

When the Cactus Blooms: A Century of Strikes in Mexico.

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ABSTRACT

There has been an underestimation of strikes in Mexico in several recent important studies due to serious methodological flaws. As well there has been a tendency to a one-sided view of the role of the state in the determination of strikes. The exclusive emphasis by many scholars on the state's determination of strikes in Mexico neglects the activity of workers themselves and the influence of economic cycles and international events on the development of strikes and strike waves. By measuring workers' protests in a more complete manner, we demonstrate the serious inadequacies in many existing studies. By conceptualizing the roots of workers' protests in a more holistic manner, we seek to provide alternate interpretations. The first part of the paper focuses on these issues of measurement and interpretation. The middle sections look at the historical development of strikes over a long time frame. And, in the last part, we examine the new strategies of capital and the state to prevent strikes in Mexico's new period of continental economic integration. It also raises the prospects for the renewal of workers' struggles given Mexico's popular traditions of solidarity and the relentless character of the neoliberal assault on workers' rights, dignity, and well-being.

KEYWORDS

Strikes, Mexico, Long time frame, Strategies to prevent strikes

Mexico: more industrialized, more global, more unstable

It seems paradoxical that the decline in strikes in contemporary Mexico coincides with the country's increasing importance in global manufacturing and the logistical aspects of international capitalism. Mexico is now (2012) the second largest economy within the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with a GDP of U.S. \$ 1,743 billion, greater than that of Canada and the eleventh largest economy in the world, just behind France and Italy.¹

A few statistics will further illustrate the crucial role played by Mexico in the new international economy. Beginning in 1995, automotive production in the factories located in Mexico increased at a dizzying speed, reaching an average volume of 210,000 vehicles per month. This is three times greater than the rate fifteen years earlier. In 2011, one out of every five autos built in North America was produced in Mexico. Companies manufacturing transportation equipment and autoparts directly employ 470,000 people in Mexico (INEGI 2010^a: 2.1.17). With regard to the logistical aspects of the world market, the movement of containers through Mexican ports has multiplied 15 times during the last quarter of a century. Every year Mexico's new maritime terminals move four million containers, which are transported along highway corridors crossing the country between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, or stretching up to the country's northern border, in some cases having passed through one of the thousands of Mexico's *maquiladoras*² Consequently, a strike capable of paralyzing this powerful machinery of international capitalism would have consequences—uneven but

¹ International Monetary Fund, 2012. World GDP Purchasing Power Parities. *World Economic Outlook Database*, April. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/01/pdf/text.pdf>

² A *maquiladora* is an industrial plant that is part of a cross-border integrated production process between the U.S. and Mexico in which the Mexican plant usually performs the more labor intensive aspects of production. It started out in the 1960s under a Border Industrialization Program signed by the U.S. and Mexican governments. It can be seen as a predecessor to NAFTA which deepens the use of cheaper and less protected Mexican labor as part of production by U.S. and other non-Mexican companies. See SCT. *Informe Estadístico, Movimiento de Carga, Buques y Pasajeros*, Mexico, Coordinación General de Puertos y Marina Mercante, Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes, 2011, p.35.

appreciable—in world industry, as well as in all the world’s ports: from Shanghai to Long Beach, from New York to Rotterdam.

The dramatic expansion and deepening of the transnational character of the Mexican working class has a potential significance as great if not greater than the specific gravity of Mexico in the global economy. There are four million industrial workers in Mexican territory, and a similar amount in the industries of the United States. It is a transnationalized proletariat, some of which settles permanently in the US and many others who enter and leave according to economic cycles, with flows of half a million people per year.³ This long history of the Mexican working class as a transborder working class, with a presence in both the Mexican and US labor markets and labor movements, has been profoundly expanded and deepened with capitalist globalization. The voracious appetite of US capital for cheap and vulnerable labor has combined with the neoliberal destruction of sources of livelihood within Mexico to greatly expand Mexican migration to all parts of the US and many sectors of the economy. This transnational character of the Mexican working class combined with Mexico’s multiple crises creates potential for a labor insurgency that could have significant impact on both Mexico and the U.S.⁴

In this essay, we will reconstruct some key aspects of the bleak course of Mexico’s labor movement within the history of the subsumption of the ancient Mexican nation into the world economy. The deepening of capitalist globalization has further tightened the heavy chains of control placed over Mexico’s working class during the decades following the Mexican Revolution of 1910.⁵ And the liberalization of the electoral system has not led to a growth of labor rights. In fact, the government of “democratic transition” has maintained the old system of labor control and added new elements of repression.

The arrival of globalization gave Mexico’s major private corporations the hope of creating a strike-proof economic and social configuration. They,

³ Pew Hispanic Center, *Latinos in the U.S., Country of Origin Profile*, 2012.

⁴ Roman, R and Velasco, E. *Continental Crucible: Big Business, Workers and Unions in the Transformation of North America* (forthcoming, 2013).

⁵ The exploitation of Mexico’s working class can be concentrated into a single statistic. The minimum hourly wage in 2011 was 42 cents of a euro. Nearly 25 million workers, or 50% of the country’s labor force, receive less than a euro for each hour worked. The differences between the productivity of Mexico’s economy and European economies do not explain these differences in wages. Turkey, a country with a per capita GDP similar to that of Mexico, remunerates its workers on the basis of a minimum wage that is six times higher than Mexico’s minimum wage (based on purchasing power parities). INEGI. *Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, Aguascalientes, Mexico.

in collaboration with the government, have carried out the worst assault on the living and working conditions of the working class in memory. This assault has led to a decrease of strikes every year, as shown in Appendix 1 and 2.

The number of strikes decreased considerably from 1982 to 2010. There were only 84 legal strikes in the entire country in 2010, with only 8,000 workers participating—in a country with a labor force of 50 million people. Only one out of every 6,250 persons in the labor force went on strike that year.⁶

This data is perhaps surprising if we consider that over the course of the past three decades, the share of wage-earners in the Gross Domestic Product decreased from 40 to 25%, and the effective unemployment rate increased from 6 to 18%. In addition, accidents in the workplace are turning Mexican factories and mines into nothing short of “death chambers” that cause the deaths of 7,000 workers each year.⁷ And tens of thousands of other accidents leave more workers with serious life-long disabilities. The economic and political engineering constructed by the Mexican bourgeoisie with the aim of subduing workers in the workplace has been developed step by step, and we will examine it in the last part of this article.

