# UNION DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE MEXICAN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY: A Reappraisal*

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The Mexican automobile manufacturing industry experienced rapid sociopolitical change in the 1960s and 1970s as workers in several firms overthrew entrenched labor leaders and instituted democratic forms of union governance. These reform movements sought increased participation by the rank and file in union affairs and heightened worker control over different aspects of the production process. For many workers, democratic unionism promised increased leadership responsiveness in resolving workplace conflicts and more effective representation of worker interests in a changing industrial environment. Specific measures of democratic unionism included the election of key union officers and their accountability to members, regularly held general assemblies, an enhanced role for the general assembly in internal decision making, procedural safeguards of workers' union rights, and opportunities for the emergence of identifiable and relatively stable internal opposition factions. By 1975 workers in five of the seven major terminal firms (those manufacturing vehicles) had won control over the selection of union leaders and other phases of internal union decision making.

Worker challenges to incumbent leaders and established union organizations resulted primarily from the structural transformation of workplace relations in the automobile industry and the breakdown of mechanisms of labor control. Rapid expansion of the automobile manufacturing industry in the 1960s and 1970s produced major changes in the labor relations context. Traditional Mexican unionism was often unable to adapt to the problems posed by a larger work force and more

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conflictive workplace relations, and the breakdown of existing labor controls permitted democratic reform movements to win power. Although attempts by internal opposition groups to oust entrenched local union leaders did not always succeed, their emergence reflected the structural changes that the rapid development of the automobile industry produced in the labor relations environment.

Worker challenges to established patterns of union organization have long generated substantial interest.[1] Periods of concerted change in working-class organization often reveal the strengths and weaknesses of controls on worker participation, possibilities for new forms of labor organization, and the more general character of state-labor relations. Previous explanations of union democratization have focused mainly on the internal organizational characteristics of labor unions and the availability of formal or informal structures that permit opposition groups to mobilize support and to contest control of union leadership.[2] Much of this literature assumes that opposition movements in unions seek to realize the potential of formally democratic decision-making procedures. But little attention has been devoted to structural changes in workplace relations as a source of demands for increased worker control over internal union decision making[3] and the creation of democratic forms of union governance in an authoritarian regime committed to maintaining institutional controls on worker participation and labor organization.

This essay will begin by evaluating prevailing interpretations of union democratization in the Mexican automobile industry.[4] Earlier analyses of this topic have emphasized the importance of factors external to the workplace (including presidential labor policy, the strength or weakness of state-level labor federations with which individual unions were affiliated, and changes in automobile workers' economic welfare) as sources of worker challenges to incumbent labor leaders and existing patterns of union organization. Although such factors helped consolidate democratic unionism in several cases, interpretations couched in these terms offer an incomplete account of sociopolitical change in the automobile industry. Thus the second section will provide an alternative explanation that focuses on structural changes in workplace relations resulting from the industry's rapid expansion in the 1960s and 1970s and the breakdown of traditional mechanisms of labor control. Union democratization had diverse consequences for workers, including increased worker control over different aspects of the production process, but this essay's main purpose is to explain the emergence of democratic union governance in the automobile manufacturing industry. The conclusion will examine the implications of this analysis for future developments in the automobile manufacturing industry and for political liberalization in Mexico.



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## CONTENDING EXPLANATIONS OF UNION DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

The Mexican automobile industry was founded in the 1920s and 1930s, when several automobile firms established assembly operations in the Mexico City area. The first to begin operations in Mexico as part of an international expansion program or in response to tariff protection offered to local assembly operations were Ford (in 1925), General Motors (in 1937), and Fábricas Auto-Mex, a Mexican firm assembling Chryslers (in 1938). By 1961 twelve firms were engaged in automobile assembly, and seven other companies were importing assembled vehicles. At the time, however, no significant automobile manufacturing was being performed in Mexico. The automobile manufacturing decree published in 1962 thus marked a dramatic change in the industry.[5] Between 1965 and 1975, the automobile industry's share (including auto parts) of gross domestic product in manufacturing rose from 3.6 percent to 6.9 percent (at constant 1960 prices). Over this same period, the annual production of cars and trucks rose from 102,500 to 352,200. Similarly, the value of automobile industry production rose at an average rate of 15.5 percent per year between 1965 and 1974, faster than all other economic activities except the petrochemical industry.[6] Seven firms dominated the industry: Auto-Mex-Chrysler, Diesel Nacional (DINA), Ford, General Motors, Nissan, Volkswagen, and Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos (VAM).[7]

Automobile workers' unions in the vehicle manufacturing portion of the industry have historically formed part of the heterogeneous federation-confederation system that includes the majority of organized workers in Mexico.[8] All are enterprise-level unions, and those unions established at Auto-Mex (1938), VAM (1946), DINA (1955), and Nissan (1966) were initially affiliated with federations linked to the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), the labor sector of the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and the country's most important labor confederation. The original Ford union (1932) was affiliated with the Federación de Obreros del Distrito Federal (FODF) until 1936, then temporarily joined the Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT), and finally became part of the newly organized CTM in 1938. Similarly, the General Motors union (1936) was initially associated with the CGT but shifted its affiliation to the Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos (CROC) when that organization was formed in 1952. The Volkswagen union was also originally organized within the CGT in the state of Mexico; its affiliation was transferred to the CTM when Volkswagen began manufacturing operations in Puebla in 1966.[9]

These links to federations and confederations often weighed heavily on local unions, preventing members from selecting union lead-



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ers freely and circumscribing their actions in negotiations with management. For example, federation officials normally appointed local labor leaders, who remained responsible to the state-level federation rather than to the union membership and possessed a broad statutory authority that permitted the federation to retain close control over local union affairs. Moreover, federation representatives were frequently responsible for negotiating collective contracts with management. This arrangement permitted little or no rank-and-file input into the bargaining process, and many workers complained that contract clauses covering hiring, wage rates, and different aspects of the production process disregarded worker interests and protected management prerogatives. Only the General Motors union in the Federal District enjoyed both a long democratic tradition and considerable organizational autonomy in its relationship with the CROC, a result of its founder's commitment to democratic decision-making structures and local union independence.

Once in control, democratic reform movements usually moved quickly to redefine the character of local union ties to state or national labor organizations. Between 1961 and 1975, three automobile workers' unions broke their ties with major labor confederations (DINA in 1961, Volkswagen in 1972, and Nissan in 1973), and a fourth substantially redefined this relationship (Ford in 1975) in an effort to increase local union autonomy. Only the VAM union, which shifted its affiliation to the Confederación Obrera Revolucionaria in 1973 after an internal schism in the CTM's Federación de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal (FTDF), altered its external ties without experiencing a significant internal democratization movement. Although the DINA, Volkswagen, and Nissan unions subsequently joined the Unidad Obrera Independiente (UOI) in order to increase their bargaining leverage vis-à-vis company management, the character of such external linkages remained a source of intense union debate. Table 1 summarizes these changes in the political status of automobile workers' unions between 1961 and 1975.

What factors explain the emergence of democratic reform movements in the automobile manufacturing industry?

