a bracero (field hand) in the United States, sometimes in his own village, maybe working as a laborer for a man who has "rented" several ejidatarios! parcels, or even in a neighboring city as a factory employee.
- 8. Although the land which can be taken from individual owners and given to a village or settlement must be within seven kilometers of the center of the village, there is a provision in the law which allows for the establishment of new villages which can become eligible to receive land. Thus, a group of residents of a given village may move to a new location, near the private lands of one or more haciendas, and establish a new settlement for the express purpose of becoming eligible

to receive ejido lands. This has happened in numerous instances. Although these new settlements sometimes have considerable trouble, and months or years of delay, in getting themselves legally recognized as being eligible for ejido lands, the process of creating new villages has been an important means by which the land reform program has been extended far beyond the seven-kilometer limit of the villages that were in existence at the time the program started.

The whole process of transferring land from private holdings to the status of ejidos, and the assignment of the ejido land to individual residents of the village was complicated and time consuming. Villages had to make petitions for the land; the eligibility of the village to receive land had to be determined, and the laws and regulations pertaining to eligibility changed many times over the years; the land had to be classified and surveyed and boundaries established; often land was taken from several nearby private holdings and the amount to be taken from each had to be determined. The owners had to be given time to select the land which they wanted to keep, and its lines had to be surveyed; the eligibility of individual residents within the village to receive ejido land had to be determined (eligibility requirements were often changed, but generally, an eligible recipient had to be a Mexican by birth, over 16 years of age, a resident of the village for at least six months before making application, and a person who customarily made his living from agriculture); an executive committee of local ejidatarios to manage and control the ejido property had to be established for each village receiving land, and a vigilance committee was also established to keep a watchful eye on the executive committee.

All of these and scores of related steps were not only time consuming, but they soon became highly legalistic and bound up with red tape. Moreover, the landlords fought every step of the way. For many years, they had the right of amparo (injunction), and the courts were often sympathetic to the landholders, with the result that there were endless court procedures and countless maneuvers for delaying final decisions as long as possible. Moreover, there were few qualified personnel to make the many findings of eligibility, and to carry out the land surveys that were involved. The peones, the people who wanted land, were illiterate, ignorant of law and of government regulations, and the easy prey of false leaders. A common practice was for the landholders and their representatives, often including ambitious politicians, to split the villagers into two groups, with one petitioning for land while the other insisted that all was serene withing the village, and that only a few trouble makers wanted to break up the hacienda and convert it into an ejido. This kind of a situation made it virtually impossible for the government agents who went in to take a census of the village and make the land surveys to tell who was who and what was what. Moreover, the government agents were ill-paid: subject to all sorts of dangers and political and landlord pressures; and never quite sure whether their

findings and recommendations would be supported by their supervisors or whether they would find themselves transferred to some out-of-the-way place where they couldn't make trouble for an important politician.

In the background of the whole process, was the important fact that Mexico had been torn by civil war and drenched in the blood of its own citizens for almost a decade preceding the effective beginnings of the land reform program. The gun and the machete were important instruments of social intercourse. The use of force and the willingness to murder were constant competitors of law and order for several years after organized fighting had come to an end. Moreover, land reform was an emotionally-charged subject. The expropriation of private property to turn it over to people who only a few years before had had a status hardly different from that of slaves, struck deep, hard blows at the very heart of the value systems of many people who were only indirectly connected with either the landowning group or the new type of government politician and bureaucrat who had aligned himself, sometimes for quite selfish reasons, with the needs and desires of the common people. When one takes account of all the many difficulties involved, it was something of a miracle that the land reform program was carried out as rapidly as it was. On the other hand, the ardent agrarian or the person who views the processes of government as being smooth and efficient (or thinks they should be) can find much to criticize.

Looking back to 1915 one can see three fairly distinct periods in the land reform movement.

The 19 years from 1916 through 1934: During most of this time, land reform was a slow moving process. The basic laws and administrative organization were being established. The prevailing philosophy alternated between two points of view. By some the granting of land to ejidatarios was viewed as a step toward establishing them as small, individual proprietors. By others the ejidatario was viewed as a person who would have continuing rights to a subsistence tract of land while he made most of his living by working on the large privately-owned haciendas. Obviously, the points of view were quite different. In one case, the ejidatario, after a few years of experience, would move on to the status of a small independent farmer -- the Jeffersonian ideal. In the other case, he would remain a hired man on a large farm, but he would have continuing rights to use a small subsistence unit from which he could supplement his wages. In neither case would the ejido dominate a large proportion of the total land in the country.

In the later years of this period, many of the early revolutionary leaders had more or less sickened

of land reform. This was particularly true of Calles, who was president from 1924 to 1928 and continued as the "Supreme Chief of the Revolution" and the maker of subsequent presidents until Cardenas finally shipped him out of the country in the spring of 1936. Although Calles had done considerably more toward breaking up haciendas, during his administration, than had his predecessors, he seemed to have had a change of heart along about 1930, and under his puppet presidents there was a noticeable slackening in the reform movement and some definite steps were taken to bring land distribution to a halt. At the time that Lázaro Cárdenas assumed office as president in late 1934, the land reform movement was in a crisis. Practically nobody was happy about the results. A good share of the older revolutionists wanted to stop it. A younger and more ardent group of reformers contended that the major difficulty was that land reform hadn't been fast enough and on a large enough scale. More of the same medicine, in large, fast doses, was their prescription for the ailing program.