The decline of formal strikes would seem to indicate quiescence on the part of the working class. But this decline has been accompanied by a silent rebellion, a rebellion difficult to measure statistically but nevertheless real. In recent years, workers in a number of factories in northern Mexico have begun to demonstrate their discontent in an increasingly defiant manner—without revealing their underground network—although these actions are not officially recorded as “legal strikes.” They have included the burning of facilities, wildcat strikes, occupation of highways next to *maquiladora* assembly plants, and open confrontations with federal security forces, as witnessed in Puerto de Lázaro Cárdenas, in the state of Michoacán

⁶ Official statistics also do not include national work stoppages by miners, due to a bitter conflict between the *Sindicato Minero Metalúrgico de la República Mexicana* (Mexican Mining-Metallurgy Union) and the right-wing governments of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (Party of National Action). The conflict arose following an accident in the Pasta de Conchos Mine that resulted in the deaths of 65 workers. The official version regarding the “compliance of Mexico’s working class” also disregards the strong presence of workers in the post-election conflict in 2006, with their combativeness evident in the massive protests in Mexico City between July and October of that year, with over a million people participating.

⁷ Velasco Arregui, E. and Roman, R. *El México bárbaro del siglo XXI: A doce años del TLC, la muerte tiene permiso. Memoria*, no. 207, Mexico, CEMOS, 2006.

in 2006⁸ and less intensely but still repeatedly in 2009 and 2010. The “peaceful labor relations” imposed by Mexico’s neoliberal governments since the signing of NAFTA with Canada and the United States in November 1993 are fragile. The alleged solidity of these relations is disappearing.

This article will critically examine some important studies of strike incidence in twentieth century Mexico and will present an alternative way of measuring and interpreting strike data. We will then examine two key periods of strike activity (1930s and 1976-1983) in order to present the Mexican experience more vividly as well as to illustrate the methodological and interpretive problems we see in the studies critiqued. We will then discuss the new period of the capitalist offensive and globalization, a period in which formal strike activity has continuously declined, but in which informal resistance appears to be growing. Finally, in the conclusion, we will discuss the implications for the study of strikes and the future of Mexico.

Determining Factors in the Long Wave of Strikes in Mexico

There have been various attempts at constructing time series of strikes in Mexico from the classic 1965 work of Pablo González Casanova, *La democracia en México*⁹, to the recent work coordinated by B.R. Mitchell in the extraordinary 2007 volume, *International Historical Statistics*¹⁰, which covers the period 1930-2004. We find that these works, along with those of Zapata¹¹ and Middlebrook¹², have significant methodological and interpretive problems. This paper will suggest a more complete way of measuring strikes in Mexico as well as an alternative interpretation of them. Our data and analysis will be presented more fully in our forthcoming book on Mexican working-class struggles.

Those strikes that are recorded in Mexico are not recorded in an aggregate manner. And many strikes are not recorded at all. Government employees, whether federal, state or municipal have a severely restricted right

⁸ Torres, Carlos. 2006. “Enfrentamiento entre metalúrgicos en huelga y la Policía Federal deja dos muertos,” *La Jornada*, April 21, 2006.

⁹ González Casanova, P. *La Democracia en México*. Mexico: ERA, 1967.

¹⁰ Mitchell, B.R. *International Historical Statistics 1750-2005: Americas*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

¹¹ Zapata, Francisco. Strikes in a state corporatist system: Mexico. In: Van der Velden, Sjaak. (ed.) *Strikes around the World 1968-2005: Case Studies of 15 Countries*. Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2007.

¹² Middlebrook, K. *The Paradox of Revolution: labor, the state and authoritarianism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1995.

to strike. Their strikes, however large and of whatever duration, do not appear in official figures. These government employees, including teachers and health workers, make up a significant part of the union movement and are covered under section "B" of Article 123 (the labor code) of the Mexican Constitution. They do not have the right to strike over wages and working conditions; they have the hypothetical right to strike only if the employer, the government itself, agrees that it has violated their constitutional rights in a broad and systematic manner. Therefore almost all of their actions of collective resistance are not recognized in government statistics as "strikes." There is no record of them, except in the inaccessible archives of the political police and other state security agencies. This omission is tremendously important since the public sector has expanded massively in the second half of the twentieth century. The collective resistance of hundreds of thousands of public sector workers, which has had great importance in Mexican labor history, is omitted from official strike data.

Workers employed by the private sector or by state-owned decentralized organisms (*paraestatales*) involved in production and/or services, are included in Part A of the labor code of the Constitution and have the right to strike over wages or working conditions. Their strikes, however, are recorded in two different sets of records, depending on whether the union is registered under federal or local jurisdiction. The designation of federal or local is made legislatively by the federal Congress according to the importance of the company and the strategic importance of that sector of production. Those enterprises designated as strategic, important, or of national scope, fall under federal jurisdiction. All other enterprises fall under local jurisdiction. Both individual and collective labor-related issues have to be brought to either the federal or local boards of conciliation and arbitration. The importance of this distinction is that strikes are recorded in two different registries, those in enterprises that are "important, strategic, or national" in the registry of the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Board while the others are recorded by local boards.

Many strikes of workers covered under section A are also not counted in strike data. The local and federal Conciliation and Arbitration Boards (*juntas*) have the legal authority to declare a strike *inexistente* or *ilegal* and these strikes will not be included in the data. *Inexistente* refers to procedural violations and *ilegal* refers to violence or threat to public order, according to the judgement of the Boards. A good example would be the 1972 strike at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico -- UNAM). This strike, which was declared illegal, lasted 85 days and involved 20,000 workers. It is not included in strike statistics. Some *ilegal* or *inexistente* strikes may end immediately, some may

go on for considerable periods, depending on many factors, including political elements (such as the relation of the union to municipal, state, or local government), the strength of union (strategic location or skills, solidarity, militancy), and the political conjuncture. The omission of these strikes not only underestimates the total number of strikes, but likely also underestimates the variation over time as it is likely that a greater number of strikes declared *illegal* or *inexistente* would nevertheless continue in periods of rising working militancy as compared to periods of relative quiescence.