## *Echeverría's Labor Policy*

The most common explanation of union democratization in the Mexican automobile industry emphasizes the impact of Echeverría's "democratic opening" (*apertura democrática*) policy on labor opposition movements.[10] Echeverría's call for a "national dialogue" and his more flexible approach to political opposition were attempts to distance himself politically from the conservative Díaz Ordaz administration (1964–1970) and his own role as Secretario de Gobernación in violently suppressing the 1968 student and popular movement. In addition, his re-



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*TABLE 1 Political Status of Main Auto Workers' Unions, 1961–1975*

| *Automobile Company and Plant Sites* | *Former Confederation Affiliation* | *New Confederation Affiliation* | *Democratic Governance* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Auto-Mex-Chrysler | | | |
| Federal District | CTM (1938) | No change | No |
| Toluca (Mexico) | CTM (1968) | No change | No |
| Diesel Nacional | | | |
| Ciudad Sahagún (Hidalgo) | CTM (1955–1961) | UOI (1961) | Yes (1961) |
| Ford | | | |
| Federal District | CTM (1938) | No change[a] | Yes (1975) |
| Tlanepantla (Mexico) | CTM (1962) | No change[a] | Yes (1975) |
| Cuautitlán (Mexico) | CTM (1964) | No change[a] | Yes (1975) |
| General Motors | | | |
| Federal District | CROC (1952) | No change | Yes (1940s) |
| Toluca (Mexico) | CTM (1965) | No change | No |
| Nissan | | | |
| Cuernavaca (Morelos) | CTM (1966–1973) | UOI (1973) | Yes (1971) |
| Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos | | | |
| Federal District | CTM (1946–1973) | COR (1973)[b] | No |
| Volkswagen | | | |
| Puebla (Puebla) | CTM (1966–1972) | UOI (1972) | Yes (1972) |

Sources: These data are drawn from Javier Aguilar García, *La política sindical en México: industria del automóvil* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1982), 105–14; Kevin J. Middlebrook, "The Political Economy of Mexican Organized Labor, 1940–1978," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982, 251–52, 278–309; and Ian Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico: The Case of the Automobile Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 76–104.

Note: This table includes data only on plant sites and unions established as of 1975. Full names of the unions listed are as follows: CTM, Confederación de Trabajadores de México; CROC, Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos; UOI, Unidad Obrera Independiente; and COR, Confederación Obrera Revolucionaria.

[a]In 1975 Ford workers were reorganized into a single union affiliated with the CTM.

[b]In 1979 the VAM union reestablished ties with the CTM.

form initiatives sought to defuse an increasingly severe crisis of public confidence in the established political and socioeconomic order, which was manifested partly in declining rates of voter participation in elections and in the rise of armed urban and rural guerrilla movements between 1968 and 1971. Echeverría also recognized that Mexico's rapid economic growth since 1940 had produced a very unequal pattern of income distribution and growing discontent among workers, and his



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reform program emphasized a more favorable policy toward labor's political and socioeconomic demands.[11]

Two aspects of Echeverría's labor policy had important consequences for reformist elements in the automobile industry. First, he used the state's union registration authority to facilitate legal recognition of unions not affiliated with "official" labor confederations such as the CTM. Earlier administrations had used this same power to block internal opposition movements and to support "official" labor leaders' control over rank-and-file members. In the early 1970s, however, the Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social frequently supported attempts by dissident factions to win control of leadership positions in local unions and to institute more democratic forms of internal governance.

Second, in an effort to defuse working-class discontent, Echeverría acted to increase organizational and political competition in the labor movement. He challenged the "official" labor movement's established position by openly criticizing Fidel Velázquez, the CTM's longtime secretary general, and by denying the CTM secure control over forming and registering new unions. Simultaneously, Echeverría employed the selective distribution of political and economic resources to encourage the emergence of reformist labor groups not affiliated with the Congreso del Trabajo (the "umbrella" body created in 1966 to unite the labor movement). These opposition organizations frequently served as allies available to dissident union factions seeking to break their affiliation with confederations such as the CTM by offering them political contacts, economic assistance, and an organizational framework for mobilizing public support for union demands. The most important of these groups were the electrical workers' Tendencia Democrática (TD), a reformist movement within the Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana; the Movimiento Sindical Ferrocarrilero (MSF), an opposition group of railroad workers led by Demetrio Vallejo, the main organizer of national railroad strikes in 1958–1959; the Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT), a Christian Democratic labor organization; and the Unidad Obrera Independiente (UOI), a loose coalition of "independent" unions coordinated by well-known labor lawyer Juan Ortega Arenas.[12] Although Echeverría ended his attack on Velázquez after 1973, when growing inflationary pressures underlined the importance of the CTM's political support, these dissident union groups continued their organizational activities throughout Echeverría's presidency (1973–1976).

Presidential labor policy contributed to the emergence of democratic unionism in the Volkswagen and Nissan unions.[13] The involvement of opposition labor groups (Ortega Arenas in Volkswagen, Ortega Arenas and the FAT in Nissan) encouraged nascent reform groups and channeled worker dissatisfaction about established union practices into



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overt opposition to the CTM. But despite Echeverría's public criticism of the CTM and Fidel Velázquez, no evidence exists that government labor authorities actively fomented or encouraged such anti-CTM dissidence. The Volkswagen and Nissan unions, however, encountered no official opposition to the democratic election of new union leaders, their decision to break ties with the CTM and join the UOI, or their formal registration as independent unions. The Echeverría administration's tolerance of labor dissent was especially important in the Volkswagen case. The CTM's state federation in Puebla actively protested the challenge to its control once the threat of union independence became clear, but the prevailing national political context prevented federation leaders from pressuring government labor authorities to support their position.

Other automobile industry cases suggest nevertheless that presidential labor policy is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for union democratization. In the DINA union, an internal reform movement won control in 1961 despite persistent opposition by both government labor authorities and national and state CTM leaders. In contrast, Chrysler management and government officials defeated worker opposition movements in 1969–70 and 1975 under two different presidents (Díaz Ordaz and Echeverría) with sharply divergent labor policies. The presence of as many as ten opposition political and labor groups in the General Motors union (Federal District) in the early and mid-1970s contributed to internal political factionalism but had no other discernible effect on the union's internal governing procedures or its ties to the CROC. Similarly, neither the activities of the UOI and the FAT nor government labor authorities had any apparent impact on the Ford union's redefining its CTM ties in the mid-1970s. Nor is there any evidence that Echeverría's "democratic opening" policy provoked internal opposition movements in two other CTM-affiliated automobile workers' unions, the VAM union in Mexico City and the General Motors union in Toluca. Thus a more complete explanation of the pattern of labor change in the automobile industry requires analyzing factors other than presidential labor policy.

*Variations in the Strength of State Labor Federations*

A second explanation of union democratization in the automobile industry focuses on the relative strength or weakness of the state-level labor federations with which individual unions were affiliated. Ian Roxborough has argued that where state federation leaders were politically strong and attentive to rank-and-file concerns, plant-level democratization movements either failed to emerge or were successfully defeated by entrenched union leaders (often acting in consort with company management). Conversely, where state labor federations were



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weak, democratic reform movements triumphed and frequently broke established federation ties.[14]

Some cases appear to fit this interpretation reasonably well. For example, Roxborough presents convincing evidence that the CTM-affiliated union at the General Motors plant in Toluca (Mexico) escaped the wave of democratization movements sweeping the automobile industry in the 1960s and 1970s by virtue of strong leadership in both the local union and the state-level federation. Four brothers from a working-class family dominated the CTM hierarchy in the state of Mexico in the 1970s. They all held important posts in CTM unions, state and local government, or both. One brother led the state-level metalworkers' union with which the General Motors union was affiliated, while another headed the General Motors union itself.[15] This closely knit network of union and government authority may well have prevented the emergence of internal rank-and-file opposition. Conversely, considerable disarray in the CTM's state federation in Morelos may have allowed a pro-democracy movement to win control in the Nissan union in Cuernavaca.[16]

One problem with this interpretation, however, is that the emergence of an independent union is often accepted as prima facie evidence of a particular state federation's weakness. Roxborough offers no specific evidence for his contention that the successful consolidation of democratic, independent unionism in the DINA, Volkswagen, and Ford unions was due to the weakness of, respectively, the CTM's Hidalgo, Puebla, and Federal District federations.[17] The state federations in Hidalgo and Puebla energetically resisted losing the large, economically prosperous automobile workers' unions, and both the Puebla and Federal District federations were led by experienced, politically influential labor leaders. Indeed, the secretary general of the CTM's state federation in Puebla, Blas Chumacero, was one of the most powerful labor leaders in Mexico. He had been a confidant of Fidel Velázquez since the 1920s and had held more national political offices than any other Mexican labor leader. When preparing to expand manufacturing operations in Puebla, Volkswagen management negotiated the transfer of its work force's union affiliation from the CGT to the CTM specifically to ensure that the strength of Chumacero's federation would prevent the outbreak of labor unrest.[18] Management was quickly disappointed in this regard, but this particular case suggests that the strength or weakness of state-level labor federations cannot fully explain union democratization in the automobile industry.