2. The Cardenas period, 1935 through 1940: President Cardenas took the route of the younger, ardent reformers. He was the ultra-New Deal president of Mexico. The man who expropriated the foreign-owned oil industry and the railroads. The man who brought organized labor into prominence in Mexican national life. The man who distributed over twice as much land during his six years in office as his predecessors had done during the preceding 19 years. In fact, 49 per cent of all the land distributed between 1915 and 1956 exchanged hands during the Cardenas administration. To Cardenas the ejido was a highly desirable system of tenure that should play a permanent and prominent part in the nation's agriculture. With him, there was no shillyshallying about whether ejidos were steppingstones to private ownership or merely subsistence plots for hired farm workers on haciendas. He was interested in using land reform as the weapon for dealing a final blow to the conservative landowning class. This he accomplished.

It was also during the Cárdenas administration (1936) that the Ejido Bank (Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal) was organized as a specialized unit to make credit available to ejidatarios. The breaking up of the haciendas and the giving of the land to the peones, very few of whom had either operating capital or experience in managing a farm, was clearly a threat to agricultural production, if the process was to go ahead at a rapid and extensive pace. Some means had to be found by which the former laborers could be supplied with capital and taught to assume some of the functions of management. The Ejido Bank was set up to fill at least a part of the vacuum created by the elimination

of the landowners and their hacienda administrators. The bank is a government agency which makes loans only to credit societies of ejidatarios. Usually there is only one society on an ejido, all the members of which must be ejidatarios, but many ejidos do not have credit societies. In 1955, there were only 8,114 credit societies, whereas, there were over twice this number of ejidos in the country. Moreover, in that year the bank made loans to slightly less than 5,000 societies. Through the years, the Ejido Bank has developed a system of making loans in the form of seed and fertilizer. In a few cases the bank, or a machinery center, prepares the land and plants the crops for the ejidatarios. These items are, of course, all charged to the account of the borrowing ejidatario, and sometimes the bank receives and sells the crops at the end of the harvest season. In these situations, which are most common in the cash crop producing areas of northern Mexico, the Ejido Bank working through the local credit society, and in close collaboration with the elected ejido leaders, has taken over some of the principal functions of the former landlords.

The post-Cardenas period, 1941 to the present: Since the Cardenas administration, Mexico has turned to the right. Land reform has tapered off, although the amount of land distributed each year has not yet reached the low point that prevailed in the year or two before Cárdenas assumed the presidency. There are three major reasons for the slackening of the land reform program: First, the presidents since Cardenas -- Avila Camacho, Miguel Alemán and Ruíz Cortines -- have not been such fire-eating reformers, and have not viewed land distribution as being of such great importance as did Cardenas. Second, there are not many haciendas with good crop land in the older areas of the country remaining to be broken up. Third, recent governments have put emphasis on bringing new lands into production through both large and small irrigation developments. At the same time, an Agricultural Extension Service has been established, and farmers are being taught to make the available land more productive through the use of fertilizers, improved seeds and insecticides. The land problem is being viewed more in the context of increasing the amount of land available for use and in increasing yields per acre than in terms of redistributing the available land among villagers. Great attention is also being given to industrial development as a means, among other things, of providing jobs to rural workers and thus alleviating the pressure of population on the land. The emphasis now is on greater production, with less attention being given to the idea of redistributing the means of production.

The amount of land distributed and the number of persons receiving land during each of the three major periods are shown by the following data, which have been summarized from Table 1 (see page 18):

	Distri	Hectares buted	Receivin	Number of Persons Receiving Land			
Period	Total	Average per year	Total	Average per year			
1916-34 1935-40 1941-56	7,777,356 17,890,577 11,146,291	409,335 2,981,763 743,086	783,135 814,519 267,276	41,218 135,753 17,818			
Total	36,814,224	920,356	1,864,930	46,623			

It is clear from these data that it was 20 years after the signing of the famous decree of January 6, 1915, the first authorization for land redistribution, before the program was thrown into high gear and began to make significant inroads on the prevailing pattern of tenure.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Most of the land which is now in ejidos was once in privately owned haciendas. Moreover, it is estimated that approximately two-thirds of the land which was originally in haciendas is now in ejidos. According to the 1950 census of agriculture, there were 17,579 ejidos in the country with a total of almost 39 million hectares of land, which was used by approximately 1,553,000 ejidatarios. 8 The land in ejidos represented about 27 per cent of all land in farms, and approximately 44 per cent of the crop land in the country. In addition, the census figures indicate that there were just over one million small-farm owners who had an average of about 1.3 hectares each. Thus, as contrasted with the situation which prevailed at the time Madero started his revolution to overthrow Dfaz in 1910, Mexico is today a country of ejidatarios and small farmers. There are still large farms, and hardly a week goes by without a group of peones in some part of the country petitioning the government for land or for the right to be recognized as a new settlement so that they can qualify to receive land. Nevertheless, the land distribution program, directly and indirectly, has greatly changed the pattern of landownership. Moreover,

The difference between the almost 39 million hectares reported by the census as "land in ejidos" and the nearly 37 million hectares reported by the Agrarian Department as having been "distributed" through the middle of 1956 results from the census including "provisional" ejidos, that is, land in process of being distributed to ejidatarios.

Table 1

Land Distributed by Agrarian Reform Program in Mexico, 1915-1956*

^{*}For the years 1916 through 1945 the data are from Whetten, Rural Mexico, p. 125. For subsequent years the data are from the Departamento Agrario, arranged for my use by courtesy of the Assistant Agricultural Attaché, American Embassy.