One of the problems in the statistical series elaborated by B.R. Mitchell in the section on “North America: Industrial Disputes” in which the Mexican data is presented, is that the data from the federal and local jurisdictions are not added together, but rather different sources are used for different years. Federal jurisdictions are used for some years and local jurisdictions for other years. For example, local jurisdiction data is used for the 1975-1985 period, but, from 1986 on, federal data is used. Thus the data from 1975-1985 only reflects strikes at the local level whereas for 1986-2004, the data reflects federal jurisdiction strikes. This creates a non-comparability of data for the different periods and undermines analysis of long-term trends. We have combined the data of both the federal and local jurisdictions to develop an alternative strike index in an attempt to correct this serious problem in Mitchell’s data (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Perhaps the most specific and detailed works on Mexican strikes are those by Francisco Zapata, who developed a methodology based on the six-year presidential terms in Mexico, using data from the *Juntas de Conciliación y Arbitraje* (Conciliation and Arbitration Boards). Zapata, as Mitchell, is inconsistent in his use of sources, at times using local, at other times federal.¹³ He reported the number of strikes and strikers through *averages* that coincide with each of the six-year presidential terms in Mexico from 1934 to the present.¹⁴ The most important actors in his analysis of strikes are neither workers nor capitalists, but the state-union officialdom complex. The most important dynamic is not class struggle but formal politics. From his perspective, labor conflict in Mexico is restricted by and subordinated to rigorous vertical control of unions by their leaders in collaboration with the Federal Executive Branch. The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 produced a legal and institutional framework in which, according to Zapata, strikes were part of the political mechanisms needed by the party in power to establish an equilibrium with other forces, such as national businessmen and

¹³ He uses data from local jurisdictions for the period 1983 to 1991, but data from federal jurisdictions for 1992 to 2003. Zapata. Op.Cit., 2007

¹⁴ Ibid.

foreign capital. Strikes in Mexico, in his view, did not express worker discontent over economic conditions or the imposed leadership of their unions.¹⁵ Zapata also argues that the cycle of strikes in Mexico since 1934 is not related to the long cycle of the Mexican economy, nor is it associated with the international configuration of the correlation of forces between wage workers and capital.¹⁶ Rather they were part of a dynamic limited to the political plane.¹⁷

Our data, based on aggregating both local and federal figures, is presented in Appendix Two in comparison to Zapata's non-aggregated figures. We also present our data in the form of an index. In addition to showing the differences between our figures and those of Zapata, it supports our argument that there are important interconnections between the pattern of strikes in Mexico, on the one hand, and the economic cycle, the strategies of capital, and international models and events, on the other. Of course, Mexican institutional dynamics play a crucial role, but they do not replace these other fundamental elements that shape class struggle. The Mexican workers' movement has been inspired into action through the influence of international models and events, particularly those in Latin America. As well, there has been an increasing synchrony with the patterns of the rest of North America (Canada and the United States).

Zapata's analysis has led to mistaken perceptions by other authors, who have based their understanding of the Mexican experience on Zapata's

¹⁵ "It's not therefore that trade unions articulate discontent based on economic deterioration, or that they rebel against the imposition of leaders, and this is where the key lies to explaining the history of labor conflict in Mexico. Instead, the top union leadership determines when it is necessary to engage in mobilization or control, action or social peace, and this is achieved by mutual consent with the country's political authorities. Therefore, strikes take place within a dynamic limited to the political sphere, and economic fluctuations do not influence their determination. Zapata, F. *El Conflicto Sindical en América Latina*. Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1986, p. 127. [Our translation]

¹⁶ Zapata, Op.Cit. 2007, p.122.

¹⁷ Zapata, Op.Cit. 1986, p.127. Also, in a recent text, Francisco Zapata states that since the end of the official party system of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, the Party of the Institutional Revolution) in 2000, when a different political party came to power, the situation has not changed in any substantial way. Zapata maintains that the State's vertical control over labor unions continued during the early part of the first decade of the 21st century. "... (The official unions) support the government in any critical situation and it ensures that the rank and file do not engage in strikes or mobilization through the implementation of clientelistic measures. Until now the CTM has been successful ...to provide a relatively quiescent labor force...we don't have evidence to suggest that the Mexican Government will really face up to the challenge of corporatist unions...An important indicator of the way state-labor relationship functioned in Mexico is the overall tendency for decrease in the average number of strikes from 1940s to the present". Zapata. Op.Cit. 2007, pp. 118-122.

six-year-term averages.¹⁸ In contrast to Zapata, we maintain that there was indeed an increase in workers' militancy in Mexico in the 1970s and the first part of the following decade¹⁹ as also observed in Argentina, Brazil and South Africa.²⁰ The retreat by Mexico's working class during the most recent period from 1994 to 2010, with its particular characteristics, was the result of a capitalist offensive carried out by the major corporations in all three North American countries against their respective working classes²¹, and not only a consequence of "national peculiarities" in the relationship between Mexico's working class and the state. Mexico's quasi-corporatist system of labor control²² has been an important element in deterring worker protest.²³ But this system of control has itself become subjected to the powerful processes of capitalist continental integration that have been part of the international capitalist offensive waged against the working class in the three nations increasingly integrated under the cloak of NAFTA.²⁴

Zapata describes an important element – the vertical control over the working class and over the incidence of strikes – but that element alone is inadequate for understanding the incidence of strikes in Mexico's state-heavy

¹⁸ Dribbusch, H. and Vandaele, K. Comprehending divergence in strike activity: Employers offensive, government interventions and union responses. In: Van der Velden, Op.Cit. 2007, p. 369, 372.

¹⁹ Van der Velden, Sjaak. Introduction. In: Van der Velden, Sjaak. (ed.) *Strikes around the World 1968-2005: Case Studies of 15 Countries*. Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2007, pp.20-22. Zapata's six-year presidential terms conceal a much clearer cycle that is, however, apparent in the data published in the Introduction by Van der Velden cited above. The powerful labor insurgency in the 1970s is reflected in the number of strikes during that period.

²⁰ Van der Velden, S. and Visser, W. Strikes in the Netherlands and South Africa, 1900-1998: A Comparison. *South African Journal of Labor Relations*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2006.

²¹ Of course, U.S. capital plays major roles in both Canada and Mexico while Mexican and Canadian capital, though having an important presence in some niches, plays a lesser role in the U.S.

²² Roman, R. and Velasco, E. The Peculiarities of Mexico's Unions. *Relay*. March-April 2006.

²³ The old system of labour control was based on five key, inter-related pillars: 1) labour law that gave the state control over union recognition and the right to strike; 2) integration of the officially recognized unions into the ruling party and state apparatus; 3) authoritarian control over the unions by the union officialdom on the basis of state laws and links as well as the usual control mechanisms of an organizational oligarchy; 4) repression by the state and by thugs commanded by the union officials; 5) and, for some periods, a social pact that allowed gains for limited sectors of the working class, especially in the realm of the social wage (most notably in the period of import substitution expansion, the so-called "Mexican miracle" from the 1940s to the 1970s). We agree with Zapata that the change from one-party rule to electoral competition has not changed the core dynamics of union officialdom-state control over workers.

