

DRY LAW, WET POLITICS:
Drinking and Prohibition in Post-Revolutionary
Yucatán, 1915–1935

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Abstract: Two radical revolutionary governors of Yucatán, Salvador Alvarado (1915–1918) and Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1922–1923), as well as many Yucatecan men and especially women considered prohibition as the key to reform, as was the case in many other regions of Mexico. Scholars, however, have long ignored the crucial role of alcohol in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Mexico. This article examines the linkages among prohibition, gender, and politics in Yucatán from the revolution to the eve of the Cardenista era. It also considers the role of alcohol as a lubricant in machine politics.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 was a social revolution that significantly transformed class, ethnic, and gender relations. Yet the revolution produced fewer and fewer reforms in the two decades between 1915 and the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1935–1940).¹ To explain the slowing pace of land reform, resurgent corruption and machine politics, and the exclusion of women from the Mexican polity during this formative period (1915–1935), historians and social scientists have long looked for answers at the top (national figures), with occasional glances at the middle (regional politics) and below (local studies). Revisionist scholars, often inspired by Marxism, have generally couched the problem in terms of Bonapartism: charismatic caudillos or warlords who manipulated popular forces and then demobilized them to empower a new bourgeoisie and to come to terms with the old oli-

1. On the social character of the Mexican Revolution, see Friedrich Katz, "Rural Revolts in Mexico," in *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico*, edited by Friedrich Katz (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 2:517–27. For revisionist views, see Ramón Ruíz, *The Great Rebellion: Mexico, 1905–1924* (New York: Norton, 1980); and John Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998). For an overview of the debate between revisionists who challenged the transformative nature of the revolution in Mexico and neopopulists who have recently defended it, see Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, "Popular Culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

garchy. Even scholars not operating from the perspective of economic determinism have considered high politics decisive in shaping the outcome of the revolution, and at times they have reduced popular mobilizations to extensions of charismatic leaders. Thomas Benjamin argued that in the period between the armed phase of the revolution and Cárdenas, national leaders Alvaro Obregón (1920–1924) and Plutarco Elías Calles (president 1924–1928, Jefe Máximo, 1928–1935) both tolerated some regional and local radicals who ran “laboratories of the new state” to counterbalance more conservative actors, especially military chieftains.² According to this view of the Obregón and Calles era, sporadic military uprisings, power plays in the capital, and assassinations eliminated radical leaders one by one—Pancho Villa, Primo Tapia, Adalberto Tejeda (Emiliano Zapata had already been liquidated by Carranza in 1919)—and with them their popular movements.³

This explanation of a Mexican Thermidor between 1920 and 1935 undoubtedly contains a degree of validity, but it narrows historical change to a question of intra-elite disputes and largely reduces *los de abajo* to bystanders.⁴ A new generation of neopopulist scholars have begun to explain the relationship between state and society in a way that looks beyond institutions, warlords, and the struggle among supposedly monolithic classes to see how power was contested in a variety of quotidian sites, an approach exemplified by Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent’s 1994 collection of essays.⁵ Alan Knight has demonstrated the debility of the post-revolutionary Mexican state, as well as the wide regional and even local variations in the revolutionary process.⁶ Mary Kay Vaughan argued convincingly that rural schooling and patriotic festivals forged an enduring post-revolutionary hegemony based mainly on an inclusive national culture and negotiation as opposed to repression.⁷ Viewed from these new perspectives, Mexican history from the

2. Thomas Benjamin, “Laboratories of the New State, 1920–1929: Regional Social Reform and Experiments in Mass Politics,” in *Provinces of the Revolution: Essays on Regional Mexican History, 1910–1929*, edited by Thomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 71.

3. Samuel Brunk, *Emiliano Zapata: Revolution and Betrayal in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1995); Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 761–68; Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 124–30; and Heather Fowler-Salamini, *Agrarian Radicalism in Veracruz, 1920–1938* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 130–35.

4. Thermidor was the conservative phase of the French Revolution, when many radical reforms were rolled back.

5. Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, 3–23.

6. Alan Knight, “Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910–1940,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74, no. 3 (1994):393–444, 438.

7. Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1997), 195.

late 1910s to the early 1930s was driven less by strongmen and class-based agrarian conflicts than by a host of historical processes, social and cultural as well as political and economic. Together these counterrevisionists have revealed the complex historical transformations and everyday struggles that built the shaky but surprisingly durable infrastructure of the post-revolutionary Mexican state.⁸

While underscoring the ability of popular forces to mold the post-revolutionary order, this new wave of neopopulist and new cultural historiography has yet to address why popular revolutionary mobilizations failed to wring more concessions from the state in such crucial areas as local democracy and women's suffrage. Similarly, the repressive and even semi-authoritarian aspects of the post-revolutionary Mexican state stressed by many revisionist scholars of the 1970s and 1980s, such as *caciquismo* (boss rule) and corruption, have rarely been analyzed using new theoretical and methodological approaches that emphasize culture and the quotidian practice of politics.⁹

To reconcile revisionist and neopopulist paradigms and understand how the post-revolutionary state in Mexico enjoyed popular support despite undemocratic practices and *caciquismo*, this study will consider the generally ignored topics of prohibition and alcohol in the southeastern state of Yucatán. The social and political implications of drinking and temperance have been strikingly absent from the historiography of modern Mexico in spite of the cultural turn. Indeed, in tracing the roots of the Mexican Revolution, Knight pointed out, "tirades against alcohol form one of the most common, pervasive, yet neglected themes of the political discourse of the time."¹⁰ Investigations into Chiapas, the only Mexican region where the political impact of alcohol has been systematically studied, reveal the central role played by alcohol in the rise of a new group of intermediaries between indigenous communities and the post-revolutionary state.¹¹ Of the

8. For different perspectives on the "New Cultural History of Mexico," see the articles in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (May 1999).

9. Alan Knight is an important exception to this generalization. See his "Habitus and Homicide: Political Culture in Revolutionary Mexico" in *Citizens of the Pyramid: Essays on Mexican Political Culture*, edited by Wil G. Pansters (Amsterdam: Thela, 1997), 107–29; "Corruption in Twentieth-Century Mexico" in *Political Corruption in Europe and Latin America*, edited by Walter Little and Eduardo Posada-Carbó (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1996), 219–33; and "Cárdenas, Caciquismo, and the Tezcatlipoca Tendency," paper presented to the Latin American Studies Association, 24–26 Sept. 1998, Chicago, Illinois.

10. Alan Knight, "The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, c. 1900–1920," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 16, pt. 1 (1984):51–79.

11. Jan Rus, "The 'Comunidad Revolucionaria Institucional': The Subversion of Native Government in Highland Chiapas, 1936–1968," in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*; Stephen E. Lewis, "Chiapas' Alcohol Monopoly versus the National Indigenous Institute (INI): Lessons from a 1950s Clash between State and Federal Forces," paper presented to the Latin American Studies Association, 24–26 Sept. 1998, Chicago, Illinois.

many regions where alcohol and prohibition have not been investigated, Yucatán ranks among the most important. It was the site of widespread popular mobilizations of both men and women under Felipe Carrillo Puerto and home of the longest-lived regional political party in revolutionary Mexico, the Partido Socialista del Sureste (PSS). This party served as a model for the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) formed in 1929, which was in turn the grandparent of the ruling party of Mexico until 2000, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).¹²

ALVARADO AND PRAETORIAN PROHIBITION, 1915–1917

Although Mexican revolutionaries defined the overthrow of Porfirio Díaz and the subsequent decade of civil war as “la Revolución social,” only in recent years have scholars rediscovered the social and cultural dimensions of the Mexican Revolution. Alan Knight has argued persuasively that prohibition was part of the developmentalist ethic of most revolutionaries associated with the Constitutionalist faction, such as Governor Salvador Alvarado, a general hailing from the northern state of Sonora. His army corps occupied Yucatán between 1915 and 1917 on the orders of national strongman Venustiano Carranza. Developmentalism advocated the material advancement of Mexico by changing the values of Mexicans, and it thus resembled U.S. prohibition campaigns and European eugenics. Progress would be accomplished through a combination of legal reforms and moral reforms, along with institutions like schools and civic associations. Guided by developmentalism, revolutionaries tried to control the use of alcohol in order to eradicate poverty, backwardness, and sloth.¹³ As an important revolutionary reformer, Alvarado (as well as many native middle- and upper-class Yucatecos who collaborated in his administration) sought to reconstruct Yucatán along developmentalist lines. His reforms abolished debt peonage, created educational and employment opportunities for women, secularized and expanded schooling, and founded the parent party of the PSS. Alvarado boasted that propaganda, state-sponsored conferences, and education had eradicated drinking in the state.¹⁴

Not content to wean Yucatecos from the bottle through persuasion, Alvarado—true to the anti-popular nature of developmentalism—imposed a series of increasingly strict regulations known collectively as *La Ley Seca* (the Dry Law) to choke off the flow of alcohol in Yucatán. The first alcohol

12. When Salvador Alvarado founded the party, it was known as the Partido Socialista Obrero, only to become the Partido Socialista de Yucatán in 1918, and then the Partido Socialista del Sureste in 1921.