^{**}Data for the period January-August inclusive are not available.

the political power of the original class of large landowners has been demolished. As individuals some of the new class of land-owners have significant influence on government administrative practices, but rather largely it is organized labor, the growing middle class, a new group of industrialists, and to a minor extent the ejidatarios, that now hold the political steering wheel. Mexico is no longer a country ruled by the landed aristocracy.

The following data from the 1950 Census of Agriculture are the best available indicators of the tenure status of Mexican farmers. Although the definitions used by the Mexican census are not the same as those that prevail in the United States, the following classification does not do great injustice to the common U.S. terminology:

Type of Tenure	Number of Farmers	Percentage of Total
Ejidatarios Owner-Operators Farm Managers Cash renters Share renters Colonists on government projects Other tenude groups	1,552,926 1,262,317 84,197 7,088) 4,317) 2,736) 4,978)	53.2 43.2 2.9
Total	2,918,559	100

These data indicate that of the almost three million farmers in Mexico in 1950, over 96 per cent were either ejidatarios or owner-operators. The ejidatarios alone outnumbered the total of all other farmers by a small margin. However, since 1950 it is almost certain that the number of private landholders has gained relative to the number of ejidatarios. One would not, therefore, be far wrong to say that as of today, half the farmers of Mexico are ejidatarios and the other half are operators of private farms either as owners or tenants. The ejidatarios, however, operated only about 44 per cent of the total crop land, in 1950, whereas the slightly smaller number of private farmers operated 56 per cent. Moreover, when we add together the number of ejidatarios and the one million private farmers with less than five hectares each, we find that this combined group of about 2,553,000 farmers operated only 51.5 per cent of the nation's crop land, whereas, the remaining farmers -- less than 400,000 in total -- operated the remaining 48.5 per cent. Thus, the ejidatario and his close counterpart, the small owner with less than five hectares of land, though bulking large in the total number of farmers -- about 84 per cent -- control only a little more than half of the nations crop land. The balance is in the hands of private owners with more than five hectares, and a significant part of it is still in a few large holdings. About 23 per cent is in holdings of more than 200 hectares.

The task, therefore, of breaking up the large holdings

is not yet complete, and the process still goes on. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that in recent years private property in farm lands is increasing more rapidly than the ejido system of tenure. For instance, in 1940, soon after the splurge of land distribution by the Cardenas administration, 47.4 per cent of the nation's crop land was in ejidos, whereas, by 1950 the proportion had fallen to 44.1 per cent. The total acres of crop land in ejidos in 1950 was larger, of course, than in 1940, but the increase in ejido land was at a slower rate than with privately owned crop land. No doubt this trend has continued since the 1950 census. Even though all large holdings have not been broken up, and private property is increasing more rapidly in recent years than ejido holdings, the fact remains that Mexico has had a real and significant revolution in her system of land tenure. reform has not only been one of the main facets of the complex social-economic-political movement that has swept the country, commonly known as The Revolution, but it has made sweeping changes in the organization and functioning of the agricultural segment of the economy. Was it necessary? Has it been good or bad for Mexico? These are the remaining problems to be explored in this report.

AN EVALUATION

As a first step toward forming realistic judgments about the Mexican land reform program, we must grasp the simple point that it was an important part of an emotionally charged revolutionary movement, in which one social, economic, and political group -- the landed aristocracy -- was being destroyed by another group. It definitely was not an ethical, rational, scientific process of government administration. It was more analogous to civil war than to a planned program of social and economic reform. How, then, do we evaluate a revolution? I know of no recognized formula for answering this question. However, it seems that we must form some kind of judgments about the results achieved.

If we look at the detailed results, and think in terms of the ordinary indicators of efficiency of public administration, the land reform movement ranks quite low on the totem pole. For instance, haciendas were expropriated without regard for the efficiency with which they were being farmed; there are instances in which holdings of less than 100 hectares, though presumably exempt by law, were expropriated; local politicians sometimes took advantage of the ignorant peones and used the program to enrich themselves; many non-farm workers, such as carpenters, shoemakers, barbers, and even industrial laborers, managed to get themselves counted as agriculturalists and received land; practically no studies were made to determine the amount of land in the various regions of the country that was necessary to support a family or to provide employment for its members; although new villages were created and old ones considerably rearranged as a result of the land distribution program, little attention was given to community planning -- the new communities grew up

in hit-or-miss fashion. Almost any schoolboy can look back over what happened and see countless errors of judgment, an almost total lack of forward planning, inequities in the application of the law, and private gain and personal greed going unchecked even though they were contrary to the spirit and letter of the law and the professed aims of The Revolution. Civil strife, bloodshed, confiscation of private property, greed and errors in its redistribution, were all a part of the process of redistributing the land.