²⁴ Part I of our forthcoming book, *Continental Crucible: Big Business, Workers and Unions in the Transformation of North America* (2013), deals with the continental capitalist offensive.

dynamic of class struggle. Workers' culture, consciousness and horizontal linkages are always important, albeit not easily accessible to the researcher. They enter into individual and collective responses of acquiescence or resistance. The behavior of workers, whether it is militant protest or relative passivity, is not something that is simply imposed. Workers' action and inaction involves individual and collective processes of interpreting the just and the possible.

The Mexican Revolution and the Working Class

The Constitution, which was written in late 1916 and early 1917 by representatives of the Revolution's triumphant factions, recognized for the first time in the country's history – more as a matter of tactics than conviction – the right to association for wage-earning workers, as well as an eight-hour workday, with a dignified minimum wage, and of course, the right to strike.²⁵ The right to strike – as well as employers' right to lock-out workers – was conditioned by the vague notion of its contribution to an equilibrium between capital and labor. The determination of whether a strike or lock-out contributed to “equilibrium” would be decided by tri-partite boards of conciliation and arbitration which would basically have the right to declare strikes or lockouts legal or illegal.²⁶ These boards would become powerful institutions of control by the state as well as areas of class contestation. Consequently, the first official statistics on strike movements in Mexico date back to the creation of the *Departamento de Trabajo* (Department of Labor) and *Juntas Locales de Conciliación y Arbitraje* (Local Conciliation and Arbitration Boards) in in each Mexican state during the years immediately following the end of the armed period of the Revolution.²⁷ The creation of the *Juntas Locales de Conciliación y Arbitraje* led to the legal existence of unions and their right to collective bargaining with companies in the various Mexican states. The *Juntas Locales de Conciliación y Arbitraje* immediately became vital spaces of power, administered by the governor of each territory, in accordance with his particular political strategy.²⁸

²⁵ Roman, R. and Velasco, E. 1810, 1910 and 2010 and Mexican Labor. *Against the Current*. no. 149, November-December, 2010.

²⁶ Roman, R. 1976, *Ideología y Clase en la Revolución Mexicana*, Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Chapter 5.

²⁷ Article 123 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 instituted the Conciliation and Arbitration Boards as public institutions to resolve differences and conflicts between labor and capital.

²⁸ Bortz, J. *Revolution within the Revolution: Cotton Textile Workers and the Mexican Labor Regime, 1910-1923*. California: Stanford University Press, 2008.

The wave of strikes in Mexico during the 20th century

The incidence of strikes in Mexico followed a tendency similar to that experienced in the other North American countries during the international crisis that exploded in the 1930s – a drop in union membership and in strike incidence during the months immediately following the beginning of the great crisis, and then an intense process of reorganization and worker militancy during the rest of the decade up until the start of the Second World War in 1939. The highest point of worker mobilization in the case of the United States was reached in 1937, with 4,740 strikes and 1.8 million workers involved in these strikes.²⁹ Worker insurgency in Mexico reached its peak during the decade of the 1930s in 1935, with 642 strikes and 145,000 strikers. A significant development within this major wave of strikes was the recuperation achieved by classist currents in labor unions. Many unions elected communist and socialist militants to lead their struggles in the 1930s.

The short duration of the first strike wave in the history of contemporary Mexico stands in sharp contrast to the experience in the United States where unions continued to vigorously make demands until well into 1941, with a spectacular increase in strikes and labor organization. Membership in the major industrial unions in the United States increased from 3.7 to 10.7 million between 1935 and 1941. In Mexico, however, the labor offensive came to a halt unexpectedly in 1937, in response to a change in the national political scene.

The independence, militancy and classist orientation of the new labour movement of the 1930s, grouped at that time around its large industrial unions and the recently-created *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (CTM, Mexican Workers' Confederation), was destroyed by its incorporation into the ruling party, an incorporation based on selective coercion and the politics of important sectors of the labor movement. The ruling party transformed itself in 1938 from a loose coalition of political elites to a mass party of four sectors,³⁰ one of which was the unions. The radical and independent labor movement of the early and mid-thirties had, by the end of the thirties, been largely incorporated into the official apparatus.

The incorporation of the labor movement into the regime's project of "revolutionary nationalism" and anti-imperialism was not simply imposed

²⁹ US Census Bureau 1976, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial times to 1970*, US Department of Commerce, pp.178-179.

³⁰ This was shortly dropped to three sectors – worker, peasant, and popular – with the fourth, the military, dropped.

from above. First, the working class itself had strong traditions of anti-imperialist “revolutionary nationalism”. Second, the use of union positions and state links by personally ambitious union leaders for personal mobility, power, and enrichment also had roots in the union movement. Finally, the important role of the Communist Party in building mass independent unionism, gave it the leverage to push the independent unions back to subordination to the anti-democratic leadership that had emerged in the CTM (with government blessing). The Communists had been a key component in splitting the main industrial unions from the opportunist and anti-democratic leadership of the CTM. But the Comintern (Communist International) ordered them to go back in on any terms and back in they went, weaker and with a big loss of credibility. The strategy of popular frontism of the Soviet Union and the Comintern was very congruent with the strategy of “revolutionary nationalism” of the Mexican regime. To summarize, the main currents within the leadership of the labour movement chose to give up class independence to ally themselves to a party organization led by national political elites whose project was national capitalist development. The nationalization of the oil industry in 1938, previously in the hands of major foreign energy corporations, helped consolidate this voluntary subordination to the project of national development. The Mexican union movement, including the communist current, identified its priority as the tasks of national liberation and the recuperation of revenue from natural resources, in this case oil revenue, to thus lay the groundwork for the country’s own domestic market. Mexico hoped to achieve a higher level of industrialization and higher employment levels on the basis of this domestic market. But when the government of President Lazaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) turned against key sections of the working class, as it increasingly did in the last period of his presidency, the working class lacked the independence in perspective and organization as well as sufficient unity to resist.³¹ The ruling party and labour federation had ideologically and politically disarmed the working class and it was thus in a weak position to resist paying the price for national capitalist development.