13. Alan Knight, “Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910–1940,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74, no. 3 (1994):393–97.

14. Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán, Mérida (hereafter AGEY), Poder Ejecutivo 487.

law of 11 May 1915 forbade the sale of liquor to women and minors.¹⁵ Only a few weeks later, new regulations prevented women from working or drinking in cantinas and barred restaurants and grills from serving alcohol. Cantinas too close to schools had to move. Following Alvarado's general governing philosophy, the law mandated draconian punishments.¹⁶

The traditionally heavy recreational drinking patterns of many Yucatecan men stubbornly persisted nonetheless. Consequently, Alvarado acted in mid-August 1915 to curtail drinking further by preventing cantinas from selling liquor during siesta break, after 10 P.M., or on national fiestas and Sundays. He was thus shutting off the taps when demand peaked.¹⁷ Even the implementation of these increasingly stiff measures failed to put much of a dent in drinking. This crackdown led Alvarado to adopt the most radical prohibition law ever passed in Mexico. Decreto 386 of 10 December 1915 admitted that new regulations would not end drunkenness and that additional taxes would only penalize the families of "the vice-ridden." Therefore, only one remedy remained: to close every cantina in Yucatán and make all liquor illegal as of 1 February 1916. As with prohibition in the United States, only nondistilled alcoholic beverages like beer (5 percent alcohol or less) remained legal.¹⁸

Alvarado's regime criminalized alcohol use in another way that also expanded the state's reach into the family. His divorce law of 26 May 1915 made legal dissolution of marriage much more accessible in the conservative, provincial society of Yucatán and made male drunkenness grounds for divorce, along with infidelity, abandonment, grievous injury, and gambling.¹⁹ This law reflected developmentalist notions that alcohol use was dangerous to the family as well as a paternalistic strain in Alvarado's thought: he considered drinking damaging to women and children, who were presumably dependent on wage-earning fathers and husbands. The Alvaradista discourse labeled alcohol as a social toxin harmful to the Victorian notion of family, but this view of drinking was not confined to elites.

The alcohol-related provision of the divorce law does not seem to have altered patterns of marriage dissolution significantly, as legal divorce remained rare. But the dry law of December 1915 ended the golden age of the domestic rum industry in Yucatán.²⁰ At the same time, the law created profitable new opportunities for clandestine still owners willing to risk prose-

15. Florencio Avila, *Diario revolucionario: Yucatán, Oficina de Información y Propaganda Revolucionaria* (Mérida: La Voz de la Revolución, 1915), 25.

16. *Ibid.*, 31.

17. *Ibid.*, 84.

18. *Ibid.*, 149.

19. *Ibid.*, 46.

20. Barbara Ellen Holmes, "Women and Yucatec Kinship," Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1978, 105–6, 342–43; and Lourdes Rejón Patrón, *Hacienda Tabi: Un capítulo en la historia de Yucatán* (Mérida: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán, 1993), 44.

cution. In the southwestern village of Yaxcaba, bootleggers (including wealthy merchants and landowners) distilled rum covertly and sold it in caves near town.²¹

The Ley Seca, combined with the abolition of debt peonage that had bound rural laborers to remain on estates, seems to have curtailed alcohol use on most haciendas and in legal cantinas, but it also drove many drinkers to illegal bars. Former *hacendado* Efraín Gutiérrez credited the Ley Seca, along with Alvarado's threat to hang mayors who ran stills, with greatly improving rural society, revealing how revolutionary developmentalism at times dovetailed with pre-revolutionary "moralizing projects."²² But when it came to drying out Yucatán, a fundamental contradiction undermined Alvarado's project: he wanted to emancipate and empower poor Yucatecans by weakening the Catholic Church and the planter class while trying to control the exercise of their newly granted rights. Alvarado's authoritarian method of reform failed to resonate with much of Yucatecan society, and he made only a few limited efforts to mobilize popular support for the crusade against alcohol. One such sortie was the formation of a sixteen-member temperance society appointed by the town council of Mérida, the state capital.²³ The total ban on alcohol sales apparently ended in late 1917, when President Carranza ordered Alvarado out of Yucatán. But the general's tight alcohol regulations stayed on the books, and the prohibitionist Socialist party he founded survived. The two longest-lasting legacies of Alvarado's Ley Seca, however, were legalization of the state's right to intervene in alcohol production and distribution and the unintentional creation of a thriving black market in liquor.

THE BATTLE FOR THE PANTALONES: SOCIALISM, POPULAR TEMPERANCE, AND GENDER

The leadership vacuum left by Alvarado's departure was filled by Yucateco Felipe Carrillo Puerto. This charismatic, self-educated carter-turned-political-organizer led Yucatecan socialism in a more radical, democratic, and agrarian direction. Under Carrillo Puerto's guidance and in response to growing popular mobilizations, the regional revolutionary party founded by Alvarado adopted a program more attuned to peasant demands.²⁴ Pro-

21. José Luis Domínguez, "La situación en el Partido de Sotuta," in *Yucatán: Peonaje y liberación*, edited by Blanca González R. et al. (Mérida: FONPAS, Yucatán, and Comisión Editorial del Estado, INAH, 1981), 196–97.

22. Fernando Benítez, *Kí: La historia de una planta y un pueblo* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1956), 200–201.

23. Avila, *Diario revolucionario*, 709.

24. Gilbert Joseph, *Revolution from Without: Yucatán, Mexico, and the United States, 1880–1924*, 2d ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1988), pt. 3; and Francisco J. Paoli and Enrique Montalvo, *El socialismo olvidado de Yucatán* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1977), chap. 5.

hibition remained a vital issue for Yucatecan revolutionary leaders from 1918 to 1923, although attacks on alcohol came less from elitist developmentalism than from the homegrown radicalism of lower-middle-class townsmen and workers as well as some peasants. Even before the revolution, advocacy of temperance had figured prominently in the search by urban plebeians and petty bourgeoisie for an alternate system of modernizing values. This grassroots prohibition movement shared the goals of Alvarado's dry developmentalism but was popularly grounded rather than state-driven. The attitude of Yucatecan Socialists toward alcohol can be understood only when placed in the context of the henequen economy of Yucatán.

In the 1880s and 1890s, predominantly white entrepreneurs and landowners commodified the large-scale production of henequen plants, whose long spiky leaves were depulped and dried to produce the most durable and cheap binder available before the invention of plastics. To staff hundreds of large and small henequen haciendas cheaply, the Yucatecan landowners relied on debt peonage. By advancing Mayan peasants loans and goods and by protecting them from the draft and taxes, hacendados induced them to take up residence on haciendas and work to pay off their debts as *peones acasillados* (literally "housed" debt peones, hereafter called simply peones). Before Alvarado's reforms of 1915, the courts had ignored the unconstitutionality of debt peonage and the massive abuse of peones pervading the system, which included whippings, sexual abuse, and incarceration.²⁵

On many haciendas, alcohol created and maintained debt servitude. For example, in the southern village of Yaxcaba, the mayor was in cahoots with the *jefe político* (prefect), who ran his commercial maize haciendas with children and teenagers lured into peonage with *aguardiente* (raw cane rum).²⁶ In the village of Muxupip in the heart of the henequen zone, Simeón Domínguez, owner of the only cantina, also helped ensnare peasants in servitude. Once drinkers had run up large debts of twenty or twenty-five pesos in his bar, he tipped off hacendados, who would then send a *capataz* (foreman) to their houses. The foreman would offer to assume peasants' debts if they would move to the estate grounds, where they could work off their debts little by little. Few if any ever could.²⁷ Opichén, in western Yucatán, was another bulwark of the Partido Socialista del Sureste. It bordered the hacienda Calcehtoc, where according to popular memory alcohol was widely

25. Allen Wells and Gilbert Joseph, *Summers of Discontent, Seasons of Upheaval: Elite Politics and Rural Insurgency in Yucatán, 1876–1915* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996); and Chris Gill, "Campesinos' Patriarchy in the Times of Slavery: The Henequen Plantation Society of Yucatán, 1860–1915," M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1991.