Could it have been done rationally, scientifically, and without violating ordinary ethical standards? Could Mexico have made significant and sustained progress toward raising the levels of living of its citizens by slower, kinder and more rational means? Quite frankly, I don't know the answers to these questions, but I am inclined to answer them in the negative. It seems to me that the old system was so tightly and securely entrenched that it was probably necessary to have Zapata and Villa, with their marauding and killing, to shake Mexican leadership out of its lethargy and to prod it into a program of redistributing land and associated rights and opportunities for the lowly citizens of the country. If I read the history of the period correctly -and much more objective analysis of the early years of The Revolution is badly needed -- the old, landed aristocracy, with its corps of científicos (scientists) as advisers, wasn't willing to give an inch in the direction of wider opportunities for the agricultural peones. The aristocrats wanted foreign capital in railroads, mining, and industry. They were willing that Mexicans should migrate to the United States, where they received much higher wages than prevailed in Mexico, and then return to tell their friends and relatives about the greener pastures on the other side of the border. And somehow they seemed to think that they could allow wages to be increased for Mexican railroad and industrial workers, and permit stories to seep across the border about how the gringoes lived and worked, without doing anything to improve the lot of the agricultural peones on their haciendas. If anything short of armed revolt could have shaken them out of that point of view, I don't know what it could have been. Madero, the first revolutionary president, a well-educated, sensitive, idealistic man, never got the idea. He thought he could retain the support of the people by his slogan, "Effective Suffrage and no Re-election." Carranza, a man who by background and training should have been much closer than Madero to the common people, never even made a promise to improve the lot of the peones until Villa and Zapata had forced him and his army out of Mexico City and had his back to the sea at Veracruz. Even then he merely made promises. He didn't act.

But after the organized shooting was over, couldn't the land redistribution program have been carried out in a fair and efficient manner? Probably not, for the simple reason that the end of the fighting war did not resolve the basic conflict. Eyler Simpson, the man who made the study of land reform up to the Cardenas period, has in his book, The Ejido - Mexico's Way Out,

page after page of description of the struggle over land. It was a hard, and often bloody, struggle all through the twenties and early thirties. Landlords were recalcitrant; the peones and their representatives were often hoodwinked; sometimes the peones were patient, but generally they were adamant that they receive land; laws were not clear, and were constantly being changed; the courts often sided with the landowners almost regardless of how the laws The struggle shifted from battlefields to government were drafted. offices and courtrooms. Two systems of social values were locked in a death struggle. The end of organized shooting didn't resolve this basic conflict. It simply shifted the power of government, and army leadership, from one side to the other. This shift, of course, made The Revolution possible and determined which side would be the ultimate winner, but it didn't provide a setting in which administrators could smoothly and efficiently reach the goal of eliminating the hacienda system of tenure. As far as I know, there is no inexorable law of human behavior which makes it necessary for all countries desiring land reform to go through civil war and extreme social conflict. However, when the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is as wide as it was in Mexico, 40 or 50 years ago, and when the "haves" are unwilling to compromise, even to save their own necks, I dare say that no land reform movement will be free from injustices and inefficiencies of administration.

If I am reasonably correct in believing that Mexican land reform couldn't have been started in the first place without civil war, and could not have been carried through after the end of the formal fighting without significant injustices and inefficiencies in administration, would it have been better if the whole thing had never happened? Couldn't the people of Mexico have enjoyed rising levels of living, modernized their economy, and enjoyed the fruits of modest industrialization without having gone through the bloody mess of land reform? Again, I don't know the answer to this question. What might have happened if there had been no land reform program is difficult to imagine. However, it seems to me that most of the available evidence points toward the conclusion that Mexico has made giant strides in becoming a united nation, in speeding up economic, social, and political development, and in raising the levels of living of at least 95 per cent of her people, precisely because of her Revolution. Moreover, land reform was the single most important ingredient of the Mexican Revolution, and it is quite probable that its other component parts, such as a national program of public education, the building of a national highway system, the fostering of an organized labor movement, and heavy emphasis on industrializing the country, would not have gone forward with anything like the speed that they have, if there had not been a redistribution of the land.

It is important to remember in this connection that The Revolution brought middle-class governments into power, and that these governments won the support of the lower classes, that is, the peones on haciendas and the city workers, mainly through land

reform and through a labor law favorable to the working man. With this mass support, the State then set about raising capital for investments in roads, schools, public health programs, and similar social projects, as well as for direct participation in industrialization. These investment activities won the middleclass governments still greater mass support, because they were of direct benefit to the lower classes. However, it took considerable squeezing of the lower classes, mainly through a program of inflation, to raise the capital for the government's investments in social and industrial projects (See JGM-4-'56: "The Growth of the Mexican Economy"). Land reform was an important factor which made this squeezing possible. An Indian, or a lower-class mestizo who has received land at the hands of the government will undergo untold hardships to keep that land and to support the government which gave it to him. He doesn't understand fiscal policies and investment programs. These things are something like the weather: they are either in the hands of God, or of some far-off complicated set of forces, about which ordinary mortals can only hope and pray for the best. But land is right here under his feet. He knows about land; how to use it, and how he got it. His allegiance is to a government that provides it. The sequence of events that has modernized Mexico would have been absolutely unthinkable and completely unacceptable to the governments that preceded The Revolution of 1910. over, it would probably have been impossible for even a middleclass government to have carried out the public investments programs which have characterized the past three or four administrations if the peones and urban workers had not received some special favors. Land redistribution was the most important special favor for the peones. An eight-hour working day, minimum wages, job security with lush termination pay, as well as heavy participation in politics by organized labor, were the special favors granted the urban laborer. Thus, unless I completely mis-read the recent history of Mexico, the country has been united and great progress has been made because of The Revolution, and The Revolution would probably not have been possible without land reform. Consequently, the major result of land reform has been its indirect role of acting as a pillar of support to middleclass governments that have used the strength thereby gained for direct action in other fields. But it has had other results.