### *Deteriorating Economic Conditions*

The argument that deteriorating national economic conditions and declining living standards for workers prompted labor opposition



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movements in the automobile manufacturing industry is the least convincing of the three explanations evaluated here.[19] Mexico entered a brief recession in 1971, when the gross domestic product rose only 3.4 percent in real terms, compared to an average real annual increase of 6.9 percent between 1965 and 1970. But the real average annual growth rate rebounded to 7.0 percent from 1972 to 1974, before falling to 4.1 percent in 1975 and 2.1 percent in 1976. The rate of inflation (consumer price index) rose from an annual average of 5.1 percent between 1970 and 1972 to 12.1 percent in 1973, averaging 16.9 percent for the period from 1973 to 1976.[20] Uneven growth and the sudden upturn in inflation thus ended the period of "stabilizing development" (characterized by high rates of economic growth and relative price stability) initiated in the mid-1950s.

This turn of events, particularly rising inflation, may have given rise to worker unrest in some sectors, but there is no evidence that these developments adversely affected the general economic circumstances of automobile workers. Total average worker remunerations (wages plus fringe benefits) in the automobile manufacturing industry rose from 42,900 pesos in 1970 to 77,100 pesos in 1976 (peso amounts at nominal prices), an increase of 79.7 percent.[21] In the five vehicle manufacturing firms for which complete data are available, average wage increases between 1971 and 1976 (ranging from 14.1 percent in Diesel Nacional to 23.3 percent in Volkswagen) exceeded the average annual rate of inflation (13 percent), not including the nationwide "emergency" wage increases implemented in 1973 (20 percent), 1974 (22 percent), and 1976 (23 percent).[22] Even if the national minimum wage is taken as the relevant frame of reference, the available evidence suggests that the Echeverría administration's nationwide emergency wage increases in these three years successfully counterbalanced inflationary pressures and produced a 26.3 percent increase in the real national minimum wage between 1970 and 1976.[23]

Moreover, by the time national economic conditions began to worsen, reform movements had already triumphed in the DINA, Volkswagen, and Nissan unions. Only the Ford unions experienced substantial internal sociopolitical change after 1973. Thus while changing economic conditions and inflationary pressures may have shaped individual unions' negotiating positions and mobilizational strategies, there is no reason to believe that such factors significantly influenced the broader process of union democratization.

## A STRUCTURAL INTERPRETATION OF UNION DEMOCRATIZATION

Although the explanations evaluated here offer valuable insights into the process of union democratization in the automobile manufac-



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TABLE 2 *Growth of Seven Major Automobile Manufacturing Firms, 1960–1975*

| Year | Total Workers | Workers per firm | Total Remunerations[a] (millions of pesos) | Remunerations per worker (in pesos) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1960 | 5,610 | 801.4 | 148.1 | 26,399 |
| 1965 | 15,853 | 2264.7 | 441.6 | 27,855 |
| 1970 | 23,506 | 3358.0 | 1,130.5 | 48,094 |
| 1975 | 36,822 | 5260.3 | 3,475.0 | 94,372 |

Source: Author's calculations based on internal documents from the Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Automotriz.

Note: The seven firms measured are Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, Nissan, Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos, Volkswagen, and Diesel Nacional.

[a]Wages, salaries, fringe benefits, and distributed profits (if any), in millions of pesos. All financial amounts are listed in pesos at nominal prices, with 12.5 pesos equal to 1 U.S. dollar from 1960 to 1975.

turing industry, they share two major limitations. First, these factors do not adequately explain the great variation in the timing of such movements. Second, interpretations emphasizing the importance of contextual variables (such as presidential labor policy or national economic conditions) cannot explain why, under similar conditions, democratic reform movements emerged within some unions but not in others. It is insufficient, however, to argue simply that a more complete understanding of union democratization requires attention to the internal dimensions of this process. Almost by definition, the emergence and consolidation of democratic governance in a particular union are shaped by a variety of highly specific circumstances. A parsimonious explanation of this process must demonstrate that a pattern of internal change exists across different cases and over time. This criterion is better met by the structural interpretation presented here than by previous explanations of democratic change in the Mexican automobile industry.

### *Structural Changes in Workplace Relations*

Characteristics of the automobile manufacturing industry as a whole changed significantly as the industry shifted from assembly activities to manufacturing operations following the 1962 decree. Worker concentrations increased from 403 to 903 workers per firm between 1960 and 1970. Invested capital per firm rose from 36.3 million pesos in 1960 to 205.6 million pesos in 1970, and invested capital per worker increased from 90,200 to 227,600 pesos over the same period (all peso amounts at nominal values). Similarly, the value of total production jumped from 96.8 million pesos per firm and 240,300 per worker in 1960



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*TABLE 3 Workers Employed by Seven Major Automobile Manufacturing Firms, 1960–1975*

| *Firm* | *1960* | *1965* | *1970* | *1975* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chrysler | 1,024 | 2,411 | 3,999 | 5,649 |
| Diesel Nacional (DINA) | 1,362 | 2,002 | 4,080 | 7,622 |
| Ford | 1,029 | 3,931 | 4,437 | 4,418 |
| General Motors | 1,480 | 4,330 | 4,325 | 4,991 |
| Nissan | 15 | 200 | 1,067 | 2,735 |
| Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos (VAM) | 450 | 1,158 | 1,982 | 1,892 |
| Volkswagen | 250 | 1,821 | 3,625 | 9,515 |

Source: Internal documents of the Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Automotriz.

Note: These totals include both blue-collar and white-collar workers.

to 373.6 million pesos per firm and 413,700 per worker in 1970. Total annual remuneration (wages, salaries, and fringe benefits) per worker increased from 20,000 pesos in 1960 to 42,900 in 1970 (including profits distributed under the 1963 profit-sharing law).[24]

These changes were especially pronounced in the seven leading automobile manufacturing firms that are the focus of this essay. Between 1960 and 1970, the average number of workers employed in these firms rose from 801 to 3358; by 1975 this average was 5260 (see table 2 and also table 3, which presents employment data for each firm). The average worker's annual earnings rose from 26,400 pesos in 1960 to 48,100 in 1970; by 1975 average annual earnings had reached 94,400 pesos. Although there are no data available on the value of production at the firm level, the average number of vehicles (cars and trucks up to 13,500 kilograms) produced by these seven firms rose from 14,193 per firm in 1965 to 50,098 per firm in 1975. The average number of vehicles produced per worker rose from 6.3 in 1965 to 9.5 in 1975.[25]