26. Wells and Joseph, *Summers of Discontent*, 209.

27. Santos Domínguez, *La historia de la Sociedad Ejidal de Muxupip* (Tlahuapan, Puebla: Instituto Nacional Indigenista SEDESOL, 1994), 21.

consumed by poor workers before the revolution, entangling them in dependent relationships with landowners and merchants.²⁸ It is therefore not surprising that dry Socialism often established deep roots in communities near haciendas where alcohol was used to entrap peasants in peonage.

The women in Muxupip had another reason to resent alcohol. When their men drank, they gave presents to their *compañeras* (in this context, a female companion other than a legal wife). And when the drinkers ran out of money, they ran up a tab at the *tienda de raya* (hacienda store), sinking further into the hacendado's debt. If these indebted men still lived in town, hacendados could force them to relocate their families to the confined hacienda peon community.²⁹ The fighting between wives and husbands over the men's spending time and scarce money on drinking and other earthly pleasures has been termed by Anna Clark as "the struggle for the breeches." Her analysis of plebeian culture of eighteenth-century England argues that males of aristocratic and plebeian strata alike defined their masculine prerogatives in terms of libertinism—the right to spend money and leisure in pursuit of pleasure. "For all urban plebeians, the libertine pleasures of metropolitan life proved both tempting and perilous. Husbands and wives quarreled over who would spend money at the pub, and the increasing flexibility of plebeian morals could spark flares of jealousy and fears of abandonment."³⁰ In early-twentieth-century Yucatán, similar "battles for the *pantalones*" over a libertine male recreational subculture accessible through the henequen economy involved not just male prerogatives but the family's independence from the control of landowners.

Reacting to the link between economic exploitation and alcohol, Socialists often advocated prohibition zealously to break the shackles binding poor rural workers to landowners. Prohibition was part of the discourse of modernizing statist like Alvarado, but it also struck a chord in many households where male prerogatives clashed with the women's claims on their men's time and family resources.

Temperance resonated with female and some male peasants and peones who suffered from debt peonage but also with urban workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and even a few elite intellectuals. Those with grassroots anti-alcohol sentiment in the countryside joined with urban prohibitionists to form a larger socialist movement in Yucatán that emerged under the patronage of Alvarado but came into its own under Carrillo Puerto. Like the German Social Democratic labor movement before World War I described by Vernon Lidtke, Yucatecan socialism's alternate culture "rejected existing structures, practices, and values" to search for radical alternatives to estab-

28. Rejón Patrón, *Hacienda Tabi*, 92.

29. Juan Rico, *La huelga de junio*, 2 vols. (Mexico City: n.p., 1923), 1:64.

30. Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 87.

lished ideas of “work, marriage, family, education, religion [and] recreation.”³¹ Temperance represented an attempt to create fair working conditions and improve family life. Yucatecan Socialists rejected the use and abuse of alcohol as part of a larger attempt to fashion genuine alternatives to the values and social institutions of the dominant pre-revolutionary landowning class and the Catholic Church.

Especially for urban workers and lower-middle-class Yucatecans, temperance ranked high among attempts to forge a new way of life that embraced a different system of values from those of the Catholic Church and positivism, the chosen ideology of the pre-revolutionary plantocracy. Carlos Loveira, a Cuban emigré and labor and political organizer for Alvarado, noted that many activist railroad workers who formed the urban core of Yucatecan Socialism in its early years abstained from meat and alcohol as part of a syncretic Latin American fusion of spiritualism and anarcho-syndicalism. Many of these workers joined the Yucatecan branch of the Casa del Obrero Mundial (COM), the influential Mexican anarcho-syndicalist labor federation that held a convention in Mérida sponsored by Alvarado in April 1915. One of the COM's committees was dedicated to spreading teetotaling among Yucatecan workers and served as a cradle for leaders of the socialist temperance movement. Member José Isabel Tec went on to crusade against alcohol for the next two decades under the aegis of the PSS.³²

Some male socialists strongly advocated temperance, but the strongest socialist constituency consisted of women. At the *Primer Congreso Obrero Socialista* in Motul in 1918, Felipe Carrillo Puerto's sister Elvia and her fellow *feministas* took the lead in pushing prohibition to the top of the party's agenda and emphasizing the need for communal enforcement. The social and familial tensions that led *campesinas* to wage this battle undoubtedly encouraged Elvia and other middle-class urban female socialist leaders (often teachers) to make the prohibition issue their own. It was also one of the few issues that gave them any leverage against male socialists. Yet Elvia and other middle-class leaders of the socialist feminist movement never succeeded in overcoming class and ethnic barriers in the same way that U.S. suffragists did. While educated women of some means made up Elvia's group, the separate *Liga Obrera Feminista* represented street vendors and *obreras* in the cordage factories of Mérida.³³ Unfortunately, however, limited archival evidence does not indicate directly how women exerted their influence to enforce the *Ley Seca* and other political and social goals. Women probably fought on the home front to try to keep men away from the *cantina*, while taking advantage of the new political opportunities opened by

31. Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8–9.

32. Paoli and Montalvo, *Socialismo olvidado*, 66.

33. Rico, *Huelga de junio*, 1:25–26.

state action and their own efforts to claim power in the public realm. These women often met with stiff resistance. Male socialists frequently tried to limit the women's efforts to a tightly circumscribed arena of issues considered appropriate for women to handle—mainly child care, education, and public health.³⁴

In the early years of Yucatecan Socialism, women were much more than a red auxiliary. They often pushed prohibition aggressively on unwilling men, using the presence of outside organizers and the *Ley Seca* to close cantinas. When Felipe Carrillo Puerto arrived in Muxupip to oversee land reform, he found alcohol, not agrarian reform, the main concern of the local women. Members of the *Liga Femenista* in Muxupip (founded by his sister Elvia) besieged Carrillo Puerto, demanding loudly that he close Muxupip's cantinas "because in these places their husbands lost all their wages, leaving them and their children without clothes or food."³⁵ To demonstrate their plight, they even showed him their ragged clothing and starving children. Carrillo told them to go and personally shut down Muxupip's watering holes, and he then gave a talk on the dangers of alcohol to the men. In reprisal, the men of Muxupip took advantage of Carrillo Puerto's intervention and anti-clerical legislation to close the church, as Catholicism was overwhelmingly a female practice. For good measure, they also "invited" the priest to leave the village forever.³⁶

By April of 1922, no fewer than seven other villages had banned alcohol and priests: Opichén, Muna, Tinum, Uaymá, Pisté, Tixcaltuyu, and Temozón. Only a few weeks after his inauguration, Governor Carrillo Puerto wrote to his national patron and future president Plutarco Elías Calles about these revolutionary communities: "They are little pueblos of Indian workers who do not permit the sale of rum in their towns, nor that priests come to exploit them as they did in the past."³⁷ It is not clear whether the PSS used the same strategy of pitting women against men to first close the cantinas and then the church in all of these villages. But as in Muxupip, at least three of the other seven dry villages had feminist leagues (Opichén, Tinum, and Uayma), while only twenty-nine of Yucatán's ninety municipalities did, suggesting a correlation between the mobilization of women and strict enforcement of liquor laws. In spite of Carrillo Puerto's indigenist rhetoric, no

34. Piedad Peniche Rivero, "El feminismo socialista de Elvia Carrillo Puerto y la lucha por el sufragio en el seno del Partido Socialista del Sureste, 1915–1926," paper presented to the Latin American Studies Association, 24–26 Sept. 1998, Chicago, Illinois; and Monique Lemaitre, *Elvia Carrillo Puerto, La Monja Roja del Mayab* (Mexico City: Castillo, 1998), 80–81.

