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Postrevolutionary Intellectuals, Rural Readings and the Shaping of the 'Peasant Problem' in Mexico: *El Maestro Rural*, 1932–34*

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Abstract. This paper studies the participation of an important group of Mexican postrevolutionary intellectuals, leaders of the cultural-educational project during the early 1930s, in the construction of two closely related concepts: the 'peasant problem' and its nucleus, the 'revolutionary peasant', both central to the political and ideological consolidation of the new regime. It discusses the approaches that lead them to propose a new 'peasantness', suitable for the political and economic interests that dominated the process of formation of the postrevolutionary State. It also considers the struggle that developed within the group between the 'productivists', linked to Marxism-Leninism, and the 'cultural-populists', more concerned with the cultural survival of the Indo-*campesino* groups, for the right to define these concepts. The analysis is based on *El Maestro Rural*, edited by the Secretaría de Educación Pública since 1932.

This article is part of a study analysing the construction of new social categories during the period immediately after the Mexican revolution. It draws heavily on a privileged source: the magazine *El Maestro Rural*, which reveals the social 'imaginary' of one of the elite postrevolutionary groups most involved: that of the rural teachers and the 'intellectual pedagogues' in charge of rural education, as expressed in their contributions to the magazine. In particular these contributions can be used to trace the representation of the *campesino* as a homogenising category. This article focuses on the 'working proposals' and 'conceptual definitions' as well as the general problematique ('national culture', 'national integration', etc.) which made up the surrounding scenario for the project of construction of the postrevolutionary *campesino*, but does not try to assess the empirical results of this project (such as the impact of the cultural revolution, above all the literacy campaign, upon the culture of the rural communities). The article also explores how the

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construct of the *campesino* acts as a foundation for shaping the antithetical self-representation of the rural teacher, whose mission it was to create the 'new *campesino*' – as if one were the synonym of the old regime and the other of the revolution.[1] This study focuses on the years of the construction of social representations prior to Cárdenas, and uncovers a series of antinomies which were encountered by the rural teachers and the 'intellectual pedagogues' at the beginning of the thirties; a period of crisis and revision of the postrevolutionary cultural project. Some of the most important questions, such as the dilemmas over whether to homogenise or to diversify, to integrate or incorporate, to acculturate or to maintain the *campesinidad*, are problems which, far from having been solved, are still present on the political and cultural agenda of the country to this day (particularly exacerbated by the armed uprising in Chiapas in January of 1994). Another antinomy, though of a different nature, is that which developed between the two principal politico-pedagogic currents of those years. On one side there were the *productivistas*, made up of teachers with pragmatic technical leanings and for whom the postrevolutionary *campesino* had to be defined in a manner centring on his technological efficiency solely as the model of a modern productive unit. On the other were the *culturalistas*, closer to populism, who proclaimed a structural change which, although it would Westernise the communities, would also rescue for the rest of the population of the country *campesino* values, customs and usages, finally creating a 'national culture'. The existence of these two currents – although they did not include the whole of the teaching profession – does not mean these were two coherent versions of the same cultural project, since both the former and the latter were plagued by contradictions. In one sense, the notion of a 'postrevolutionary cultural project' can be taken at face value: as a project (or often a multiplicity of projects) which, when seen from the centres of the country's political power, may have appeared as a 'cultural steam roller' sweeping across the country. However, from another aspect, reflected in the comments and letters from the local intellectuals published in the magazine, these cultural impulses frequently appeared quite incapable of bringing about the desired transformations.[2]

[1] William Doyle, 'Presentation' (Part 1: The Old Regimen and the Revolution), in Colin Lucas (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. II, *The Political Culture of the French Revolution* (Oxford, New York, 1988), p. 4. On the difficulty of *measuring* the results, that is, the cultural ('ideological') impact of the revolution cf. Alan Knight, 'Revolutionary Project; Recalcitrant People: Mexico, 1910–1940', in Jaime E. Rodríguez (ed.), *The Revolutionary Process in Mexico. Essays on Political and Social Change* (Los Angeles, 1990), pp. 251–52.