The working class would pay a huge price for this subordination to the national project over the next three decades of industrialization. The ruling party and the trade unions then became almost fully – though with more autonomy and exceptions than in Communist countries – an instrument of government policy for controlling the working class. Corruption and gangsterist methods of control of unions and workers became characteristic

³¹ Roman, R. Nationalization and the Formation of the Administración Obrera of Mexico's Railroads, 1937-1938. *Inter-American Economic Affairs*, Vol. 35, #3, Winter, 1981, pp.3-22.

and were fostered and sustained by the government.³² The “labor truce” agreed upon in the Cárdenas era (1934-1940) was extended for more than 30 years in a harsh and, at times, brutal manner, under the iron hand of the country’s presidents. The state used severe repression when faced with any attempt at labor autonomy. Workers were only able to achieve major strike movements during brief, intense periods of organized labor protest in 1944 and 1958.

The peak of labor insurgency in the 20th century

Employment grew significantly from 1970 to 1983, but it was especially rapid in mining, auto, and construction. This high demand for more workers favored the development of independent organization and contributed to the labor insurgency of the period. The second major wave of labor insurgency in recent history erupted in 1980. On June 9 the first national day of action, or *Primera Jornada Nacional*, was held by teachers organized independently from the corporatist teachers’ union.³³ Though concentrated in Mexico City, the action was led by teachers in Chiapas, with 80,000 teachers participating in a week-long work stoppage.³⁴ Workers in all manufacturing areas, from automotive to food production, entered into a period of open labor discontent.³⁵

The paralysis of the official union leaders in the face of the combination of inflation and full employment led to growing pressure for action from the rank and file in 1981. As well, the rise of *Solidarnosc* as an independent workers movement in Poland and the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua inspired many of these rank and file movements. A series of strikes and stoppages were unleashed in automotive plants. Miners and metallurgical workers suspended work in copper deposits and steelworks.

³² Campa, Valentín. *Mi testimonio*. Mexico: Editorial Ediciones de Cultura Popular, 1978, pp. 167-173.

³³ The CNTE (*Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación*- National Coordinator of Educational Workers), is an organized national alliance of dissident teachers’ groups in the SNTE (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación – National Union of Educational Workers), an authoritarian union previously connected to the state party, now a key cog in the conservative- neoliberal power bloc. It has close to 1.5 million members.

³⁴ Martínez Verdugo: 478-479..

³⁵ In the final decades of the 20th century, the labor union movement would receive an impulse from other major torrents of social mobilization in a country with its own pre-capitalist cultural matrix, as powerful as Mexico itself. Due to limited space, it is not possible to review the magnitude of the contribution from the 1968 student movement to the labor insurgency, or the powerful links between the working class and the 1994 insurrection by the EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army) in Chiapas. See Velasco Arregui, E. *Cuestión Indígena y Nación; Una Perspectiva Andina del Zapatismo*, *Chiapas*, no. 9, vol. 3, Mexico, Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, UNAM, 2000.

Teachers carried out the largest mobilizations in the country. Between 1981 and 1982, labor struggles were led by teachers from Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla, the state of Mexico, Zacatecas, Michoacán, Queretaro, Morelos, Hidalgo and eleven other states. Throughout the year, tens of thousands of workers participated in struggles for union democracy in the streets of Mexico City and throughout the rest of the nation. The teachers' strikes were not counted in the statistics developed by B.R. Mitchell³⁶, since they correspond to Section B. And here lies our major difference with the analysis presented by Francisco Zapata. In the period from 1978 to 1982, precisely when tens of thousands of teachers initiated an unprecedented cycle of strikes and work stoppages, Francisco Zapata perceives a "decline" in the number of striking workers.³⁷

The problems with the data on the number of strikers in Zapata's presentation are the same as that for the number of strikes: 1) that is, the switching between local and federal data; and 2) the fact that large numbers of strikes do not appear in the data. (As well, reliable data on the number of strikers, does not yet exist.) There is a substantial difference in the number of strikes in Zapata and the number in Roman & Velasco, especially for 1983, since he switches from local data to federal data. This decrease in the number of strikes did not occur. 1983 was a year of considerable labor militancy. And 1982 appears in his data as a year with a paltry number of strikers: only 25,173, compared to 92,774 in 1980 which is highly improbable since 1982 witnessed the highest number of strikes in Mexican history. Widespread strikes by teachers broke out in 1978, but are not included in our data or Zapata's data. Their statistical disappearance in Mexican official data makes them no less real and important for understanding strike patterns. But beyond statistical discrepancies and similarities, there is a fundamental difference of interpretation. Zapata sees solid corporatist control throughout the 1940-1982 period whereas we give great importance to the labor insurgency of the 1970s and early 1980s, an insurgency that happened almost simultaneously, though with some delay, to that of the USA and Canada.

The second wave of labor insurgency was the result of a combination of factors that particularly helped to facilitate the development of worker autonomy: (1) a notable increase in the industrial labor force, which doubled in a brief period of time, as a result of the oil boom that occurred between 1975 and 1981; (2) a chronic inflationary process threatening the total wage mass for workers. In 1981 the prices of consumer goods purchased by workers increased nearly 30% for the second consecutive year. Inflation and an increase in industrial employment led to the most intense period of

³⁶ Mitchell. Op.Cit.

³⁷ Zapata, 2007. Op.Cit. p.122.

autonomous worker mobilization in 1980 to 1983. These mobilizations took a variety of organizational forms ranging from the struggles of individual unions, union sections, rank and file caucuses, and the special case of the nationally organized teachers' dissident movement. The period of 1976 to 1982 can be characterized as an ongoing tug of war around the workers' share of the GDP.³⁸ The regime, of which Mexico's peculiar labor bureaucracy was an integrated part, responded with repression. Starting in early 1981, the use of paramilitary groups hired by official union bureaucrats became more frequent and began to deal serious blows to the labor insurgency.³⁹ The second wave of labor insurgency crested in 1982, as illustrated in Figure 1 in Appendix 1, despite all the attempts by the regime to avoid the synchrony between the failure of its economic project and the rise in protest by workers autonomously organized.

The Capitalist Offensive, Globalization, and Worker Militancy

This section will explore three of the most important elements in the decline in the number of strikes in Mexico in the last three decades: 1) the globalization of production and industrial relocation; 2) high levels of real unemployment; 3) increased repression (a *State of Exception* and social violence).