35. Laureano Cardos Ruz, *El drama de los Mayas: Una reforma social traicionada* (Mexico City: Libros de Mexico, n.d.), 282–83.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Felipe Carrillo Puerto to Plutarco Elías Calles, 3 Apr. 1922, Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles (hereafter APEC), gavilla "Carrillo Puerto, Felipe," expediente 25, legajo 3/7.

evidence indicates that more indigenous communities tended to be drier.³⁸ And in at least one of the dry villages, the Liga Feminista enforced municipal prohibition. In what the PSS weekly *Tierra* called an “energetic demonstration of civic duty,” the women of Tinum requested that the mayor turn over to them ten bottles of aguardiente seized from Samuel Cetina, who was covertly selling alcohol. The women then smashed the bottles ceremonially in the town square.³⁹

In communities where alcohol was banned, women apparently took the lead in imposing prohibition. It would be a mistake nonetheless to assume that women themselves uniformly opposed the use of alcohol. The archival record and newspapers of the period contain little on the point, but it seems that despite the apparently strong social and even legal barriers keeping women out of cantinas, some women drank, at times in private and less commonly in public. The commissioner of the hacienda of Oxcum incarcerated two older women in the state asylum for ten days because they had disturbed the peace by threatening to cast spells on frightened neighbors while drinking all day.⁴⁰ The federal inspector of education for the northeastern zone of the state closed a cantina in a poor neighborhood of Espita because of the “immoral lesson” it taught pupils of a nearby school, namely the “surprising number of indigenous women of the neighborhood who in a semi-inebriated condition go to sell their domestic products like corn and eggs, undoubtedly not to eat.”⁴¹ State agents preferred to view women as allies in their war against alcohol, not as the enemy. But the Espita example suggests that public drinking by women was not unknown, especially when women from more isolated rural communities came into contact with new mores in larger urban centers through the spread of petty capitalism and improved transportation after the revolution.

Such complexities did not trouble Socialist policy, which strongly supported prohibition. Although harsh enforcement of the Ley Seca ended with Alvarado’s resignation as governor in November 1917, eradicating alcohol remained a pillar of socialist rhetoric. In his inaugural address as governor on 1 February 1922, Felipe Carrillo Puerto spoke in Maya from

38. “Relación de las Ligas de Resistencias adscritas a la Liga Central de Mérida,” 15 Feb. 1923, APEC, “Ligas Diversas,” legajo 1/16; and Benjamin Carrillo Puerto, *Apuntes sobre la organización y trabajos del Partido Socialista del Sureste* (Mérida: Talleres Tipográficos del Gobierno del Estado, 1923), 14.

39. *Tierra*, 23 Sept. 1923, cited in Lemaitre, *Elvia Carrillo Puerto*, 91.

40. Julián Gómez to governor, 20 July 1928, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 864, Sección Gobernación 1.

41. On the changing economic, social, and political place of women in post-revolutionary Mexico, see *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850–1990*, edited by Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughan (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995). See also Inspector Juan I. Flores to Mayor Espita, 8 Mar. 1935, Archivo de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, Mexico City (hereafter SEP), 1351 Índice General, exp. “Asuntos en general.”

the balcony of the state capital building to his assembled followers in the main square of Mérida. He lectured the thousands of men and women who had brought the PSS to power on the ills of alcohol: "It is a great mistake to go to the cantinas and spend money that you worked hard to earn, [leaving it] in the hands of the octopuses and spongers who never want the people to progress and better themselves. I ask all of you to promise me with all of your hearts that you will never go to the cantinas to get drunk, because if you keep doing it, the working people will be held back forever."⁴² His plea indicated the extent to which the PSS had incorporated popular prohibition into its project, where it joined Alvarado's developmentalism as a justification for severely curbing recreational male drinking. By the time that Carrillo Puerto took over the governorship, hundreds of *Ligas de Resistencia Socialista* had been charged with encouraging members to renounce drinking, while the *Ligas Feministas* played a salient role in exorcizing demon rum. A *Liga Socialista* "Regeneración Social" was even dedicated to prohibition.⁴³ In hindsight, however, Carrillo Puerto's inauguration represented the high watermark of Socialist prohibition.

PROHIBITION TRIUMPHANT? THE RISE OF GRASSROOTS SOCIALISM AND THE CARRILLO PUERTO ADMINISTRATION, 1918–1923

Prohibition was a staple of both the PSS doctrine and the popular alternate culture of Yucatecan socialism in the late 1910s. But although *Ligas Feministas* and some male socialists opposed drinking energetically, the PSS as a party never devoted much effort to enforcing existing harsh anti-alcohol legislation in municipalities and the state once Alvarado's military rule ended. It is true that Carrillo Puerto publicly supported a crack-down on the sale of alcohol. At the first congress in 1918, he called on the party to send an initiative to the Socialist-dominated state congress for the "complete suppression of the sale of alcoholic beverages."⁴⁴ Yet the Socialist state congress took no action. Periods of frequent violence and persecution by hostile federal troops in 1919 and 1920 might explain the PSS's failure to crack down on rum running during this period. But at its second congress in 1921, when the PSS was driving opponents from political power regionally and its national protectors Calles and Obregón were doing the same in Mexico City, the party showed little inclination to use its newfound power

42. Acrelio Carrillo Puerto, *La familia Carrillo Puerto de Motul, con la Revolución Mexicana* (Mérida: n.p., 1959), 57.

43. "Relación de Ligas," Partido Socialista del Sureste, 15 Feb. 1923, APEC, gav. 40, "Ligas Diversas," 16 Jan. 1910.

44. *Primer Congreso Obrero Socialista celebrado en Motul, Estado de Yucatán: Bases que se discutieron y aprobaron*, 2d ed. (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Históricos del Movimiento Obrero Mexicano, 1977), 103.

to stifle the use of alcohol. Instead, the congress's fifth theme of socialist "moral principles" called on the state to use practical education to "instill the love of work" among members by encouraging abstinence from alcoholic beverages and tobacco.⁴⁵ Elvia Carrillo Puerto's call for a "war without quarter" on alcohol was politely applauded but never declared.⁴⁶

Why did the PSS pull back from harsh enforcement of alcohol regulation once firmly in power in 1922–1923? Many male Socialists, like those in Muxupip, remained reluctant to give up customary recreational drinking. Moreover, strong evidence indicates that many leading Socialists became implicated in the illegal sale of alcohol. Several factors explain the growing use of alcohol by PSS officials despite the party's strong commitment to prohibition.

By 1921 the PSS had established an effective network of local chapters in the northern, central, and western reaches of the state, an area roughly coterminous with the henequen zone. But the party was much weaker in the corn- and cattle-producing south and east, except in a few smaller towns and villages around Valladolid like Chan Kom. Consequently, PSS politicians in the south and east had no constituencies pressuring them to enforce anti-alcohol legislation. Moreover, Socialist officeholders there were often imposed from without by Socialist state governments and ruled unchecked by a strong Socialist base among residents. In such an atmosphere, corruption flourished. Santiago Barbosa, the Socialist mayor of the large southern town of Ticul, was eventually jailed for allowing illegal cantinas to operate in return for kickbacks.⁴⁷

Opposition to the Socialists grew most in these same areas of the south and east because after 1917, the regional bourgeoisie had organized political parties to counter the PSS.⁴⁸ Offering alcohol was an efficient way for hard-pressed Socialist organizers to induce men to desert opposition parties. At the same time, the Ley Seca could be enforced selectively against opposition supporters. In the southern town of Tekax, for instance, Socialist congressman Rafael Cebada Tenreiro enlisted owners of local cantinas and bars to lure voters to a reception for a Socialist candidate.⁴⁹ In another clear example of these tactics, the Socialist town council of the large mid-eastern town of Temax reportedly sweetened the appeal of the PSS by distributing alcohol to voters in the fall 1921 gubernatorial election, the same one that elevated Felipe Carrillo Puerto to governor.⁵⁰ Once in power, many

45. *Segundo Congreso Obrero de Izamal*, 2d ed. (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Históricos del Movimiento Obrero Mexicano 1977), 46–47.

46. Peniche Rivero, "Femenismo socialista," 18.

47. *La Opinión*, 22 June 1922, p. 1.

48. Franco Savarino, *Pueblos y nacionalismo, del régimen oligárquico a la sociedad de masas en Yucatán, 1894–1925* (Mexico City: INEHRM, 1997), 392.

49. *La Opinión*, 27 Jan. 1921, pp. 1, 2.

50. *La Opinión*, 22 Mar. 1922, pp. 2, 3.