How, for instance, has land reform affected the efficiency of agricultural production? There is a common opinion among many people in Mexico that the ejidatarios are bad farmers: that as a result of their ignorance and laziness, agricultural production suffers. Whetten points out that the hacendado ... "views the agrarian program as nothing short of a dual crime. In the first place, he considers expropriation of lands by government officials as wholesale robbery of that which rightfully belongs to others. In the second place, he views as an equally serious crime what he regards as the reckless and indiscriminate bestowing of this 'stolen' property upon ignorant peons who have no appreciation of its value or any ability to utilize it for the benefit of themselves or society. He will often tell you sadly that he

could forgive the government for the crime of stealing his land, if only it had been placed in the hands of people who could profit by it." But is it true that the ejidatario is a terribly inefficient farmer? There are two pertinent aspects to this general question. First, how does the ejido system of tenure compare with the old hacienda system? Second, are the present day ejidatarios as good farmers as the private operators of today? To neither question can we give a definitive answer: proper information is lacking. The former involves comparisons over a long period of time, and there are many factors other than land reform which have entered the picture. Enough evidence is available, however, about both questions to make one suspicious of the ordinary claims of the ex-landowners and their ilk.

Great progress has been made in the last few years in raising the productive efficiency of Mexican agriculture. has come about largely through the introduction of new ideas and techniques, as well as through the use of more and better capital. We don't know how the hacienda system might have responded to these new forces. Most observers are agreed, however, that the old system was quite inefficient. It was built on low cost labor: many of the old landowning families were certainly not in the vanguard of those who brought new ideas, innovations and techniques onto the agricultural scene. Their hired managers were usually without incentives to improve production practices, and often were ignorant, callous policemen of the peones under their direction, rather than enterprising and innovating administrators of the haciendas which they managed. This isn't the kind of a system which responds rapidly to new technological practices of the kind which have swept over U.S. agriculture during the past 20 years. If there had been no land reform, public education, and industrialization, all of which have come out of The Revolution, I know of no good reason to believe that the old hacienda system would have somehow changed its traditional coloring and suddenly become an efficient producer of agricultural products, particularly of products to be sold in the low-income markets of Mexico, as distinguished from a few specialized export crops.

Until I see better information on the subject than I have been able to find I am inclined to the following opinions:
(1) Most of the ejidos of today are considerably more efficient than most of the haciendas of 30 years ago; (2) land reform has tended to speed up agricultural efficiency rather than slow it down, though some of the factors associated with land reform, such as irrigation, public education, industrialization, and improved communications, have been considerably more important than land redistribution itself in increasing efficiency in agriculture; and (4) most ejidatarios have significantly higher levels of living than they had as peones on haciendas 30 or 40 years ago, and they very probably have higher levels of living than would have been the case if the old system had not been virtually destroyed by the land reform program. This, however, does not mean that the ejido pattern of tenure is the best that might have been designed, or that it is as efficient as present-day

private ownership of the land.

Of one thing I think we can be fairly certain: the productive ability of Mexican agriculture was by no means destroyed by land reform, and apparently total output was not seriously affected. This kind of a statement doesn't tell us much about the relative efficiency of the two systems of tenure, and the data supporting it are by no means perfect. However, it casts doubt on some of the extreme forebodings of conservative groups who thought of land reform as a calamitous destruction of the nation's agricultural plant. As evidence of the general validity of the view that land reform did not deal a major destructive blow to Mexican agriculture we have two types of information.

First, Whetten made a comparison of the total production of each of 19 crops for three different five-year periods -1903-07, 1925-29 and 1940-44 -- which throws considerable light on the question. The first five-year period (1903-07) was well before the beginning of land redistribution. The second (1925-29) was after land redistribution had begun, but before much land had been distributed. The third (1940-44) was after the major upsurge of land distribution during Cardenas' administration, and yet it was too soon after the war for many of the newer technological advances of recent years to have made themselves felt on a large scale. They are, therefore, good periods for comparing the influence of changes in tenure patterns on total agricultural production.

Using the annual average production figures for the first five years (1903-07) as a base period equal to 100, we have the following relative changes in production:

Crops	1925-29	1940-44	Crops	1925-29	1940-44
Corn	68	72	Beans	101	93
Wheat	111	138	Chickpeas	178	192
Rice	293	398	Tomatoes	1102	2081
Barley	49	53	Green Chile	41	71
· ·	• •		Dry Chile	83	158
Banana s	734	93 3	•		
Pineapples	375	1146	Cotton	82	1 45
* *		,	Henequen	133	116
Peanuts	86	529	•		
Sesame	33	191	Sugar cane	164	336
· · · · · · ·		•	Coffee	103	139
Van illa	34	58	Tobacco	67	133

These figures indicate that the production of quite a few crops declined in the 1925-29 period as compared with 1903-07, and, therefore, suggest that the fighting and turmoil accompanying the early years of The Revolution may have been more important

Whetten, Rural Mexico, pp. 252-254.

than land redistribution in its effects on production. For the long period, it appears that the traditional food crops -- corn, beans, barley and chile -- have declined, but there have been significant increases in other crops. Tomatoes and pineapples have shown phenomenal gains in production. In general, the shifts in production suggest a greater commercialization of agriculture and a greater variety in diets, rather than a destruction of productive ability or a decline in total output.