Global manufacturing and industrial relocation

Mexican industry was structured around the domestic market and concentrated in industrial cities in the country's central region until 1982 when an extensive process of industrial re-structuring was initiated. Production was relocated to different areas of Mexico, areas without unions and without established working-class communities. It also involved the massive introduction of foreign investment. The new factories carry out only fractions of globalized manufacturing processes, and consequently isolated strikes in individual factories have lost a significant amount of their previous capacity to exert pressure on companies – as compared to previous periods when the nation's industry was integrated into an autarchical domestic market.⁴⁰ In addition, industrial relocation involved the de-industrialization

³⁸ Bortz, J. *La estructura de salarios en México*. Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1985, p.17.

³⁹ Cockcroft, J. *Mexico: Class Formation, Capital Accumulation and the State*. New York, Monthly Review Press, 1983, p.viii.

⁴⁰ Roman, R. and Velasco, E. Neoliberalism, Labor Market Transformation and Working Class Responses. *Latin American Perspectives Review*, issue 119, vol. 28, no. 4, pp.54-56, 2001. The exception would be if the plant was the sole supplier of a crucial component

of the traditional industrial regions in the center of the country – regions characterized by a great tradition of labor combativeness – and the relocation to new industrial corridors in the country’s northern states, in which capital’s despotism has been a constant factor during a major part of the 20th century and the first part of this century. The rate of unionization in the country’s central region is 25%, while in the northern states it is less than a third of that percentage, with an average of 7%, and most of these unionized workers are employed by the federal government.

New technologies, reorganization of work and outsourcing

The incorporation of new technologies dislodged many workers from their old knowledge of work processes – knowledge which was transferred and assimilated into the objectified production process, as the force of accumulated labor-capital that devours the new, precarious living labor.⁴¹ It is much more difficult to conduct an effective work stoppage in the new automated factories on the periphery of the central technological nucleus of the new production processes. And the new strategic segment of the working class has been de-unionized through various methods including subcontracting out the work to “other companies” in order to block working-class unity.⁴²

Real unemployment rate at high levels

The Mexican government’s claim that the unemployment rate in Mexico is lower than in the United States is an obvious statistical fiction as the *Instituto de Estadística de México* (Mexican Statistics Institute) considers a person to be employed if he or she works only one hour a week or “has an imminent promise of work.” Individuals in precarious employment conditions, or specifically, those who actually have no work on the basis of which to survive, accounted for a fifth of the country’s labor force in 2010.

for the continental production chain. This is rarely the case. In general, companies can relatively easily shift production from one *maquiladora* to another.

⁴¹ Marx, K. *El Capital, Libro I, Capítulo VI Inedito*. Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1971, p.72.

⁴² “The average rate of unionization is only 29% for the 50 most important companies in Mexico, including the large public companies. The most notable case of blocking unionization is that of the 230,000 employees of Walmart, where they are not defined as wage workers but ‘associates.’” Bibian, C. Las Empresas de México. In: *Las Quinientas Empresas más grandes de México, Informe de la Revista Expansión*, June 20, no. 1068, Mexico, Grupo CNN Expansión, 2011, p.201.

Such a high real unemployment rate constitutes a permanent element of pressure on workers who are employed, due to the difficulty they will face when seeking employment with another company in the case of individual or mass firing. In the past, all periods of rapid employment growth have led to an increase in the levels of worker defiance and discontent, and therefore, in the number of strikes. While real unemployment levels remain above 20%, unemployment becomes a powerful element in discouraging organized working class resistance.

The safety valve of Mexican emigration

During the last two decades, the emigration of young workers to the United States, totaling an average of about 400,000 per year, has significantly diminished social and political pressure on Mexican capitalism—which is incapable of resolving social problems in the over 100 cities where Mexico’s proletariat is currently concentrated. Emigration to the North creates a paradox in which there may be more Mexican workers in the US in regular, stable employment in certain key sectors than there are within Mexico.⁴³ Many of those with rebellious discontent decide to leave the country—in the absence of effective organized alternatives for expressing their discontent—and end up participating in labor resistance in the United States.

⁴³ There were 2.1 million Latino workers in the US in 2010 in the construction industry, with the great majority from Mexico. The number of construction workers in Mexico who are in the formal economic sector and pay into the social security system is only 1.3 million. In the case of the mining industry, the number of workers is similar, with the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) acknowledging 112,000 Latino workers in mining production in the US, out of a total of 731,000 workers, while in Mexico there are 108,000 mining workers in the formal sector. In the transportation sector, there are 1.6 million Latino workers in the US, while in Mexico there are 600,000 transportation workers in the formal sector. In manufacturing, there are more workers in Mexico’s formal sector, with a total of 3.9 million industrial workers, in comparison to the 2.2 million Latino workers in US factories. In the agricultural sector there are 443,000 permanent wage-earning workers in Mexico—the country’s stable agricultural proletariat—while the number of wage-earning Latino workers in agricultural activities in the US, according to the BLS, is 468,000. The total number of wage-earning Latino workers in the United States in the activities mentioned above is 6.48 million, while in 2010 in Mexico the number of permanent wage-earning workers who are in these same sectors and who pay into social security and are therefore part of the formal sector is approximately 6.35 million. In summary there are more Latino workers in the United States, most of whom are Mexican than there are Mexican workers in the same sectors in Mexico’s formal economy. US Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Employed Hispanics or Latino Workers by sex and occupation. Current Population Survey*. Table 13, 2010 and 2010 and Instituto Mexicano de Seguridad Social, IMSS. *Cubo de Información Estadística 2010*, <http://www.imss.gob.mx>2010.

Preservation of vertical control over national unions

A significant portion of the most important national unions, such as those of oil workers, teachers, railway workers and the power workers (those outside the *Distrito Federal* and some surrounding areas)⁴⁴, are kept under authoritarian control by the union officialdom through undemocratic internal statutes, various types of governmental support, the usual control mechanisms of an organizational oligarchy, and when necessary, violence by union thugs or agents of the state. As in the old days under the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional* --Institutional Revolutionary Party), the new right-wing governments have been very effective in re-creating vertical control over the large labor organizations.⁴⁵ The recent major labor conflicts have resulted from employer lockouts against militant, combative labor organizations such as the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME). The attack on the SME culminated in the arbitrary, illegal firing of 44,000 workers.⁴⁶ In 2011 the transnational footwear corporation, Sandak, dismantled its factory in the Mexican state of Tlaxcala in order to get rid of the independent union established a few years earlier. Workers were sent to their homes to work within a cottage industry scheme.