Socialist leaders became caciques (petty bosses) who exploited their power and enjoyed virtual impunity in running local protection rackets or selling aguardiente, without paying state and federal taxes or respecting tight regulations on its distribution.⁵¹ The local rings constructed by some low-level Socialist leaders like Demetrio Cardeña and Amalio Díaz in Tekax were dwarfed by the large, illegal one constructed by Socialist Congressman Manuel González. His ring serviced the entire western half of the state from the time Alvarado enacted the Ley Seca until González's own *pistoleros* claimed his life in downtown Mérida in May 1921, reportedly because he had tried to shortchange them.⁵² Throughout the Socialist state administrations from 1918 onward, Socialist officials ignored bars owned or protected by Socialist politicians operating outside of the law. Ironically, some infamous speakeasies set up shop on the street designated by Alvarado as the "Promenade Revolucionaria" in the heart of downtown Mérida.⁵³

The conservative press of Yucatán and embattled opposition politicians generally attributed collusion between bootleggers and many Socialist politicians to the revolutionaries' innate moral, intellectual, and sometimes racial inferiority—more evidence that socialism was not reconstructing the Porfirian order. Actually, changes were at work in the social composition of the PSS, along with changes in the legal and political system caused by the revolution. Put simply, the promise of de facto impunity lured bootleggers into the PSS. As early as March 1917, peasants in the small town of Tecoh in the central henequen region complained to Governor Alvarado that reactionary merchants had hijacked the local branch of the PSS. These former enemies of socialism and prohibition, whom loyal Socialists called "*veladas*" (windmills, who changed political affiliation according to which way the wind was blowing), had taken over the local Socialist league to protect their own clandestine liquor sales.⁵⁴ For contraband vendors of liquor, the political atmosphere of Yucatán was the major variable affecting their profits. They reportedly watched the outcome of the hotly contested election in November 1919 to see if prohibition would be repealed and the *estado mojado* restored.⁵⁵

Ironically, the Ley Seca facilitated symbiosis between corrupt local Socialist officials and clandestine cantina owners even as socialism consoli-

51. The classic study of caciques remains Gilbert M. Joseph, "Caciquismo and the Revolution: Carrillo Puerto in Yucatán," in *Caudillo and Peasant in the Mexican Revolution*, edited by David A. Brading (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 193–221; see also *La Opinión*, 8 Mar. 1921, p. 1.

52. Joseph, *Revolution from Without*, 118–19; *La Opinión*, 9 June 1921, p. 3; 21 June 1921, p. 3; 12 July 1921, p. 1; 13 July 1921, p. 2; and Alvaro Gamboa Ricalde, *Yucatán desde 1910* (Veracruz: Imprenta Standard, 1943), 3:213.

53. *La Opinión*, 1 Feb. 1921, p. 1.

54. Evelio Chi et al. to the governor, 1 Mar. 1917, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 589.

55. "A través de mis lentes," *La Revista de Yucatán*, 8 Nov. 1919, p. 3.

dated in political power in Yucatán under Carrillo Puerto's governorship. Given the relative weakness of the state authority and the even weaker federal government, municipal authorities were left largely to their own devices in interpreting and implementing laws regulating alcohol. Selective enforcement allowed mayors and town council members to create an effective monopoly for favored alcohol sellers by using the law to hound competitors of protected bar owners out of business. In Dzemul the secretary of the town council charged still owner Heliodoro "Canto" Baas five pesos a week to ply his trade, confident that Baas would escape prosecution because "ya me he ligado" ("I have already joined the local [Socialist] league").⁵⁶ To make matters worse, citizens who tried to close politically connected watering holes often faced harsh reprisals and had no recourse but to complain in the opposition press. In Telchac Pueblo, whistle-blower Manuel Maldonado was attacked by a relative of the mayor for trying to close the family still, while the head of local government turned a blind eye to producers of aguardiente.⁵⁷

Even as Carrillo Puerto headed a Socialist state administration dedicated to prohibition, alcohol lubricated gears of the Socialist political machine and many red caciques used the Ley Seca to create de facto local monopolies of aguardiente. Yet at the same time, active female Socialist leagues and Carrillo Puerto's desire to limit the use of alcohol in order to modernize Yucatecan rural society and impress national revolutionary leaders combined to curb clandestine alcohol production. The technical limitations of makeshift stills rigged up across the henequen zone had capped output, and the rivalry among different political cliques prevented construction of a single clandestine distribution network. By the early 1920s, an uneasy equilibrium between Socialist prohibitionists and bootleggers had been established.

Nevertheless, the proliferation of alcohol rings and the inability of Carrillo Puerto and the PSS to rein them in pointed to fundamental flaws in the emerging post-revolutionary state and its legal structure. In the first place, state debility and ineptness consistently frustrated popular support for the enforcement of prohibition laws. Most glaringly, many local Socialist leaders ran corrupt rackets that used the Ley Seca to shake down still and cantina owners with impunity. The violence and civil strife that undermined the old regime between 1911 and 1920 in Yucatán destroyed most of the pre-revolutionary repressive apparatus, including the biased judicial system. But the victorious Socialists failed to build a new legal framework that could address popular grievances against rum-running politicians on the take.

56. *La Opinión*, 9 June 1921, p. 2.

57. *La Opinión*, 1 June 1921, p. 1.

The inability of revolutionary socialism to construct an effective judicial structure could be clearly seen in mid-1919, when mayors of some of the largest towns in Yucatán were charged by their constituents (and usually the local Socialist Party organizations) with abusing their office by tolerating or profiting from clandestine alcohol sales. The Socialist state legislature investigated the cases but took no action. Socialist Congressman José Dolores Conde Perera, a homeopathic doctor-turned-police-inspector, suggested altering the constitution to remove the office of *alcalde* (mayor) and leaving the municipal president (the senior member of the town council) to run local government.⁵⁸ Even after the congress adopted these constitutional reforms, corruption and protection rackets for selling alcohol illegally continued to flourish. The embryonic civil society that the Socialist leagues had nurtured became increasingly powerless against abusive petty officials tolerated by the state.

Between 1918 and 1923, Carrillo Puerto and the popular Socialist movement checked local bosses and their bootlegging operations but could never root them out. Nevertheless, Carrillo Puerto's social reforms and the widespread mobilization of men and women under the banner of socialism earned for him a reputation as the most radical regional leader in Mexico. A botched military uprising in late 1923 deprived Yucatecan socialism of its greatest leader and allowed wet politicians in the party to demobilize Socialist women. This outcome ended the Yucatecan experiment in revolutionary prohibition in all but name and transformed the relationship between the post-revolutionary state and society in Yucatán.

FROM TEMPERANCE TO TOLERANCE: MACHINE POLITICS AND ALCOHOL, 1924–1936

In December 1923, the federal army battalion garrisoned in Mérida revolted against the national government of President Alvaro Obregón. They joined many troops and most generals in a mutiny across Mexico, trying to prevent Obregón from installing his handpicked successor, Plutarco Elías Calles, over their man, Adolfo de la Huerta. Because the *delahuertistas* feared that Felipe Carrillo Puerto would use henequen revenues to aid his patron Calles, they moved to overthrow the Socialist governor. For reasons still not fully understood, Carrillo Puerto ordered his partisans not to defend him and fled for the coast—perhaps for Cuba or New York to buy arms, or perhaps to San Francisco for a rendezvous with his gringa lover Alma Reed. He never got out of Yucatán, however, and a firing squad of *federales* executed him early on 3 January 1924. The rebel government, in one of its first

58. *La Revista de Yucatán*, 23 June 1919, p. 2; 26 June 1919, p. 3; 29 June 1919, p. 1; 1 July 1919, p. 2; and 22 Aug. 1919, p. 3.

acts, suspended the limits on the sale of alcohol in return for a special extraordinary tax on alcohol.⁵⁹

Five months of counter-revolutionary rule probably did not alter drinking patterns permanently in Yucatán, and the victorious national supporters of Obregón and Calles restored Socialist rule in Yucatán by May of 1924. Nevertheless, the coup altered the PSS in two fundamental ways. First, the murder of Carrillo Puerto led to the rise of new party leaders, who adopted a considerably different position on prohibition. At the same time, the Socialist experiment in politically empowering women suddenly ended, facilitating the replacement of dry politics with wet politics.