A second bit of evidence of the same general nature is afforded by the official indices of the volume of agricultural output. The Department of National Economy calculates an annual index of the volume of agricultural production, which is available since 1893, except for the period between 1910 and 1925. Because the basic data on production, particularly for the early years, are none too accurate, the value of the index is limited mainly to showing general trends. I have examined the year by year variations for the entire period for which the index is available. The following data for five-year intervals show trends as accurately as the annual figures:

Year	Index of volume of agricultural production	Cumulative hectares of land distributed		
1895	80.7	None		
1900	87.9	at the second se		
1 905	106.8	II .		
1910	143.4	11		
1915	₩ •• •	Ħ		
1920		166,571		
1925	109.3	2,015,200		
1930	90•3	5,971,369		
1 935	106.3	10,677,582		
1940	118.5	25,667,933		
1945	153.5	30,619,321		
1950	238.3	33,812,592		
1955	342.3	36,283,322		

Just how one should interpret these data is something of a puzzle. Clearly, since 1935 -- the period when land distribution has been most significant -- production has been rising rapidly. However, it is also evident that between 1910 and 1935 there was a tendency for production to decline. Until there are careful studies, region by region, and crop by crop, of the relation between production and land reform, I suggest that two conclusions may be warranted. First, during the period of civil war and the years immediately following -- when there was perpetual conflict about the land reform program, when there were uncertainties and indecisions about its future, and when there was no general agreement with respect to the scope and nature of the part that the ejido pattern of tenure should play in the nation's economy -production was disrupted and held back. Second, after the die had been finally cast, and the uncertainties and indecisions had been brushed aside by the vigorous land distribution activities of the

Cárdenas administration, the way was cleared for production to expand, and, if the official index is remotely accurate, the volume of agricultural output has increased rapidly. We must remember, however, that irrigation, the use of credit, improved varieties of seeds, commercial fertilizers, and more timely cultural practices have been important factors in accounting for the rapid rise of production during the past 15 to 20 years. These output-increasing influences, however, have all been nurtured and promoted by the government, and the government has consistently had a paternal attitude toward the ejidatarios. It has been interested in seeing that its land reform activities did not result in failure. Thus, the very fact that the government substituted the ejido for the hacienda was an incentive for it to put its hand to the task of aiding and encouraging the ejidatarios to improve their production practices. The least that can be said, it seems to me, is that we do not find evidence that land reform seriously impaired the agricultural plant of the nation.

There are indications, however, that the ejidatario may not be as good a farmer as the present-day private operator. 10 This is a point that needs much careful study in various sections of the country. I have driven through many areas where ejido tracts are side by side with privately owned and operated tracts. Almost never does one see any significant difference in the quality of crops being grown under the two types of tenure. When you go into the villages -- and most Mexican farmers live in small villages -- you find the houses, gardens, and corrals of small, private landowners interspersed with those of the ejidatarios. In these villages I have noticed that the houses of the private landowners are often a little better than those of ejidatarios. They are more likely to be whitewashed, to have more flowers and vegetables around the yard and garden, and quite often the pigs, chickens, and cows of the landowners appear to be a little more numerous and of a better quality. I think there is commonly a difference in the levels of living of small, private owners as compared with ejidatarios who live in the same village and farm essentially the same surrounding land. The private owners seem to be a little better off. Sometimes they have slightly larger tracts than the ejidatarios. But when one goes to the fields and looks at the crops, the ejidatarios seem to be doing just as good a job of planting and cultivating as the private owners. The crops look the same, if the land is the same.

Census data on crop yields, however, tend to belie my field observations, and they suggest that the ejidatario is not increasing his yields from year to year as rapidly as is the private owner (Table 2). There often are differences in the

¹⁰In this connection, we must remember that most private operators of the present period are not at all the same kind of farmers as the old hacendados, whom the land reform set out to destroy.

Table 2

Yields of Six Important Crops in Mexico on Ejidos and Private Holdings, in 1940 and 1950*

(Kilograms per hectare)

Private holdings of:							
Crops	Ejidos	Less than 5 hectares	Five hectares and more				
<u>1940</u>							
Corn (planted alone) Wheat (irrigated) Beans (planted alone) Cotton (unginned) Coffee (parchment) Bananas	691.5 789.7 449.8 705.0 321.5 4,751.7	671.0 600.1 383.9 809.3 401.7	624.0 916.4 416.6 919.1 474.2 4,633.9				
	1950						
Corn (planted alone) 749 Wheat (irrigated) 871 Beans (planted alone) 355 Cotton (unginned) 885 Coffee (parchment) 346 Bananas 5,855		907.8 987.0 599.2 1,158.5 **	854.7 1,183.9 427.2 999.4 359.8 7,214.9				
Percentage increases in yields, 1940 to 1950							
Corn Wheat Beans Cotton Coffee Bananas	7.1 10.8 (-21.6) 26.2 7.8 23.3	35.3 64.5 56.1 43.1	37.0 29.2 2.5 8.7 (-24.2) 55.7				

^{*}The data are from the Census of Agriculture for 1940 and 1950 and were arranged for my use through the courtesy of the Assistant Agricultural Attaché, American Embassy.

^{**}Not available.

quality of ejido land as compared with privately owned tracts. The original hacienda owners usually kept the best land when their haciendas were being broken up, and many of them subsequently sold this land to private operators. This difference in quality of land, however, is not likely to be the explanation for yields on private holdings generally increasing more between 1940 and 1950 than yields on ejidos. This was a period when great strides were being made in the use of improved varieties of seeds and in the use of commercial fertilizers. These two practices hold significant potentialities for increasing the output of Mexican agriculture. Are the ejidatarios falling behind private owners in adopting the new, yield-increasing practices? They may be. However, there is another factor that may have influenced the yield data shown in Table 2. During the decade from 1940 to 1950, much new land was brought into cultivation through the construction of irrigation facilities. Although some of it went into ejidos, most of it remained as private property. This may be an important reason for yields having increased more rapidly on private holdings as a whole than on ejidos. Only detailed, careful studies can clear up the problem.