[2] See, for example, Elsie Rockwell, 'Schools of the Revolution: Enacting and Contesting State Forms in Tlaxcala, 1910–1930', in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (ed.), *Everyday Forms of State Formation. Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*

'El Maestro Rural' ('*The Rural School Teacher*')

In 1932, a little more than ten years after the revolutionary campaign for rural education had begun, the Mexican government promoted a series of changes to its education policy.[3] On March the first of that year, the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP), headed by Narciso Bassols, started the publication of a new magazine, *El Maestro Rural*, initially under the direction of a young revolutionary intellectual, Salvador Novo. In a certain sense, the magazine continued the efforts made at the end of the Portes Gil administration (Dec. 1928 to Feb. 1930) to create a vehicle of communication between the State and the agrarian classes, as was the task of *El Sembrador*, in addition to the other publications put out by the SEP, such as *El Libro y El Pueblo*. But, unlike the latter, which, in spite of its 'Narodnikian' title, was, in fact, a magazine made by intellectuals for intellectuals, *El Maestro Rural* was intended since its beginning to act as a means of communication between the upper echelons of the SEP and the rural school teachers, on the one hand, and between the SEP and the *campesinos* – some of whom were gradually being incorporated into the 'cultured' literate population by the national literacy campaign – on the other. At least this was so up to 1936, when Cárdenas altered the objectives of the magazine by no longer aiming at the *campesino* readers, but instead, exclusively at the rural schoolteachers.[4]

While offering pedagogic guidance and including reading material for the *campesinos*, from the start the new publication also expressed the clear intention of forming a revolutionary identity and structuring a revolutionary conscience. The postrevolutionary State ideologists considered that control of the *campesino* 'imaginary' would have to be preceded by the shaping of a social representation of the *campesino*. This

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(Durham and London, 1994), pp. 170–208; Knight, 'Revolutionary Project', also offers valuable information about instances of popular rejection of the cultural post-revolutionary 'project' and discusses the term.

[3] The background of rural education in the twenties has been studied in detail by several authors; it is worth consulting, among others, J. Z. Vázquez, *Nacionalismo y educación en México* (Mexico, 1975), pp. 317–36; D. L. Raby, *Educación y revolución social en México (1921–1940)* (Mexico, 1974), pp. 11–18; and M. K. Vaughan, *Estado, clases sociales y educación en México*, vol. II (Mexico, 1982), pp. 317–36. Cf. also the classic I. Castillo, *México: sus revoluciones sociales y la educación*, vol. 3 (Mexico, 1976), pp. 287–319.

[4] 'Lázaro Cárdenas el 1° de septiembre de 1936, al abrir el Congreso las sesiones ordinarias' in Secretaría de Educación Pública, *La Educación Pública a través de los mensajes presidenciales* (Mexico, 1976), p. 23; about *El Sembrador* and *El Libro y el Pueblo*, encouraged by a group led by Jaime Torres Bodet, another bright hope of the revolutionary intellectuals, cf. Engracia Loyo, 'Lectura para el pueblo, 1921–1940', *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 33, no. 3 (1988), pp. 298–345.

paradigm would serve as a basis for creating policies directed towards rural areas for the support and consolidation of the new regime. In fact, in the early days of the new regime, the definition of the *campesino*, as well as the definition of what constituted the *campesino* problem, were key elements in a broader definition of the social world – including the process of State formation itself – which gradually emerged as a result of the tension between diverse concepts of (*el deber ser*) the correct postrevolutionary posture, and of diverse projects of nationhood. In its turn, this tension resulted from the struggle between the various intellectual factions of the victorious revolutionary groups and their allies, each attempting to impose an archetype of the social world which conformed to their particular interests and which would include their specific rough project of a nation. Thus, modes of expression, instruments of learning and arbitrary cultural values were imposed upon groups of *indo-campesinos* by rural schoolteachers and 'intellectual pedagogues'. The legitimate use of such 'symbolic violence' was considered to be within their rights as representatives of the new State.[5]

The appearance of *El Maestro Rural* was hailed as the fourth force in the educational process, yet another instance to add to what the SEP considered its three main agencies, that is: the rural school itself, the *Escuelas Normales* (Teacher Training Colleges) and the Cultural Missions.[6] From its very first editions it is possible to perceive the editors concern to produce texts and formats that would allow them to reach their newly literate *campesino* reader directly. They tried to produce popular literature, easily accessible, with articles '*escritos en un lenguaje sencillo*', that could be '*aprovechados y entendidos por todos*'. The editors and contributors were constantly exhorting their readers to comment on and transmit what they had read to their communities.[7] In August 1932, *El Maestro Rural* changed

[5] The 'legitimate symbolic violence' concept is a Weberian elaboration made by Bourdieu. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991).

[6] The Cultural Missions were created in 1923 as a tool for updating rural teachers and 'brigades for the ideological fermentation and the renovation of the teachers' knowledge and methods'. These were small groups of teachers ('missionaries') specialised in fields such as pedagogy, geography, mathematics, arts and trades, who made short and periodic visits ('Missions') to isolated villages. In 1932 the SEP had thirteen of these missions. Cf. Narciso Bassols, 'El Programa Educativo de México', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, (1 Aug. 1932), p. 4–5; Manuel Mesa [Andraca], 'Organización y funcionamiento de las Misiones Culturales', *ibid.*, vol. II, no. 10 (1933); R. Mejía Zúñiga, *Moisés Sáenz. Educador de México. (Su vida, su Obra y su Tiempo)* (Monterrey, 1962), pp. 121–2; Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), *Las Misiones Culturales, 1932–33* (Mexico, 1933); Castillo, *México: sus revoluciones*, vol. 3, pp. 308–19; a critical vision by one of the participants in the Bassolist phase can be found in S. Arias Navarro, *Las Misiones Culturales: reflexiones de un misionero* (Mexico, 1934).