Thus by 1970, the automobile manufacturing industry had become a highly capital-intensive manufacturing activity with large and growing worker concentrations per firm and rising worker productivity. These changes had three important consequences for workplace relations and established mechanisms of labor control. First, sharply increased worker concentrations per firm posed special challenges for the informal, paternalistic labor-relations arrangements that had long prevailed in the industry. Most labor-relations analysts agree that large worker concentrations in manufacturing activities such as the automobile industry require institutionalized procedures for conflict resolution that are capable of resolving the day-to-day grievances arising from a complex, closely integrated production process. Paternalistic responses



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to workplace problems based on the supervisor's personal relationship with the worker are no longer adequate in a modern manufacturing environment.[26]

Second, as manufacturing activities accelerated, automobile companies placed greater emphasis on controlling overall labor costs and being able to move workers flexibly among different work areas in order to increase the efficiency of production processes. These issues were particularly important to management because the Secretaría de Industria y Comercio administered both production quotas and price controls on finished vehicles between 1962 and 1977. Production quotas were intended to preserve a minimum market share for firms with Mexican capital, and price controls were designed to encourage firms to control costs and achieve greater production efficiency.[27] As a result, the cost of wages and fringe benefits and control over disposition of the work force within the workplace became central issues in bargaining between labor and management. Union officials, in turn, came under increased pressure to win larger economic benefits for workers and control the sometimes arbitrary movement of workers on the plant floor.

Third, the transition to manufacturing activities produced new workplace grievances and increased worker discontent with established union organizations. Unlike "craft system" technologies (activities requiring that individual workers possess considerable traditional skill at manipulating physical materials with tools, as in printing) and "continuous process" technologies (activities characterized by automatic, centralized control of an integrated production system, as in petroleum refining), "mass production" industries such as automobile manufacturing generally involve a high degree of repetitiveness in work tasks, relatively unskilled and highly standardized work techniques, and considerable subdivision of the production process.[28] The characteristics of work in an automobile manufacturing plant tend to produce greater worker alienation—particularly the reduced social interaction among workers due to the noise level, the close attention required by the pace of the assembly line, restricted physical activity, and reduced organizational contact with all but immediate work supervisors.[29] The concerns typically voiced by Mexican automobile workers, which focused on the intensity and repetitiveness of assembly-line work, management discipline, and the need for enhanced job safety measures, conform closely to this general characterization of work in mass-production industries.

Because labor leaders affiliated with the CTM were often closely identified with company management, grievances arising from a more conflictive industrial environment frequently produced worker demands for more democratic union representation. A review of the available (albeit sometimes incomplete) evidence suggests broad similarities across different automobile workers' unions in terms of worker com-



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plaints about local union leaders and their conduct of union business.[30] The specific complaints typically voiced included such issues as leaders' open collaboration with management to prevent rank-and-file protests; failure to secure improved wages, fringe benefits, working conditions, or restraints on the movement of workers on the plant floor; malfeasance in the administration of union dues and strike funds; manipulation of general assemblies and elections; exploitation of temporary workers (including the sale of job openings); the failure to increase employment security; and the dismissal of workers advocating more assertive actions toward management or change in union representational structures. For many workers, union democracy promised increased union autonomy in negotiations with management, regular elections of union officials by secret balloting, greater leadership accountability to the rank and file, an expanded role for the general assembly in internal union decision making, and effective procedures for resolving grievances that included departmental delegates distributed throughout the workplace. In sum, although considerable importance was attached to procedural issues such as effective member participation in union affairs through the general assembly, workers generally viewed union democratization as a means of increasing their bargaining effectiveness with management and resolving a wide range of problems in the workplace.

*The Crisis of Traditional Unionism in the Automobile Industry*

Structural changes in workplace relations in the automobile manufacturing industry assumed particular importance in the context of traditional labor-relations arrangements. The top-down orientation of the "official" Mexican organized labor movement frequently results in a crucial gap between labor leaders and workers. The traditional union leader in Mexico is typically more intent on winning local, state, or national political office than on attending to day-to-day problems in the workplace. The arrangement that has been developed to address this problem is the plant delegate system (*delegado de planta*). The delegado de planta is an individual chosen by the labor-union leader to attend to workers' daily concerns and avoid conflicts between labor and management at the local plant level in exchange for a share of union dues, political rewards, or both. Plant delegates are rarely selected from regular workers; instead, they are generally brought into a manufacturing plant when it is founded. Their approach to labor-management relations is highly personal and unstructured, and they vary considerably in their skill and dedication in resolving workplace problems.

The plant delegate system was firmly entrenched in the Auto-Mex-Chrysler (Federal District) and Ford unions. In the case of Auto-



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Mex-Chrysler, the plant delegate also served continuously as union secretary general from 1942 until his death in 1965. Although a formal union structure existed, actual decision-making authority and day-to-day responsibility for resolving workplace problems rested with the plant delegate, who reported directly to the leader of Section 23 of the Federación de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal.[31] In the Ford unions, labor-management relations in all three of Ford's separate manufacturing plants were handled by a single plant delegate. Although he was not originally a Ford worker and never held union office, he maintained close contact with (and control over) workers. The CTM's presence was formally based on the requirement that federation section leaders (who also held the post of secretary general in the two different Ford unions) sign new collective contracts for each manufacturing plant. But the effective basis of CTM control lay with the longtime plant delegate's highly personalistic, but skillful, resolution of workplace problems and his avoidance of internal opposition. The plant delegate thus served as a crucial intermediary between Ford management and the CTM federations until his death in 1975.[32]

Plant delegates also played an important role in the DINA, Volkswagen, and Nissan unions, albeit for shorter periods of time. In the case of DINA, the same plant delegate was active from the union's formation in 1955 until 1961. He shared responsibility with local union officials for negotiating, signing, and administering collective work agreements, and he was in charge of resolving day-to-day workplace conflicts.[33] In both the Volkswagen and Nissan cases, the CTM's main tie with the local union and workers was a plant delegate (who in both cases also served as union secretary general) brought in by the leader of the respective state labor federation to handle union affairs in newly established manufacturing facilities. The Volkswagen plant delegate was very successful at maintaining strict control over the rank and file during the Puebla plant's first years of activity, but his Nissan counterpart was quite ineffective in resolving workplace grievances. His office was located in the CTM state federation's headquarters in downtown Cuernavaca rather than in the plant, and he failed to maintain close supervision over daily developments in the workplace.[34]

In all these cases, the breakdown of the plant delegate system was followed by major rank-and-file challenges to established undemocratic patterns of union governance and the CTM's role in local union affairs.[35] For example, several months after DINA's plant delegate left Ciudad Sahagún in early 1961 for personal reasons, a protracted struggle for control over union affairs spiraled out of control as reformist groups mobilized widespread worker support for an opposition candidate when the incumbent secretary general attempted to win reelection by fraudulent means, in apparent violation of an implicit internal agree-



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ment to rotate union offices among CTM loyalists on a regular basis. Concerted efforts by state and national CTM leaders and government labor officials to restore order (and to back the incumbent secretary general's position) only fueled anti-CTM dissidence. By early 1962, a new, democratically elected union leadership had successfully consolidated its position and ended the union's ties to the CTM.

In both Auto-Mex-Chrysler and Ford, the death of longtime plant delegates opened traditional labor-relations arrangements to worker challenges, although the crises were resolved quite differently in the two cases. At Auto-Mex-Chrysler, the plant delegate's death in 1965 disrupted the established system of labor control just when the company was undergoing a major expansion program, which culminated with construction of a manufacturing plant in Toluca in 1968. Open labor strife erupted in the union's Toluca section in late 1969 as workers protested wages and working conditions that were considerably less favorable than those at the Mexico City plant. When Auto-Mex-Chrysler management dismissed the protest organizers, the dissident movement rapidly expanded its focus to challenge a number of corrupt union practices: the sale of plant employment openings for union leaders' private gain, the questionable and undocumented use of union dues, the union leadership's censorship of worker participation in general assemblies, its open collaboration with management, and the extensive use of one-day work contracts. In the end, however, forceful and sustained opposition by CTM leaders, government labor officials, and especially company management defeated the challenge from rank and file, and Auto-Mex-Chrysler management imposed its chief production manager as union secretary general to ensure future labor peace.