One such study in 1954 of 190 ejidatarios and 214 private owners indicated that ejidatarios were not farming as efficiently as private owners. The data in Table 3, still unpublished, have been supplied by Carlos Manuel Castillo, now with the Economic Commission for Latin America of the United Nations and formerly with Project 39 of the Organization of American States, under whose auspices he carried out a detailed study of agricultural resources and farming practices in an area of the central plateau about 200 miles north and west of Mexico City. These data show that the ejidatarios in this area were less efficient in the use of resources than private owners in every respect except possibly in the use of capital. In each of the four major types of farming covered by the study, the ejidatarios had lower crop yields, produced a lower value of crops per hectare, and with one minor exception had a lower gross farm income per man year of labor, than did the private owners. On the other hand, the ejidatarios ranked higher than the private owners with respect to gross farm income per 1,000 pesos of capital. This clearly results from the fact that the ejidatarios are quite small farmers with very little capital. As indicated by the items in the upper part of Table 3, there were wide differences in the scale of operations of the two tenure groups. The private owners were reasonably large farmers, who used substantial amounts of labor and capital in their operations. The ejidatarios, on the other hand, were small operators in terms of land area, size of labor force, and particularly with respect to the amount of capital which they employed. Because of this great difference in the scale of operations as between the two groups, the differences shown by the indicators of efficiency may not be too significant. In one sense we are comparing two entirely different systems of agriculture. Yet, it seems to me that the data warrant the general conclusion that the ejidatarios were not as efficient as the private owners. This point is further buttressed by another part of the study which indicated that the

Table 3

Resources per Farm and Selected Indicators of Efficiency for Four Types of Farming in the Celaya Area of Central Mexico, 1954*

(Based on detailed records from 190 ejidatarios and 214 private owners)

<u>Items</u>	Farming Private owners	type #1 Ejida- tarios	Farming Private owners	type #2 Ejida- tarios	Farming Private owners	type #3 Ejida- tarios	Farming Private owners	type #4 Ejida- tarios
RESOURCES								
Total land Ha.	75•2	9•6	74.1	7•4	51.9	6•7	21.1	6•4
Irrigated land	69.8	9•6	35•3	6•5	26.8	5•5	17.1	5•1
Labor - Man months	154.9	27.2	87.4	18.3	63•6	12.6	68 •4	19.7
Capital 1,000 pesos	235	21	65	9	83	6	11/3	6
INDICATORS OF EFFICIENCY	·							
Index of crop yields	152.6	121.9	110.3	99•8	116.4	106.7	135•3	95•3
Gross value of crops per cultivated hec- tare — pesos	1,388	1,033	705	633	795	632	1,512	749
Gross farm income per man year of labor — pesos	9,087	7,818	4,775	4,820	8,802	5,863	10,795	և,607
Gross farm income per 1,000 pesos of capital pesos	499	871	537	797	559	1,042	429	1,228

Farming type #1 was wheat and corn with intensive enterprises such as alfalfa and dairying. Farming type #2 was wheat and corn with extensive crops such as beans and chickpeas.

Farming type #3 was primarily wheat and corn.

Farming type #4 was intensive truck farming such as tomatoes, garlic, and other vegetables.

^{*}The data were supplied by Carlos Manuel Castillo from an unpublished manuscript of a study under the auspices of Project 39 of the Organization of American States.

ejidatarios were permitting their collectively owned property, mainly irrigation pumps and facilities, to deteriorate. For the group as a whole they were using up what little capital they had, instead of increasing it. They were dis-investing, instead of investing. This process, if continued very long, could seriously impair their future productive potential.

As to the general effects of the Mexican land reform program on agricultural production, I believe it is safe to summarize the available information as follows: (1) Land reform did not destroy the productive ability of the agricultural plant, and probably has not greatly affected the total agricultural output of the nation; (2) the present ejido is probably a more efficient organizational unit than the old hacienda; and (3) the case is not clear with respect to the efficiency of the ejido relative to present-day private ownership. There is a strong presumption, however, that the private owners, particularly those with fair sized farms, are more efficient than the ejidatarios.

When we look toward the future, it appears quite clear that the ejido has a built-in resistance to the kind of adaptation and change that modern developments in agriculture virtually demand. In other words, the ejido may well be a brake on future agricultural progress, unless its internal structure is significantly altered. Ingeniero Ramón Fernandez y Fernandez, one of Mexico's top-notch agricultural economists and a careful student of the whole land reform movement, points with telling effect to the inflexibility of the ejido in adjusting to change, and its consequent inefficiencies as a producing unit in a period when a new type of agriculture is being born through advances in technology and the greater utilization of machinery. 11 To grasp the import of the major points, we must recall: (1) That the total land assigned to a given ejidatario is usually limited, and often it is broken up into several tracts, some of which may be distant from others; 12 (2) that the ejidatarios not only farm on a very small scale but they also are poverty-stricken and uneducated. As a result of these and related characteristics, the holdings

¹¹ Ramón Fernandez y Fernandez, Propiedad Privada Versus Ejidos.