In the chaotic atmosphere of restored Socialist rule, Miguel Cantón, who considered himself Carrillo Puerto's dauphin, and José María Iturralde, the dominant Socialist leader in eastern Yucatán, struggled for power and split the PSS. Cantón's writings are sprinkled with references to radical continental political philosophers.⁶⁰ Yet his relations with the female Liga Socialista in his hometown of Izamal sunk so low that Socialist women picketed him publicly.⁶¹ Cantón eventually lost out in his bid to succeed Carrillo Puerto, but Iturralde, the new interim governor (May 1924–January 1926), took an even dimmer view of women's participation in politics.

Shortly before the coup by de la Huerta's followers, the PSS had elected a new state congress. Three of its eighteen members were women, including Felipe's sister Elvia Carrillo Puerta. But after the defeat of the Delahuertistas, Iturralde eventually forced them to resign, supposedly because national law made no provision for women to vote, even though state law had allowed women to vote since 1922. Fearing for her life, Elvia fled to the distant state of San Luis Potosí.⁶² The subsequent stream of accusations leveled against female politicians by male Socialists revealed the deep-seated resentment that many male Socialist leaders harbored toward Socialist women. It is impossible to determine how much of male Socialists' opposition to women's suffrage resulted from these women's ardent advocacy of prohibition, but the purge of female politicians from congress and the suppression of female participation in Socialist politics were accompanied by a dramatic increase in alcohol-related corruption and the growing importance of collective male drinking in socialist political culture.

The displacement of an alternate political culture that stressed prohibition was undoubtedly also linked to changes in the PSS directorate. Governor Iturralde inherited a weakened and internally divided party. In an effort to regain control of a PSS dominated by supporters of Cantón,

59. *Diario Oficial*, 8 Jan. 1924, p. 1.

60. Miguel Cantón, *En tiempos de conquista: Veinte años de acción socialista* (Mérida: Editorial Mayab, n.d.).

61. *La Opinión*, 9 July 1921, p. 2.

62. Peniche Rivero, "El feminismo socialista," 26–27.

Iturralde invited one of Cantón's key former backers, Bartolomé "Box Pato" (Black Duck) García Correa, to serve as president of the party. At the time, García Correa was barely thirty. His charismatic personality, dark skin, and fluency in Maya made him one of the most popular and influential Socialist leaders. His radical rhetoric and condemnations of the upper class and U.S. imperialism made foreign observers like the U.S. consul in Yucatán nervous.⁶³ But like many PSS barons, Garcia Correa had quietly set about lining his own pockets. He reportedly controlled the production and sale of aguardiente in his hometown of Umán.⁶⁴ Garcia Correa survived Iturralde's untimely death in 1927 to dominate the PSS until 1935 and preside over the triumph of wet politics in Socialist Yucatán.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DRINKING: BOX PATO AND HABAÑERO

The party presidency afforded García Correa a new opportunity to expand his economic horizons. He formed a profitable alliance with Alvaro Torre Díaz, the new governor (February 1926–January 1930), with the governor of the neighboring state of Campeche, Angel Castillo Lanz, and with entrepreneur Enrique Zapata Conde.⁶⁵ By enacting punitive taxation in January 1928, this foursome forced most of the surviving large-scale legal distilleries out of operation and then used Zapata's business connections to flood Yucatán with his brand-name rum, Zapata Habañero. Havana rum producers allegedly paid Governor Torre Díaz a million pesos to hand over the state's booming market to them.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, to get around the *Ley Seca*, state officials allowed thousands of liters of Zapata's Cuban liquor to enter Yucatán disguised as bags of cement and sugar.⁶⁷ Once García Correa was elected governor in February 1930, he nominated Zapata to head the alcohol department, giving him both control over a legal alcohol-distribution monopoly and state sanction to shut down potential rivals by using the department's policing powers. Since Alvarado's regime, the Departamento

63. U.S. Vice Consul in Progreso, Rufus H. Lane Jr., 20 July 1928, in U.S. National Archives, National Archive and Record Service, Washington, D.C., General Services Administration, "Records of the Dept. of State relating to Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910–1929," microform, 1959, vol. 95.

64. Rafael Otero to the president, 20 Aug. 1926, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City (hereafter AGN), Presidentes Alvaro Obregón y Plutarco Calles 243-Y1-M.

65. *Ibid.*; and Flora Quijano to governor, 25 Nov. 1932, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 398, Sección Gobernación 2.

66. Luis Aboites, *La Revolución Mexicana en Espita, Yucatán (1910–1940): Microhistoria de la formación del estado de la Revolución* (Mérida: Maldonado, INAH, and SEP, 1985), 130.

67. Rafael Otero to President Calles, 20 Aug. 1926, AGN, Presidentes Alvaro Obregón y Plutarco Calles 243-Y1-M.; Aboites, *La Revolución Mexicana en Espita*, 130; and Baltazar Naranjo Morales, *El doctor Torre Díaz: Su actuación* (Mexico City? n.p., n.d.), AGN, Presidentes Alvaro Obregón y Plutarco Calles, 307-y-2.

de Alcohol had been the only distributor of the state-run *Compañía Industrial*, which had the sole legal right to manufacture distilled alcohol. During the administration of Alvaro Torre Díaz (1926–1929), a federal informer charged, the governor had siphoned off three hundred thousand pesos annually from the *Compañía Industrial*.⁶⁸ Although this figure was probably inflated, it suggests the scale of graft in the alcohol monopoly. The department raked in more revenue (and almost certainly kickbacks) because it also licensed the right to manufacture small amounts of alcohol domestically.⁶⁹

The authority to stifle alcohol production allowed Enrique Zapata to continue the traditional practice of shaking down clandestine small producers in return for ignoring their production, but on a much larger scale.⁷⁰ Nor was Zapata reluctant to use his legal powers as head of the state alcohol commission to protect his business interests from those who would not pay bribes. Flora Quijano Méndez, owner of a cantina in Motul, complained that Zapata and three police burst through her doors with pistols in hand. They found nothing more incriminating than two kegs of Yucatecan rum, a can of alcohol, and a keg of Habañero. While Zapata eventually returned most of the confiscated alcohol, he kept the choice Habañero for a party.⁷¹

By using state power in this manner, Zapata and his associates dictated low prices to producers and collected high profits from leveraged sales to cantina owners, allegedly setting a price of sixty pesos per keg for liquor that cost only twelve pesos to buy. By moving fifty barrels each day, the syndicate reaped a healthy profit, most of which allegedly never found its way to the state treasury.⁷² While federal taxes generated by alcohol totaled little more than a hundred thousand pesos annually, the legal monopoly reportedly cleared a half-million pesos per year.⁷³ The illegal Zapata ring and its front, the state *Departamento de Alcohol*, lasted more than ten years until January 1936, keeping rum prices high to benefit Socialist racketeers.⁷⁴

Revenue from the Zapata ring greased provincial politics. At the same time, legal profits from the state-run monopoly on alcohol, along with state and local taxes on cantinas and alcohol, yielded a broad stream of legal rev-

68. Anonymous federal employee to Luis Morones, Feb. 1928, AGN, *Presidentes Alvaro Obregón y Plutarco Calles 307-Y-2*.

69. Justino Bolívar to the governor, 12 Mar. 1928, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 865, Sección Gobernación 2; *El Yucatanista*, 7 May 1932, p. 2; various correspondence, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 952, Sección Gobernación 2.

70. Manuel Cauich to the governor, 10 Aug. 1933, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 975.

71. Flora Quijano to the governor, 25 Nov. 1932, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 398, Sección Gobernación 2.

72. Rubén Darío Domínguez to the president, n.d., AGN, *Presidente Abelardo Rodríguez*, 525.25/95.

73. Antonio Mediz Bolio and José Castillo Torre, *La agonía de Yucatán: Exposición de la actual situación política, social y económica del estado* (Mexico City: n.p., 1932), 16–17.