In contrast, the death of the Ford plants' delegate in 1975 sparked an internal reform process that resulted in unifying the three Ford plants' labor forces into a single union and substantially increasing the new union's organizational autonomy. The former plant delegate had relied on a number of assistants at the different plant sites, but no one of them could fill his position. Faced with a severe disruption in the established system of labor relations and the possibility that the breakdown of traditional unionism might lead to the emergence of a more combative, "independent" union, Ford management moved quickly to unify its work force into one union under a single, more easily administered collective contract. Simultaneously, CTM representatives and management personnel responded to increasing rank and file pressures by developing formal procedures for resolving grievances and a system of section-level labor delegates elected by workers in different workplace divisions that could address the demands of a large industrial labor force. In addition, after 1975 the union was linked directly to the



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CTM rather than affiliated with the national organization through federations. The result was a significant increase in union autonomy vis-à-vis the CTM and Ford management.

In other cases, the plant delegate system failed for reasons other than the death or physical absence of the plant delegate. At Volkswagen, the rapidly expanding work force and the union's growing political and economic importance tempted the plant delegate to try to wrest power from the CTM state federation leader and win personal control over collecting and using union membership dues. In the ensuing struggle, a democratic reform group succeeded in winning office. In the Nissan union, an opposition (but not anti-CTM) coalition succeeded in holding union elections in 1971 in which the incumbent secretary general–plant delegate was defeated. The state CTM federation leader accepted this change because of the union leader's demonstrated inability to maintain control over the work force, but this turnover in union leadership offered an opportunity for anti-CTM activists to develop a political base within the union. In both cases, then, conflicts that challenged elements of the established system of labor control offered internal opposition groups (aided by Ortega Arenas or the FAT or both) the opportunity to mobilize accumulated discontent among the rank and file and take power. Victorious reformers then established more democratic forms of union governance and broke ties with the CTM.

Although the specific circumstances surrounding the crisis of traditional unionism in these five cases varied considerably, a pattern emerges from this analysis of automobile workers' unions. The dramatic increase in work-force size and the transformation in workplace labor relations produced by the automobile industry's shift to manufacturing in the 1960s and 1970s laid the basis for challenges to established arrangements of labor control. When the plant delegate system was seriously disrupted under substantially different workplace conditions, rank-and-file challenges often followed quickly. The new labor-relations context also precluded recreating labor relations arrangements based on paternalism. It is particularly significant in this regard that newly democratic automobile workers' unions moved swiftly to establish formal structures for resolving conflicts between labor and management.

The time between the breakdown of the plant delegate system and internal challenges to incumbent union leaders was usually a matter of weeks or months. Only in Auto-Mex-Chrysler did a longer period of time elapse, and only in DINA did the challenge to established labor controls and the CTM's presence occur before the rapid expansion of automobile manufacturing activities. DINA had experienced substantial growth in its labor force between 1955 and 1960, and a threatened plant shutdown following abrogation of a licensing agreement with Fiat, combined with major contract concessions to management in 1960,



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stimulated challenges by dissident workers to the incumbent union leadership and CTM control.

Evidence concerning the three cases in which significant internal challenges did not emerge during the 1960s and 1970s—General Motors (Federal District), General Motors (Toluca), and VAM—further supports the structural interpretation of union democratization presented here. As previously noted, the General Motors (Federal District) union enjoyed both an established democratic tradition and substantial autonomy vis-à-vis the CROC. The growth of the General Motors labor force occurred in the context of a democratically accountable union executive committee and department-level union representatives actively involved in resolving worker grievances. Although such procedures did not exist in the General Motors plant in Toluca, the union's strong, politically influential leadership and its close ties to the state-level metalworkers' union and government authorities prevented the emergence of a rank-and-file opposition movement. In the case of the VAM union, several factors worked against the generalization of workplace grievances: an effective plant delegate, a sophisticated strategy of management paternalism, a comparatively small labor force, and an incentive wage system (in which wage scales were tied to a complex set of productivity measures that rewarded workers in narrowly defined workplace units according to their own productivity achievements).[36]

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CHANGE

Union democratization in the automobile manufacturing industry yielded important consequences for workers.[37] Union statutes were substantially revised, or new ones were adopted, to address several goals: to provide for regular election of union officers and their accountability to members, to enhance procedural safeguards on workers' union rights, to increase participation by the rank and file in general assemblies, and to expand the general assembly's role in internal union decision making. These reforms significantly expanded the opportunities for participation in union affairs. Democratically elected union officials also proved more aggressive in protecting workers' interests, both in resolving individual and collective conflicts at the enterprise level and in bringing grievance proceedings before such government agencies as the national social security administration and labor conciliation and arbitration boards.

Moreover, automobile workers in democratic unions quickly won greater control over the production process, especially union participation in determining production rates and work force distribution within a plant, equalizing wage categories, and establishing occupational health and safety measures. They also secured more influence over pro-



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motion procedures and employment policies, including union participation in elaborating the personnel hierarchy, deciding on workplace promotions, and progressively reducing the number of temporary employees in the work force. Democratic automobile workers' unions were also more likely to strike than their "official" counterparts, although their more assertive conduct in labor-management negotiations did not always produce larger wage increases.

These developments significantly influenced management strategies in the new, export-oriented automobile plants constructed in the early 1980s. Domestic demand for automobiles plummeted after the onset of the economic crisis in 1982: sales of cars and trucks fell from a record 561,200 vehicles in 1981 to 256,300 in 1986, a 54.3 percent decline.[38] In response to changed domestic market conditions, the progressive internationalization of automobile manufacturing, and government legislation promoting manufactured exports,[39] several transnational firms established manufacturing facilities in central and northern Mexico. Opening export-oriented plants in 1981 were Nissan (Aguascalientes), Chrysler (Ramos Arizpe), and General Motors (Ramos Arizpe); their examples were soon followed by Ford (Chihuahua) in 1983, Renault (Gómez Palacio) in 1985, and Ford (Hermosillo) in 1986.

These new sites were chosen mainly because of their geographical proximity to the United States, the intended export market. But in the cases of General Motors, Ford, Nissan, and Renault, company management also sought to reverse the trend toward union control over key aspects of the production process (production rates, work force distribution within a plant, and the use of temporary workers) that had prevailed in their older manufacturing plants in central Mexico. (Indeed, construction of these new manufacturing facilities was accompanied by a sustained management campaign to reverse the contract concessions won by democratic unions in established automobile plants. Despite vigorous union resistance, these efforts largely succeeded at DINA–Renault de México between 1983 and 1986 and at Ford [Cuautitlán] in 1987. Sustained union opposition defeated a similar initiative at Volkswagen in 1987, however.)[40] By hiring a new labor force in comparatively low-wage areas, these companies also sought to lower wage costs and reduce seniority-based fringe benefits. Workers in several of these recently established plants are organized in plant-level unions that are legally separate from those in older manufacturing facilities and affiliated with CTM state federations.