¹²If the ejido contains both irrigated and dry land, or other significant differences in quality of soil, there have usually been deliberate plans to scatter the holdings of individual ejidatarios so that each would have a parcel of each different type of soil. In some of the irrigated, cotton-producing areas, where the Banco de Ejidal has taken over the functions of preparing and planting the land with tractor-drawn equipment, thus getting some modicum of efficiency in the production picture, the particular tracts assigned to given ejidatarios are shifted from year to year so that if there is a shortage of water in part of the ejido, or a poorer quality of soil, the same ejidatarios will not be stuck with the low producing fields year after year.

of individual ejidatarios are too small to be easily operated by machinery; they cannot be used as a base for credit; they cannot be sold either to other ejidatarios or to private operators.

We have in most of the ejidos a middle-ground type of tenure, which is neither large-scale (government or co-operative) farming, nor individual, private proprietorship. The situation is not one in which the group as a whole is stimulated to act as a collective unity and take advantages of new, modern methods of machine production, or take steps to improve the productiveness of the ejido as a total unit. At the same time, the ambitious, able, thrifty individual, is not allowed, legally at least, to buy or rent the tracts of his neighbors, and thus enlarge his unit to a more economical size; nor is he encouraged to spend much effort or capital in improving the quality of his holding, because he can't sell it or borrow money on it with which to buy land outside of the ejido. Thus, both group initiative and individual initiative are held back, if not quite completely symied, by the ejido type of tenure. In the background of this situation are: too many people for the available land; ejido administrative committees which are often inefficient and irresponsible; and a government which is generally benevolent and yet inefficient in providing credit, supporting prices of farm products, and educating the ejidatarios in the techniques of production and the responsibilities of management. Also in the background, there is often the sharpie or petty crook, who is anxious to get his hands on the meager co-operative funds of the ejido, which are supposed to be used to improve and operate the pasture lands, the irrigation works, and such heavy machinery and equipment as is the property of the ejido as a collective entity.

All in all, there is a tendency for the ejido type of farming to slip into a pattern of stagnation or no-change. The ejidatarios have never had much in the way of worldly goods or social and cultural opportunities; their horizons of expectations are not very wide; and the ejido type of tenure does not stimulate them to accumulate capital in the traditional ways that small farmers do, namely, by improving their soil, their houses, and their livestock, or by buying additional land. Too often, when crops are harvested and sold and a little money is available, and after the family is supplied with a new set of cheap, winter clothes, there is a round of fiestas, drunken sprees, and visits to the beds of the beauties of the nearest city, with the result that that part of the year's earning which might have gone into making the future a little more productive and livable is quickly used up in a spurt of hilarious living. Papa and the older boys kick over the traces, while Mama, in her dirt-floored hovel, caring for her brood of younger children, has little to say about the family fortunes. This pattern of life is, of course, not wholly attributable to the land tenure system. It is as characteristic of small owners as of ejidatarios in many areas of Mexico. Moreover, I saw the same pattern in my home county in southern Arkansas, where the participating sharecroppers, tenants, and small owners had never heard of an ejido, and where the sinners

and "saved" alike were steeped in the good, sound fundamentalism of the rural Baptist and Methodist ministers. It is a pattern of life, however, which has been opened to more people by the breaking up of the haciendas which kept the peones at such a miserably low level of living that they seldom if ever had the funds for a year-end period of wild living. Since the ejido is neither quite private property nor collective property it fails to provide an incentive for the individual ejidatario to raise the productivity of his land.

This is a problem which yet has to be solved. to be tackled from many angles, and its sclution is not easy. If the government suddenly permitted the ejidatarios to mortgage or sell their holdings, there would be a real and prolonged spree of high living; probably an increase in agricultural production; and probably a few well-to-do people would grab the land and meld it into relatively large holdings. These new large holdings would probably be more efficient than the old haciendas, because they would be put together mainly by merchants, bankers, and professional men from the cities and larger country towns -- men who are generally interested in making money from their investments and are quite modern minded in their methods. At the same time, many of the present ejidatarios would become poorly-paid wage workers on these large farms, while many more would be pushed off the land to look for nonexistent jobs in the cities. With the doctrines of The Revolution still strongly influencing government policy, there isn't a chance that the government will do anything so drastic as converting ejidos into private property. Instead, the government will probably: (1) continue to subsidize the ejidos, mainly through losses of the Banco de Ejidal which have been running about 20 to 25 per cent of its loans plus another 10 to 11 per cent for administration; (2) look the other way while a few of the more ambitious ejidatarios, often with the help of outside friends who have capital, arrange through leases and various sorts of verbal arrangements, gradually to get control of tracts considerably larger than their assigned holdings; (3) put considerable effort into bringing new lands into cultivation through irrigation and also into encouraging industrialization, as a means for relieving the pressure of population on the land; and (4) continue to teach rural people (through the public schools, the Agricultural Extension Service, and a couple of other more or less similar organizations) how to become more effective producers and more responsible citizens. The road ahead is a long, hard, uphill one -- uphill because population is growing rapidly and public rescurces, though increasing, are still small in relation to the tremendous needs of the rural population.

Land reform has certainly not brought a millenium to Mexico. It has left the country with a political tradition and a tenure pattern that are inflexible and difficult to adjust to the needs of the years ahead. The way in which many of the ejidatarios look to the government for guidance and help, and the way in which the controlling political party looks to the ejidatarios for votes, makes for a cozy little arrangement which may not be

as conducive to the growth of democratic processes as many people would like. The ejidos are not as efficient as they should be. There are many little injustices dealt out to the ejidatarios by their local leaders and friends of local leaders who make a speciality of sharp and shady practices. But I have never found an ejidatario who would say that the Old system was better than the New, and I trust the judgment of the farmers. Above all, they are free men now, even if poor and somewhat bedraggled.

James G. Madda