Though strikes have been few and far between in recent decades, the discontent of workers has been expressed in other ways, as we have briefly described. The absence of genuine unions and state repression of strikes has pushed workers' discontent into other forms not generally measured in strike statistics. In 2006, Mexican workers' discontent burst forth on a massive scale on both sides of the border. The immigrant rights movement in the U.S. was

⁴⁴ There are two major power worker unions, the SUTERM (Sole Union for Electrical Workers of the Mexican Republic) and the *Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas* (SME—Mexican Electrical Workers Union). The SME was the union at *Luz y Fuerza del Centro* (LyFC--Central Light and Power Company) which is the public company that distributes power in central Mexico, with only token power production. It buys almost all the power it distributes from the *La Comisión Federal de Electricidad* (CFE—Federal Electricity Commission), the other state owned power company that handles production (for most/all of) and distribution for areas outside the jurisdiction of the LyFC. The union at the CFE is the SUTERM, a compliant, undemocratic and corrupt union that does not challenge the government's plans for privatization and squeezing workers even more. The CFE has quietly contracted out significant amounts of power production to private companies whereas the SME has opposed privatization of power production and attacks on workers' rights. In response to the opposition of the SME, the government liquidated the LyFC with a military assault on October 10, 2009 and fired 44,000 workers. The company was then taken over by the CFE who hired new workers who belong to the SUTERM.

⁴⁵ Roman, R. and Velasco, E. The State, the Bourgeoisie, and the Unions: The Recycling of Mexico System of Labour Control. *Latin American Perspectives Review*. Issue 147, vol. 33, pp.96-99, 2006.

⁴⁶ Roman, R. and Velasco, E. Mexico: The Murder of a Union and the Rebirth of Class Struggle, Part I: The New Assault. www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/279.php and Part II: The Fightback. www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/280/php, 2009.

a working- class movement mainly composed and led by Mexican workers. Their demands were for dignity and social rights for immigrant workers. Their one-day massive general strike was not initially supported by the top leadership of most unions, but pushed forward by mid-level leaders and rank and file activists of Mexican and other national origins. The Oaxaca insurgency was initiated by a dissident state section of the official teachers' union and supported by much of the laboring poor of the city of Oaxaca and the state. The brutal attack by the state government on the striking teachers led to a general uprising that controlled the city of Oaxaca for five months.⁴⁷ The third, the anti- electoral fraud movement in Mexico of the same year, though led by political elites, was also mainly based on the working class. Despite sharing many underlying grievances and a broad concern for social justice, these movements never converged although there were a myriad of formal and informal linkages. These struggles and linkages are sowing the seeds for a possible continental movement of workers' protest. And more recently, as mentioned earlier, workers' protests in the northern *maquiladora* regions have involved wildcat strikes, highway occupations, and even burning facilities. And in May-June 2012, the dissident school teachers' organization, the CNTE, has been carrying out a strike that has closed schools in the states of Oaxaca, Chiapas, Morelos, Michoacán, and parts of Mexico City.⁴⁸ The Oaxaca teachers have occupied the central square of the city of Oaxaca and are blockading highway toll booths and the local airport. 10% of Oaxaca's teachers, accompanied by many teachers from other states, have occupied the central square of Mexico City. This widespread strike will not be counted in the official government figures, neither federal nor local, as it is considered an illegal strike.

State of Exception and Social Violence

The transition from one-party rule to electoral competition has not brought democratic rights to most of the population. In fact, the levels of institutional and social violence have increased in a formidable manner across Mexico. The feminicides carried out with impunity against female workers in cities with *maquiladoras* along the country's northern border are one of the most brutal examples of state-permitted violence. The criminalization of

⁴⁷ Roman, R. and Velasco, E. The Other Indigenous Rebellion: The Oaxaca Commune. In: *Global Flash Points: Reactions to Imperialism and Neoliberalism, 2008 Socialist Register*, eds. L. Panitch and C. Leys, London: Merlin Press, 2007.

⁴⁸ The teachers' movement is protesting standardized testing which they view as part of the neoliberal offensive to privatize education and redistribute resources away from poor areas of the country.

hundreds of thousands of young people has been taking place in Mexico as well as the U.S. Mexico's prison population has nearly tripled since NAFTA was signed. The "war against drugs" – actually a war over control of the production and distribution of drugs within the state-cartels complex – has led to the presence of the Army and the Marines on the streets of numerous industrial cities, and to the increasingly frequent use of institutional violence to intimidate workers from protesting. Between 2007 and 2011, 55,000 Mexicans have been killed in "confrontations" in which irregular forces or State security forces have been involved.⁴⁹ A state of terror – some state-executed, some state-tolerated⁵⁰ – creates an intimidating environment in which it takes great courage to organize collective action. In short, a working class subjected to a State of Exception faces huge difficulties in organizing strikes in a peaceful way in order to demand respect for their rights.

Conclusion and Prospects

We have sought to present a more methodologically complete picture of strike patterns in Mexico by aggregating data collected by the federal and local Boards of Arbitration and Conciliation. We have also argued that the interpretation of strike patterns in Mexico has to move beyond an exclusive emphasis on political dynamics and also examine changes in the economy, capitalist strategies, and influences of workers' movements and revolutions internationally. We have also pointed out that even this aggregation of data paints a very incomplete picture of strike patterns in Mexico as many strikes, including some that are widespread and of long duration, are simply not recorded in official data for reasons that have been discussed above. We have also sought to show that working-class protests, especially given the paucity of genuine unions, have taken political and community forms as well as, at times, through direct action of various kinds.

We have also discussed the neoliberal strategies that have combined with Mexico's old system of labor control to try to disarticulate worker resistance and organization. This combination of neoliberal strategies and old forms of labor control has had considerable success. But as we have also

⁴⁹ Revista Zeta, 15 July 2011..

⁵⁰ Amnesty International (AI) has pointed out that there is a pattern of violation of human rights carried out by the Mexican Army in their "war on drugs" and that both civil and military authorities deny and ignore these forced disappearances and extrajudicial executions. AI accuses Mexican authorities of failing to exhaustively investigate the complaints of abuses committed by the Army. Amnesty International. *México: Memorandum al gobierno de México y al Congreso de la Unión, AMR 41/070/2010*. London: Amnesty International.

2010.

pointed out, there are significant signs of worker resistance. The seeds of a renewal of a workers' movement have been planted by the very same processes of neoliberal capitalism that have combined with old forms of labor control to disarticulate worker resistance. These collective actions have taken dramatic forms, at times well beyond those of trade unionism. The Oaxaca rebellion was a good example of this – a teachers' strike, state repression, and an uprising of a whole city – led, in considerable part, by the state teachers' union. Traditions of communalism and solidarity survive in many Mexican communities and are transported to cities by internal and cross-border migrants, both in Mexico and in the U.S. These old traditions and invocations⁵¹, deep in collective memory, may yet combine with the intelligence and tools available in the 21st century, in ways not yet known, to shape workers' collective responses to the continuing assaults on their dignity and well-being.