74. *El Yucatanista*, 11 Jan. 1936, p. 3.

enue. In 1925 the right-wing opposition press claimed that domestic producers of cigarettes and beer were paying thirty thousand pesos a month in taxes, while privileged politicians smuggled in untaxed tobacco and *cerveza* to hawk. The percentage of state revenue derived from alcohol probably rose in the late 1920s and early 1930s due to more drinking in the relaxed legal atmosphere. The official state budget forecast for 1931 estimated that taxes on cantinas and alcohol would total almost 12 percent of the state's total income.⁷⁵ In May 1932, a new incremental tax schedule for cantinas ensured that the most profitable taverns would pay more taxes: those worth over ten thousand pesos would pay two hundred pesos a month.⁷⁶ The Unión de Cantineros protested the heavier tax burden, suggesting that when it came to collecting taxes, at least, alcohol authorities followed the law conscientiously.⁷⁷ Municipal authorities depended on alcohol-related revenue only slightly less. For example, the larger town of Tixkokob received almost a tenth of its monthly municipal revenue (about a thousand pesos) from alcohol in 1934.⁷⁸ Moreover, its relative importance for the state government increased as tax revenue from henequen fell in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Although alcohol was an increasingly important source of legal and illegal revenue for politicians, state control and taxation of alcohol were hampered by the governor's inability to lean too heavily on local officials.⁷⁹ Ironically, alcohol regulations ended up encouraging corruption and nepotism: cantina owners who were relatives of the mayor or paying him kickbacks avoided taxes and regulations, while those operating legally could not compete. For instance, the brothers of Seye's municipal president drove their legal competition out of business by staying open all hours and selling untaxed rum that was cheaper.⁸⁰

By the late 1920s, Socialist prohibition had been undermined by the political economy of alcohol that supplied legal revenue for the state as well as extralegal opportunities for economic advancement to many politicians, especially the Zapata ring run by Yucatecan governors. Moreover, the state government proved too feeble to enforce alcohol regulations in distant pueblos, while provincial leaders feared political repercussion should their clients in town halls be forced to close down small-scale protection rackets. As the PSS evolved from a radical movement into a political machine (a change

75. *Diario Oficial*, 1 Jan. 1932, p. 1.

76. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 940.

77. Unión de Cantineros to the governor, 21 Sept. 1932, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 951, Sección Gobernación 1.

78. "Presupuestos . . . del primero de enero al treinta y uno de diciembre del año 1934," AGEY, Archivos Municipales, Tixkokob, exp. 5.

79. Numerous items of correspondence, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 943; and Director of Federal Education to the governor, 27 Oct. 1933, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 970.

80. Treasury agent to the governor, 4 Mar. 1932, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 943.

predating Carrillo Puerto's death), alcohol became deeply ingrained in Socialist political practice. Yet this transformation did not end popular participation in politics but instead changed its nature—and constituency. This change from dry to wet politics was never more evident than when Socialists went to the polls.

DRINKING AND SOCIALIST POLITICAL CULTURE AFTER 1924

As noted, local Socialist organizations once included women in their ranks and promised to eradicate alcohol as part of a larger campaign to combat the misery and inequality of pre-revolutionary Yucatán. The political disenfranchisement of women after 1924, however, coming on the heels of the elimination of opposition parties after 1921, forced the PSS to find a means of convincing male voters to turn out for state and federal elections that were essentially meaningless. Its ward heelers came to prize the power of alcohol to draw men to rallies and polling places. But rather than being simply an incentive, drinking took on cultural value in regional politics. Alcohol became doubly important for the PSS as a key component of electoral ritual and as the means of facilitating its intermediaries' control over local balloting. At the same time, the association of drinking and politics assured the continued inclusion of thousands of lower-class males in post-revolutionary politics.

Certainly the Socialist regime understood the political potential of alcohol. In late December 1932, the Mérida town council paid 144 pesos for beer distribution at polling places during municipal elections and another 98 pesos for beer tapped at various civic festivals.⁸¹ The bill for the Socialist gubernatorial campaign of 1933 in one small town suggests how Socialists turned voting into a wet fiesta: they shelled out for a keg of *aguardiente*, six bottles of *Habañero*, sixty rockets, and no less than three musical bands.⁸² State employees often traded rum blatantly for the promise of votes.⁸³ On election day, alcohol distribution at the polls was unimpeded by orders to close *cantinas* at 3:00 P.M. the day before the voting and keep them closed until the day after.⁸⁴ In Maxcanú campaigners for the official candidate distributed liquor in the town hall under the nose of the representative of the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (the national ruling party), who had been sent to keep the polling dry.⁸⁵

The idea that alcohol would assume a central role in post-revolutionary politics is not surprising, given its cultural significance. In much of Latin

81. Entries dated 16 Dec. 1932, AGEY, Archivos Municipales, Mérida, libro 93.

82. José R. Herrera to the governor, 7 July 1933, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 979, Sección Gobernación 1.

83. Rosado Hernández to the governor, 20 June 1933, AGEY.

84. Circular to all mayors, 14 July 1933, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 961.

85. Felipe Montforte to Comité Ejecutivo Nacional of the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario*, AGN, Dirección General de Gobierno, vol. 337, exp. 2, 311 G(27) 2.

America, alcohol was esteemed as a ceremonial gift, although the ritual heavy drinking found among Chiapan Mayan communities did not occur commonly among most Yucatecan Mayas. Socialist politicians appropriated from folk Catholic religious festivals many of the elements that became staples of political campaigning, such as shooting off rockets and holding dances (a process recalling the transfer of sacrality from church to state described by Mona Ozouf in revolutionary France). The ritual (and generous) offering of alcohol by Socialist campaigners to voters came to be seen as a basic entitlement by the male peasants, artisans, and peones of rural precincts. For instance, Antonio Poot and other campesinos of the small hamlet of Ebtún wrote to Governor-elect César Alayola Barrera shortly after his victory to remind him, "As in past times after each election, we have been presented with a little aguardiente, we respectfully request of you, for goodness sake, that you favor the people of Ebtún with a keg of the said liquor."⁸⁶

While alcohol played a relatively benign role in promoting male popular participation, it served as more than a drawing card for the Socialist political machine. To understand its other uses, the role of caciques must be considered. A mayor who delivered his entire town or village for the Socialist regime's official candidate was guaranteed a large degree of autonomy, including wide discretion over enforcing alcohol regulations. A beleaguered tax agent trying to control stills in eastern Yucatán shortly after the 1933 gubernatorial campaign complained, "Each mayor has become a cacique. They realize that they can do what they want because in the last election, they prevented the installation of [opposition] campaign headquarters."⁸⁷ A boss able to guarantee local votes earned extra latitude when it came to the Ley Seca as well as state and federal tax laws.

Many caciques viewed the distribution of alcohol as more than a perk that came with supporting the status quo. It also reinforced their power by encouraging violence, a much more malign element of wet politics. Judging from numerous accounts of drunken physical attacks perpetrated by *presidentes municipales* (mayors), town councilmen, and local policemen, many mayors and their retinues consumed alcohol on the job, and the cantina often served as the meeting place for municipal kitchen cabinets.⁸⁸ When tempers were already short because of old grudges or a contested election, drinking turned tense situations violent. In the 1934 senate primary, opposition organizers in Conkal claimed that a drunk mayor and his inebriated goons insulted and then beat them.⁸⁹ Alcohol seems to have been a frequent factor precipitating fistfights or worse.

86. Antonio Poot et al. to the governor, 25 Nov. 1933, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 960.

87. Agente de Hacienda to Contaduría del Estado, 5 Nov. 1933, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 961.

88. Donaciano Herrera to the governor, 27 Dec. 1929, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 864, Sección Gobernación 2.

89. José G. Chan et al. to the governor, 5 Oct. 1934, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 984, Sección Gobernación 1.

Social scientists who compare the behavior of intoxicated individuals across cultures have argued that behavior of drinkers is not universal but a “product of expectations and culturally shared values.”⁹⁰ Ample reasons suggest that drinking was regarded by many in post-revolutionary Yucatán as a license to settle old scores violently or to confront political enemies physically. Some incidents of drunken violence resulted from personal vendettas, as when the intoxicated mayor of Espita brawled with a state police agent in public.⁹¹

In Homun, a henequen town south of Mérida, alcohol and violence accompanied the rise of a cacique to local dominance. García Correa first installed his local client Juan Ortíz as mayor for the 1931–1932 term. Juan then imposed his brother and *cantinero* Vicente as municipal president for the 1933–1934 term in the fall elections of 1932, prompting a wave of protests. Casimiro Dzul denounced the “indecorous attitude” of Juan Ortíz, who used brawny intimidation to squelch opposition to his brother Vicente, who in turn ran Homun “as if it were his own kingdom.”⁹² Juan Ortiz’s favorite tactic in dealing with potential opponents was to round up a gang of drinkers, take them to Vicente’s cantinas to work them up into a violent mood, and then lead them into the streets to wreak havoc on the enemy.⁹³

The Socialist regime after 1924 not only tolerated many local bosses who ruled in an inebriated and violent manner, they deployed political operatives to distribute alcohol to flying columns of campaigners, who in turn served as shock troops against opposition. For instance, Diego Rendón Barrera, a veteran Socialist politico, journalist, and longtime leader of the Socialist railroad workers’ union, organized workers for Alvaro Torre Díaz’s gubernatorial campaign in 1925. Given Torre Díaz’s lack of support among the rank and file of the PSS, it was a difficult task. Rendón filled his own car with aguardiente and personally handed it out to followers to steel their courage in challenging opposition forces who had “turned the electoral arena into an armed camp.”⁹⁴ The importance of alcohol, already clear in the imposition of the virtually unknown Torre Díaz by veteran Socialist operatives in 1925, only grew in the following years.