Automobile companies drew further on their experiences with combative democratic unions in the 1970s in developing strategies for industrial relations in the new export manufacturing plants.[41] For example, Ford, General Motors, and Nissan management have attempted to reduce worker alienation by organizing the labor force into small work



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teams and quality circles. Continuous employee training emphasizes productivity, discipline, and punctuality as well as the technical skills required in these technologically sophisticated plants. Internal promotion is based on satisfactory completion of training courses and experience in diverse positions within a plant, rather than on simple seniority. Labor contracts signed with CTM affiliates granted management great flexibility in assigning workers to meet changing production requirements and substantially reduced the role of union representatives in resolving day-to-day grievances in the workplace. These kinds of management strategies have not eliminated worker protests (strikes for higher wages and improved working conditions broke out at all of the Ford and General Motors northern manufacturing plants in the 1980s), but they have so far forestalled open rank-and-file challenges to these labor relations arrangements.

The CTM has also applied the lessons of the 1960s and 1970s in its approach to labor control in the recently established automobile manufacturing plants. Local union advisors are often graduates of the CTM's new leadership training school in Cuernavaca, where they received instruction in economics, labor law, negotiating strategies, and the leadership skills required to manage a more educated labor force. Union executive committees are selected in regularly held elections, and in several instances, workers have actually ousted incumbent union leaders.[42] Nevertheless, CTM union representatives maintain tight control over wage and contract negotiations, and workers who challenge CTM influence are quickly (and regularly) dismissed by company management. The CTM's modified approach to labor relations in these plants may not prevent the eventual triumph of democratic reform movements, but these labor-control arrangements are likely to withstand internal challenges much more effectively than the traditional plant delegate system.

Whatever the course of future developments in this area, the experience of democratic unionism in the automobile manufacturing industry poses important questions regarding the prospects for broader political change in Mexico. Opposition political forces on both the left and the right must substantially expand their mass organizational bases if they are to develop any effective national presence and push forward the political liberalization process initiated in the late 1970s.[43] Because the PRI's hegemonic position within the organized labor movement constitutes a major obstacle to such efforts, one might assume that democratic, "independent" automobile workers' unions offer a propitious opportunity for opposition parties to build support among the organized working class. Leftist opposition groups have certainly made sustained efforts to do so since the early 1970s, and some opposition elements have succeeded in establishing an organizational presence



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among automobile workers. But democratic unions in the industry have often been reluctant to compromise their hard-won organizational autonomy by establishing affiliations with groups whose agendas might expose the unions to political risks. The most durable linkages of this kind have been to local or regional political organizations dedicated primarily to plant-level activities. Thus while union democratization in sectors such as the automobile industry opens new opportunities for opposition political organization, no necessary relationship exists between this process and more general regime change. Lasting ties between democratic unions and national political parties will emerge only as a result of long-term, politically sensitive organization at the local level.

NOTES

1. Examples from the Latin American context include Juan Carlos Torre, "The Meaning of Current Workers' Struggles," *Latin American Perspectives* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1974):73–81; Elizabeth Jelin, "Espontaneidad y organización en el movimiento obrero," *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, n. s. no. 2 (1975):77–118; John Humphrey, *Capitalist Control and Workers' Struggle in the Brazilian Auto Industry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), especially chaps. 1, 4–7.
2. See J. David Edelstein and Malcolm Warner, *Comparative Union Democracy: Organisation and Opposition in British and American Unions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976), chap. 3; John Hemingway, *Conflict and Democracy: Studies in Trade Union Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), chaps. 1–2; Roderick Martin, "Union Democracy: An Explanatory Framework," *Sociology* 2, no. 2 (May 1968):205–20; John C. Anderson, "A Comparative Analysis of Local Union Democracy," *Industrial Relations* 17, no. 3 (Oct. 1978):278–95; and Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin Trow, and James Coleman, *Union Democracy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1962), 15, 77–91, 452–69.
3. Martin notes that rapid technological change may contribute to the emergence of democratic reform movements in unions. See his "Union Democracy," 211, 216.
4. The now-substantial literature on this topic includes Ian Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico: The Case of the Automobile Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Javier Aguilar García, *La política sindical en México: industria del automóvil* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1982); Ian Roxborough, "Labor in the Mexican Motor Vehicle Industry," in *The Political Economy of the Latin American Motor Vehicle Industry*, edited by Rich Kronish and Kenneth S. Mericle (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 161–94; Ian Roxborough, "El sindicalismo en el sector automotriz," *Estudios Sociológicos* 1, no. 1 (Jan.–Apr. 1983); Ian Roxborough and Ilán Bizberg, "Union Locals in Mexico: The 'New Unionism' in Steel and Automobiles," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 15, no. 1 (May 1983):117–35; Mark Thompson and Ian Roxborough, "Union Elections and Democracy in Mexico: A Comparative Perspective," *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 20, no. 2 (July 1982):201–17; José Othón Quiroz, "Proceso de trabajo en la industria automotriz," *Cuadernos Políticos* 26 (Oct.–Dec. 1980):64–77; Francisco Javier Aguilar García, "El sindicalismo del sector automotriz, 1960–1976," *Cuadernos Políticos* 16 (Apr.–June 1978):44–64; Javier Rodríguez, "El movimiento sindical en la industria automotriz, 1970–1978," *Iztapalapa* 2, no. 5 (July–Dec. 1981); Francisco Javier Aguilar García, "Historia sindical de General Motors y la huelga de 1980," *A Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 1, no. 1 (Sept.–Dec. 1980):91–105; Lucía Bazán, "El sindicalismo independiente de Nissan Mexicana," in *Memorias del encuentro sobre historia del movimiento obrero* (Puebla: Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1980), 3:337–44; and Enrique Contreras Suárez and Gilberto Silva Ruiz, "Los recientes movimientos obreros mexicanos pro-democracia sindical y el



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reformismo obrero," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 34, nos. 3–4 (July–Sept., Oct.–Dec. 1972):845–79.

5. The 1962 decree required manufacturers to increase the share of nationally produced components in automobile manufacturing to 60 percent, regulated the price of vehicles manufactured in Mexico in accordance with international market prices, and set annual production quotas for each firm (according to each firm's prior market penetration, compliance with the decree, and share of national capital participation). For the full text of the decree, see *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, 25 Aug. 1962. For a discussion of the automobile industry's early history and the implementation of the 1962 decree, see Douglas C. Bennett and Kenneth E. Sharpe, *Transnational Corporations versus the State: The Political Economy of the Mexican Auto Industry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), chaps. 3 and 5; see also Rhys Jenkins, *Transnational Corporations and the Latin American Automobile Industry* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987).
6. Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Automotriz, *La industria automotriz en cifras, 1976* (Mexico City: AMIA, 1977), 13, 58–59, 170; and Héctor Vázquez Tercero, *Una década de política sobre industria automotriz* (Mexico City: Editorial Tecnos, 1975), 14, 19.
7. Of these seven firms, Ford Motor Company, S.A., General Motors de México, S.A. de C.V., Nissan Mexicana, S.A. de C.V., and Volkswagen de México, S.A. de C.V., are wholly owned subsidiaries of transnational corporations. Chrysler purchased 33 percent of Fábricas Auto-Mex in 1959; in 1971, Chrysler increased its holdings to 90.5 percent and changed the firm's name to Chrysler de México, S.A. Chrysler later expanded its equity share to 99.3 percent. Until 1983, Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos, S.A. de C.V., was 60 percent state-owned, with 40 percent of equity held by the American Motors Corporation; in 1983 Vehículos Automotores Mexicanos was purchased by Regie Nationale des Usines Renault. Prior to 1978, Diesel Nacional, S.A., was wholly state-owned; in 1978 Regie Nationale des Usine Renault purchased 40 percent of equity. In 1982 DINA (which produced trucks, buses, and engines) and Renault de México, S.A. de C.V. (which produced passenger cars), were divided; DINA was subsequently reorganized into five separate enterprises, and in 1983 Renault de México was wholly purchased by Regie Nationale des Usines Renault. Although these seven firms were the largest producers and employers, the Mexican automobile industry included several other companies that manufactured heavy trucks and buses as well as a large auto-parts industry. For details, see Vázquez Tercero, *Una década de política sobre industria automotriz*, 16–17; and Bennett and Sharpe, *Transnational Corporations versus the State*, 129–34, 176–78.
8. State and regional labor federations are organized along federal jurisdictional lines without regard to functional specificity. Their membership is heterogeneous in terms of the size of affiliated unions, economic activities represented, and the kind of local unions included. State and regional federations are normally organized in local sections at the municipal level where this heterogeneity in size, economic activity, and union structure also exists. Different national confederations may have their own state or regional federations operating within the same geographic area, competing for the same heterogeneous union membership. These unions predominate in more traditional economic activities characterized by smaller work-force concentrations and lower wage levels. Their internal resources, organizational strength, and mobilizational capacities are usually modest. Yet these unions represent the majority of organized workers in Mexico, and they have traditionally constituted the majority of the CTM's membership. On the general organizational structure of Mexican unionism, see Francisco Zapata, "Afiliación y organización sindical en México," in José Luis Reyna et al., *Tres estudios sobre el movimiento obrero en México*, Jornadas 80 series (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1976), 81–148, especially 89–96.
9. Information on affiliations of automobile unions is drawn from Kevin J. Middlebrook, "The Political Economy of Mexican Organized Labor, 1940–1978," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982, 251–52, 278–309; Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 76–104; and Aguilar García, *La política sindical en México*, 105–14. The CTM-affiliated unions evidenced the greatest degree of organizational dispersion. The VAM and Auto-Mex-Chrysler unions were affiliated with Sections 9 and 23, respec-