⁵¹ Matamoros, P. *Memoria y Utopía en México: Imaginarios en la Génesis del Neozapatismo*. Buenos Aires: Herramienta, 2007.

Appendix 1

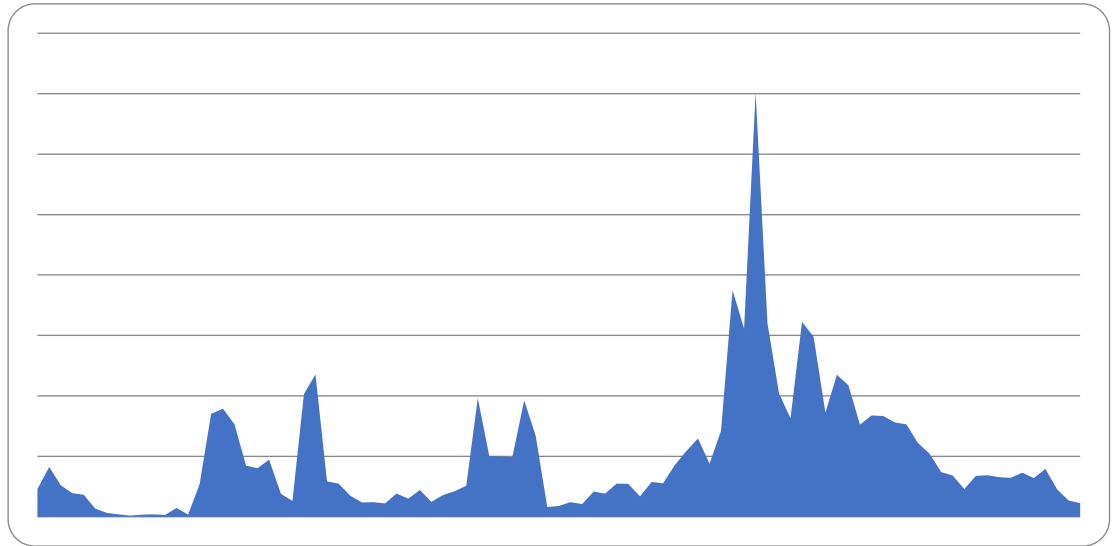
Year	Index of Strikes
1920	45,9
1921	82,2
1922	52,3
1923	38,7
1924	36,1
1925	13,5
1926	6,1
1927	4,2
1928	1,9
1929	3,7
1930	4,0
1931	2,9
1932	14,9
1933	3,4
1934	53,6
1935	170,3
1936	178,8
1937	152,8
1938	84,6
1939	80,4
1940	94,7
1941	37,7
1942	26,0
1943	203,2
1944	235,3
1945	58,4
1946	54,9
1947	34,5
1948	23,3
1949	23,9
1950	21,8
1951	38,2
1952	30,0
1953	44,3
1954	24,7
1955	35,8
1956	42,2
1957	51,2
1958	196,3
1959	100,5

Year	Index of Strikes
1960	100,0
1961	98,9
1962	192,3
1963	133,7
1964	16,4
1965	17,8
1966	24,1
1967	20,7
1968	41,6
1969	38,2
1970	54,6
1971	54,1
1972	33,4
1973	57,6
1974	55,4
1975	84,9
1976	108,2
1977	129,4
1978	87,8
1979	142,4
1980	374,5
1981	311,4
1982	701,9
1983	320,4
1984	204,0
1985	162,9
1986	322,3
1987	297,9
1988	172,4
1989	234,7
1990	217,2
1991	152,3
1992	167,9
1993	166,8
1994	156,0
1995	153,1
1996	122,3
1997	104,8
1998	73,7
1999	68,2
2000	45,9
2001	67,4
2002	68,4

Year	Index of Strikes
2003	65,3
2004	64,5
2005	72,7
2006	63,9
2007	79,3
2008	45,4
2009	26,5
2010	22,3

Source: Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social.
Anuario de Estadísticas del Trabajo (1940-2010)
INEGI. Estadísticas sobre relaciones laborales de
jurisdicción local y federal
JFCA ,Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje,
Informes Anuales del Presidente de la Junta (1928-
2010)

Figure 1. México: Strike Index 1920- 2010 (1960=100)



Source:
Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social. Anuario de Estadísticas del Trabajo (1940-2010)
INEGI. Estadísticas sobre relaciones laborales de jurisdicción local y federal y JFCA Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje, Informes Anuales del Presidente de la Junta (1928-2010)

Appendix 2

Roman and Velasco Index vs Zapata Series								
año	Strikes Councils Local	Strikes Council Federal	Total Federal plus Local	Roman Velasco Index	Number of Strikes Zapata Series			
1960	310	67	377	100,0	nd			
1980	1.339	93	1.432	379,8	1.139			
1981	1.066	108	1.174	311,4	1.066			
1982	1.971	675	2.646	701,9	1.925			
1983	978	230	1.208	320,4	216			
1984	548	221	769	204,0	427			
1985	489	125	614	162,9	159			
1986	903	312	1.215	322,3	312			
1987	949	174	1.123	297,9	174			
1988	518	132	650	172,4	132			
1989	757	118	875	232,1	118			
1990	670	149	819	217,2	150			
1991	438	136	574	152,3	136			
1992	477	156	633	167,9	477			
1993	474	155	629	166,8	474			
1994	472	116	588	156,0	472			
1995	481	96	577	153,1	481			
1996	410	51	461	122,3	410			
1997	356	39	395	104,8	356			
1998	245	33	278	73,7	245			
1999	225	32	257	68,2	225			
2000	147	26	173	45,9	147			
2001	219	35	254	67,4	219			
2002	213	45	258	68,4	213			
2003	202	44	246	65,3	204			
2004	205	38	243	64,5	nd			
2005	224	50	274	72,7	nd			
2006	186	55	241	63,9				
2007	271	28	299	79,3				
2008	150	21	171	45,4				
2009	81	19	100	26,5				
2010	73	11	84	22,3				

Fuente: Secretaria del Trabajo y Previsión Social, Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje, Informes Anuales e INEGI, Anuarios Estadísticos de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, 1980-2011.