Alcohol lubricated machine politics, sustained more than a few caciques, and figured in the exclusion of women from politics. But its proliferation in the 1920s and 1930s should not be viewed simply as a betrayal of the revolution, as the revisionists would have it. Revisionist analysis of the Mexican Revolution hinges on an alleged restoration of the conservative

90. Dwight B. Heath, “Alcohol Studies and Anthropology” in *Society, Culture, and Drinking Patterns Reexamined*, edited by David J. Pittman and Helene Raskin White (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies, 1991), 87–109, 90.

91. Chief of state police to the governor, 16 Oct. 1932, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 943.

92. Casimiro Dzul et al. to the governor, 4 Aug. 1932, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 943.

93. Filomeno Chan et al. to the governor, 11 Oct. 1932, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 943.

94. Diego Rendón to the governor, 24 May 1928, AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo 854.

old social order brought about through a pact between opportunistic revolutionaries and the old pre-revolutionary ruling class. Yet the wet politics of Yucatecan Socialism after 1924 do not fit the revisionist mold and break it in some significant ways.

Three important reasons demonstrate that the end of prohibition and the development of what I term *wet politics* in the peninsula did not constitute a revisionist-style counter-revolution. In the first place, although many Yucatecans (especially women) supported prohibition, it was ended in no small part because of widespread and mostly male resistance. Second, many of the caciques and Socialist operatives who deployed alcohol for political ends and their own economic benefit sprang from relatively humble origins, and in this sense, alcohol helped consolidate a Snopes-like new group of Socialist entrepreneurs.⁹⁵ Their rise came at the expense of female Socialists and more idealistic male Socialists but helped displace the old Porfirian patricians atop provincial society. The Yucatecan planters who had amassed tremendous wealth during the salad days of the Porfiriato and had been banished from electoral politics by the Mexican Revolution certainly tried to use their economic resources and social connections to bend politicians to their will. But over time, Yucatecan hacendados lost leverage over Socialist politicians like García Correa, partly because of the independent financial base that the alcohol ring provided.⁹⁶ The Zapata ring's profits went not to the old pre-revolutionary oligarchy but to a new political class that generally viewed the hacendados as an obstacle rather than an ally. Third, the fact that Socialist politicians had to appeal to voters rather than simply imposing candidates or relying on appointed prefects (the infamous Porfirian *jefes políticos*) highlights the tremendous leveling effect of the Mexican Revolution. But to consider the full impact of alcohol on post-revolutionary Yucatán, it is necessary to look further chronologically and deeper analytically.

CONCLUSION: ALCOHOL AND POLITICS IN YUCATAN

The heady mix of alcohol and politics perfected by Governor García Correa and his cadre of local operatives eventually went flat, but its effect lingered. On 1 February 1934, César Alayola Barrera was sworn in as the new governor of Yucatán. Although he owed his election in part to his pre-

95. Novelist William Faulkner used the Snopes clan as an example of upwardly mobile poor whites in the U.S. South in the late nineteenth century.

96. See the following works by Ben Fallaw: "Bartolocallismo: Calles, García Correa y los henequeneros de Yucatán," *Boletín del Archivo Plutarco Elías Calles*, no. 37 (Apr. 1998):1–32; "Los fundamentos económicos del bartolismo: García Correa, los hacendados yucatecos y la industria del henequén, 1930–1933," *Unicornio* 7, no. 338 (19 Oct. 1997):3–9; "The Red Triangle: Corruption and the Political Culture of Postrevolutionary Yucatán, 1915–1935," paper presented to the Midwestern Association of Latin American Studies, 6 Nov. 1999, Charleston, Illinois; and "The Political Geography of Yucatán: Yucatecanism as Conservative Regional-

decessor García Correa's copious use of alcohol to turn out the red vote, Alayola soon turned on both. Alayola pledged to crack down on alcohol regulations and dismissed García's crony Enrique Zapata Conde as head of the alcohol regulating commission.⁹⁷ Although Alayola was forced from office in October 1935, his successor, Fernando López Cárdenas, also dedicated himself to curbing drinking. At about the same time, President Lázaro Cárdenas renewed attempts to control alcohol across Mexico.

Although the Zapata ring collapsed and was never replaced by another semi-legal cartel, the revived prohibition campaign in Yucatán spearheaded by resurgent feminist groups ran up against daunting problems. Alcohol remained a key ingredient in the regional political culture long after the fall of García Correa's administration, and many local bosses who ran protection rackets could not be dislodged because of their political value to state and national authorities. Politicians continued to invoke the essentially meaningless discourse of prohibition to curry favor with reformist and developmentalist national authorities as well as with a shrinking base of dedicated radical Socialists. But this rhetoric was uncoupled from any sustained or systematic attempt to restrict alcohol use and became increasingly incongruous. For instance, during the PSS commemoration in Mérida (the state capital) of El Día de la Revolución on 20 November 1935, the parade of revolutionary politicians, government employees, and students carried *carteles* (large posters) supporting the national government's prohibition campaign. Several even featured official slogans condemning alcoholism. Yet marchers also carried placards for one of their sponsors, a local brewery.⁹⁸

When the relationship between alcohol and politics in Yucatán from 1915 to 1935 is analyzed, it is clear that the Mexican Revolution sowed the seeds of an inclusive democratic order by destroying a dictatorial regime and many of the barriers to political participation by women and other subaltern groups. Prohibition unified statist reformers and grassroots popular organizations, including a strong women's movement. Even before the execution of Carrillo Puerto, corruption, caciquismo, and machine politics had begun to eat away at the popular base of Yucatecan Socialism. These same developments empowered a populist-minded new political elite that would prevent any resurgence by the old plantocracy. The assassination of charismatic radical leader Felipe Carrillo Puerto did not end popular mobilizations, nor did the national post-revolutionary state centralize power through his removal, as revisionists have argued. Instead, the politicized economy

ism, 1915–1940," paper presented to the conference "A Country Unlike Any Other: New Approaches to the History of Yucatán," 5 Nov. 2000, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

97. César Alayola Barrera, *Informe constitucional* (Mérida: Talleres Gráficos del Sureste, 1935), 35; and Rafael Mendiburu and Pedro Góngora, *Indicador informativo* (Mérida: Propagandas, 1935).

98. *El Yucatanista*, 9 Nov. 1935, p. 2.

and the political culture of Yucatecan socialism became increasingly dependent on alcohol, as female socialists found themselves marginalized in the party they had helped bring to power. This rather uncivil society bred corruption and corroded the legal and electoral systems—themes so far largely absent from the new cultural history of Mexico.

Still, the rise of García Correa and the wet politics practiced in many locales did not restore the Porfiriato. The new elites came from much humbler origins than the old Yucatecan planter oligarchy. More important, local political power was contested far more openly and by a much broader slice of society than before the Mexican Revolution. Although the wet Yucatecan socialism of the 1925–1935 era disenfranchised women and provoked numerous outbreaks of violence, it exemplified social churning and a kind of crude (albeit all-male) popular inclusion unthinkable before the revolution. The fact that alcohol became so closely linked with local electioneering is evidence of not only bossism and machine politics but also the need to attract votes. The failure of dry politics and the rise of wet Socialists defies key arguments by both the revisionist and neopopulist paradigms. It also underscores the need for new regional and microhistorical investigations into the formative period of post-revolutionary Mexico from 1920 to 1935. Such studies will take into account gender, grassroots politics, and the often conflictive relationship between cultural reform and a politicized economy in that era.

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