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tively, of the CTM's powerful Federación de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal (FTDF). When General Motors established its Toluca subsidiary in 1965, its work force was unionized as Section 9 of the CTM's Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria Metalúrgica. The DINA and Nissan unions were organized within the CTM's state federations in Hidalgo and Morelos, respectively. Workers at Ford's original manufacturing and assembly plant at La Villa (in the Federal District) were represented by the Unión de Obreros y Empleados de la Industria Automovilística del Distrito Federal and affiliated with the FTDF's Section 15, which grouped workers from a large number of electronics, manufacturing, and metalworking firms. Workers at the Ford assembly plant in Tlanepantla and the motor manufacturing plant at Cuautitlán (established in 1962 and 1964, respectively) in the state of Mexico were represented by the CTM's Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de la Industria Metálica del Estado de México. Each of the three Ford plants had a separate collective contract.

10. For example, see Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 32–33; Aguilar García, *La política sindical en México*, 37, 69, 71; Ilán Bizberg, "Política laboral y acción sindical en México (1976–1982)," *Foro Internacional* 25, no. 2 (Oct.–Dec. 1984):169; and Jorge Basurto, *En el régimen de Echeverría: rebelión e independencia*, vol. 14 of *La clase obrera en la historia de México*, edited by Pablo González Casanova (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1983), 9.
11. For a more detailed discussion of Echeverría's reform policies in the labor sector, see Basurto, *En el régimen de Echeverría*, 9, 32, 34, 36–45; Daniel Molina, "Notas sobre el estado y el movimiento obrero," *Cuadernos Políticos* 12 (Apr.–June 1977):69–88; Magdalena Galindo, "El movimiento obrero en el sexenio echeverrista," *Investigación Económica* 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1977):97–127; and "Seis años de combates obreros: avances y retrocesos, 1970–1976," *Punto Crítico*, no. 69, 31 Jan. 1977, pp. 15–24.
12. For accounts of the emergence and evolution of the Tendencia Democrática, see Silvia Gómez Tagle and Marcelo Miquet, "Integración o democracia sindical: el caso de los electricistas," in Reyna et al., *Tres estudios sobre el movimiento obrero en México*, 149–202, especially 152–54, 170–71; *Punto Crítico*, no. 58, 9 July 1976, pp. 9–10; and Raúl Trejo Delarbre, "Cronología de la Tendencia Democrática, 1960–1978," special section of *Siempre*, no. 1319, 4 Oct. 1978. For details on the MSF, see *Punto Crítico*, no. 13, Jan. 1973, p. 10, and no. 69, 31 Jan. 1977, p. 19. For additional information on the FAT, see *Punto Crítico*, no. 6, 10 June 1972, pp. 33, 35, 39; no. 10, Oct. 1972, p. 8; and no. 69, 31 Jan. 1977, pp. 15, 21. On the UOI, see Middlebrook, "The Political Economy of Mexican Organized Labor," 372–74.
13. This discussion of developments in individual unions is based on information presented in Middlebrook, "The Political Economy of Mexican Organized Labor," 284–86, 289–90, 292, 294–96, 302, 304, 308; Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 78–80, 100, 108; and Aguilar García, *La política sindical en México*, 79, 109.
14. Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 82, 102, 104, 107.
15. Ibid., 82.
16. Author's interview with a former Nissan union official, 26 Feb. 1978, Cuernavaca.
17. Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 104, 107. Concerning the Volkswagen case, Roxborough argues that the presence of affiliates of rival labor confederations in Puebla weakened the CTM state federation. But rival organizations are also prominent in states where the CTM is strong, including the state of Mexico.
18. Information on Blas Chumacero's political record comes from Jorge Basurto, *La influencia de la economía y el estado en las huelgas: el caso de México* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, 1962), and personal correspondence from Basurto, May 1978. Information on Volkswagen management's strategy is based on interviews with a former governor and federal senator, 21 June 1977, Mexico City; a Volkswagen labor-relations employee, 13 Sept. 1977, Puebla; and an automobile industry labor organizer, 18 Jan. 1978, Mexico City.
19. Aguilar García is the principal advocate of this view, albeit indirectly. He contends that deteriorating economic conditions contributed to the "worker insurgence" of the early 1970s and that democratic unionism in the automobile industry was a



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specific embodiment of this more general phenomenon. See *La política sindical en México*, 40–41.

20. Data regarding economic growth rates and inflation rates between 1970 and 1973 come from Carlos Tello, *La política económica en México, 1970–1976* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1979), 71, 74, 136. Data regarding inflation rates from 1974 to 1976 are from María de la Luz Arriaga Lemus, Edur Velasco Arregui, and Eduardo Zepeda Miramontes, "Inflación y salarios en el régimen de LEA," *Investigación Económica* 3 (July–Sept. 1977):214. This article cites Banco de México data.
21. The 1970 figure was calculated by the author from data presented in Secretaría de Industria y Comercio, Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo Industrial IX* (1971), tables 3, 5, 14 (classification nos. 3831, 3833). The 1976 figure was calculated by multiplying "average days worked in 1970" (258; 1970 industrial census, "Resúmen general," t. 12, averaging classifications nos. 3831, 3832, and 3833) by the average daily wage reported in International Metalworkers' Federation, *Report to Second IMF Latin American and Caribbean Automobile and Agricultural Implement Conference, Valencia, Venezuela, September 1976*, vol. 1, *Mexico*. For both figures, 12.5 pesos equaled one U.S. dollar. The 1976 figure may be slightly inflated because it refers only to the seven largest automobile manufacturing firms, while the 1970 figure includes all automobile manufacturing industry firms. The Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Automotriz reports somewhat higher figures for both years; see *La industria automotriz en cifras, 1976*, t. 3.
22. Middlebrook, "The Political Economy of Mexican Organized Labor," t. 6.4.
23. Arriaga Lemus et al., "Inflación y salarios en el régimen de LEA," p. 233, t. 8; and Basurto, *En el régimen de Echeverría*, p. 62, t. 8. Tello presents a less positive view concerning real minimum wages in *La política económica en México*, 72, 103, 144, 158.
24. Calculations by the author based on information from the Secretaría de Industria y Comercio, Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo Industrial VII* (1961), t. 1 (pp. 1–2, 24–25; classification no. 3832); *Censo Industrial IX* (1971), t. 3 (p. 35), t. 5 (pp. 112–13), and t. 14 (pp. 273, 284) (classification nos. 3831, 3833). The data for 1960 refer to privately owned firms and do not include state-owned firms or those with state participation; the data for 1970 refer to both private enterprises and firms with state participation. Data for secondary subsidiaries (*unidades auxiliares*) are not included in 1970 figures. The major shift in capital investment had in fact occurred by 1967, as automobile firms moved to meet the 1962 degree's requirements concerning domestic manufacture and local content. Indeed, the amount of capital invested per worker declined somewhat between 1965 and 1970 as employment increased and the rate of capital investment slowed.
25. These calculations are based on data presented in table 2 and in Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Automotriz, *La industria automotriz en cifras, 1976*, 58–59.
26. Garfield Clack, *Industrial Relations in a British Car Factory*, University of Cambridge, Department of Applied Economics, Occasional Papers no. 9 (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1967), pp. 21, 23–24, 36, 42–43, and especially 96; see also William Heston McPherson, *Labor Relations in the Automobile Industry* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1940), chap. 5, especially pp. 48–49.
27. Bennett and Sharpe, *Transnational Corporations versus the State*, 117, 149, 210. Michael Fullan argues that production efficiency in the automobile industry generally depends on labor costs. See Fullan, "Industrial Technology and Worker Integration in the Organization," *American Sociological Review* 36, no. 1 (Dec. 1970):1031.
28. Fullan provides a comparative treatment of these factors in "Industrial Technology and Worker Integration," 1028. For other discussions of workplace relations in the automobile industry, see Gerald Bloomfield, *The World Automotive Industry* (Vancouver, B.C.: David and Charles, 1978), 113–14; and William A. Faunce, "Automation in the Automobile Industry: Some Consequences for In-Plant Social Structure," *American Sociological Review* 23, no. 4 (Aug. 1958):402–3.
29. Fullan, "Industrial Technology and Worker Integration," 1031, 1034–35; and Faunce, "Automation in the Automobile Industry," 402–3. Although this generalized characterization of automobile manufacturing as an industry may be correct, considerable diversity exists in workplace relations within a single automobile plant; see Clack,



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Industrial Relations in a British Car Factory, 16. Moreover, according to Clack, not all studies conclude that these workplace conditions result in worker dissatisfaction (p. 13). For a discussion of working conditions in the Brazilian automobile industry, see Humphrey, *Capitalist Control and Workers' Struggle*, 82–84, 100–104.

30. For a more detailed discussion of these issues in the context of specific automobile workers' unions, see Middlebrook, "The Political Economy of Mexican Organized Labor," 279–89, 293–96, 298–99, 302–4; and Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 77–78, 88. For a compelling examination of the relationship between the industrial working environment in Mexican automobile manufacturing plants and worker grievances, see Quiroz, "Proceso de trabajo en la industria automotriz," 65–72. Anderson suggests that the failure of incumbent union leaders to satisfy membership demands in collective bargaining may increase pressures for union democracy. See Anderson, "A Comparative Analysis of Local Union Democracy," 284.
31. This discussion is based on an interview with an automobile industry labor organizer, 22 June 1978, Mexico City. See also *Justicia Social* 1, no. 1 (Aug. 1974), the first issue of the Chrysler union's cultural and social affairs magazine; and Angel Fojo de Diego, "Estudio de un conflicto industrial: el caso Automex," mimeo, Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, El Colegio de México, 1973, pp. 1–2.
32. This discussion is based on interviews with automobile industry labor organizers, 2 June 1977 and 18 June 1978, Mexico City, and an analysis of Ford labor contracts; see also Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 78–79.
33. This discussion is based on interviews with a former DINA worker, 11 Aug. 1977, Ciudad Sahagún, and an automobile industry labor organizer, 18 Jan. 1978, Mexico City.
34. This discussion of the Volkswagen case is based on interviews with a Volkswagen labor relations official, 13 Sept. 1977, Puebla, and an automobile industry labor organizer, 20 June 1978, Mexico City; information concerning Nissan is based on an interview with a former union official, 26 Feb. 1978, Cuernavaca.
35. The discussion of these cases is based on the same materials cited in notes 31–34.
36. This discussion of the VAM case is based on author's interview with an automobile industry labor organizer, 18 Jan. 1978, Mexico City; Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 93–94; and Quiroz, "Proceso de trabajo en la industria automotriz," 67–68.
37. See Middlebrook, "The Political Economy of Mexican Organized Labor," chap. 6; and Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico*, 47–49, 50–66, 72, 112–19, 121–31, 155–63.
38. Asociación Mexicana de la Industria Automotriz, *Boletín*, no. 253 (Jan. 1987), p. 3.
39. The "Decreto para la racionalización de la industria automotriz" required companies to generate export income to compensate for essential imports and specifically encouraged the export of automobile parts and components. It can be found in *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, 15 Sept. 1983, pp. 3–9.
40. Renault de México closed its automobile manufacturing plant in Ciudad Sahagún, Hidalgo, in 1986. Ford closed its La Villa and Tlanepantla facilities in 1983 and 1985, respectively, and in 1987, its Cuautitlán manufacturing plant was temporarily shut down and its work force indemnified. By later reopening the Cuautitlán plant with a new labor force, Ford management was able to reduce labor costs (especially seniority-based fringe benefits) and redraw the collective contract so as to increase management control over the production process. On the protracted struggle over contract revisions in Renault de México, see Luciano Concheiro B. and Guadalupe Montes de Oca, "Los trabajadores de Renault y su sindicato: cronología, 1976–1986," *El Cotidiano*, no. 15 (Jan.–Feb. 1986):40–43; for details on the 1987 Volkswagen case and the Ford (Cuautitlán) episode, see María Teresa Garza and Luis Méndez, "La huelga en Volkswagen" and "El conflicto de la Ford Cuautitlán," *El Cotidiano*, no. 20 (Nov.–Dec. 1987):381–85.
41. The discussion here draws on the author's interviews with an official of the Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, 16 Oct. 1987, Mexico City, and an auto company industrial-relations director, 6 Nov. 1987, Mexico City. It also draws on Jordy Micheli and Arnulfo Arteaga, "El nuevo modelo de las relaciones capital-trabajo en la industria automotriz en México," *Brecha* 2 (Spring 1987):73–85; Rainer



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Dombois, "La producción automotriz y el mercado del trabajo en un país en desarrollo," International Institute for Comparative Social Research/Labor Policy (Berlin), mimeo (IIVG/dp86–216), pp. 79–81; Harley Shaiken, *Automation and Global Production: Automobile Engine Production in Mexico, the United States, and Canada* (La Jolla, Cal.: Center for U.S.–Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1987), 42, 47–53.

42. Author's interview with an official of the Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, 16 Oct. 1987, Mexico City; and Shaiken, *Automation and Global Production*, 51.
43. For analyses of recent political change in Mexico, see Kevin J. Middlebrook, "Political Liberalization in an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Mexico," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pt. 2, pp. 123–47; and Wayne A. Cornelius, "Political Liberalization in an Authoritarian Regime: Mexico, 1976–1985," in *Mexican Politics in Transition*, edited by Judith Gentleman (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987), 15–39.



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