[7] For example, Dagoberto J. Rendón, 'Cómo construir un gallinero', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. I, no. 3 (1932), p. 15.

its format and began to experiment with set sections which would make reading easier and provide guidance by concentrating on certain subjects.[8] These changes were accelerated when Francisco Monterde, former head of the Library at the National Anthropological Museum, took over as editor in place of Novo at the beginning of 1933. That year *El Maestro Rural* reached a circulation of 12,000 copies. At that time it started the practice of publishing a brief explanatory summary by each author, preceding each article, which constituted a timid yet clear attempt to offer indications that would lead to a 'correct' reading and interpretation of the article.[9]

The *dramatis personae* whose discourse nourished the magazine can be divided in three categories of intellectuals – (here the term is used in the broad sense allowed by Gramsci, without making any distinction between the traditional and the organic intellectuals). First, headed by those who would become famous in following generations, there were: Bassols, Sáenz, Novo, Yáñez, Mesa Andraca, Rafael Ramírez, Isidro Castillo and a few others.[10] Secondly, there were men who considered the *campesino* issue in less depth and with less grandiloquence, but perhaps from a closer perspective – these were the rural inspectors and regional directors of the SEP. All of them based their ideas on the support given by the rural schoolteachers themselves. These comprised the third category, who also contributed to the magazine, either by being in charge of certain columns or set sections, or as authors of articles on specific subjects, or merely

[8] The formal elaboration of the magazine entails a certain representation of the peasant audience within the 'imaginary' of its drafters and typographers. For reading as a concrete act of construction of meaning see R. Chartier, *Cultural history: between practices and representations* (Cambridge, 1988).

[9] Guiding the reader by using 'introductions' is a central practice in the creation of a meaning to be imposed upon the reader. It is achieved through what Chartier calls 'Strategies of control or of seduction of the reader', and by means of devices that seek to control interpretation. Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: between practices and representations* (Cambridge, 1988).

[10] Certainly, Bassols, Sáenz, Novo and Yáñez need no presentation. Manuel Mesa Andraca (1893–1984) was educated as an agronomist at the National School of Agricultural in 1917; between 1923 and 1930 he was its secretary and director. In 1928 he produced an extensive, critical study about the Central Agricultural Schools, upon which the reforms implemented in 1933 would be based. About his role and, in general, about the relationship among the members of the intellectual pedagogue group, cf. J. A. Britton, *Educación y Radicalismo en México*, I, *Los Años de Bassols* (*1931–1934*) (México, 1976). Rafael Ramírez was a teacher educated at the Escuela Normal of Xalapa, Veracruz. He was Director of the Department of Rural Schools of the SEP and Head of the Cultural Missions between 1927 and 1935. Very close to Sáenz, he resigned from his posts when Bassols forced Sáenz out. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 29; David Raby, 'Ideología y formación del Estado: la función política de la educación rural en México, 1921–1935', *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, vol. LI, no. 2 (1989), p. 310. Isidro Castillo was also a teacher, educated at the Escuela Normal of Morelia; he was director of federal education in several states during the thirties.

as commentators in the sections open to opinions, like 'La voz del Maestro'. The convergence of these different cultural levels finally produced a unified body of discourse thanks to the feedback of ideas between the 'cultured, urban' intellectuals and the 'rustic' ones, to give them a name.[11] There was constant communication between the two groups, and one can discern the influence of the former's thinking on the latter, but they also fed their imagination and wrote their articles with the help and first-hand information provided by the *campesino*-teachers. The case of M. Sáenz is a good example. In fact, it is difficult to tell to what extent the ideas and concepts put forward by relatively unknown rural teachers were extracted from Sáenz's thinking, or whether it was the other way round, or occurred in a circular process.[12] It may be valid to suggest that Sáenz's work captured and systematised ideas which were in the air, which then became a kind of collective reflection, a *discourse* in the semiological sense.[13] See, for example, the similarity of the concepts (sometimes identical) expressed by Sáenz in his work of the late thirties, particularly in *Carapan*, with proposals which appeared in *El Maestro Rural* at the beginning of the decade signed by other authors, or anonymously as editorials, when Sáenz was no longer the editor.[14]

The publication of *El Maestro Rural* was also a means of imposing or reinforcing the political and ideological control of the SEP upon the great mass of rural teachers, those cultural intermediaries who started to appear at the end of the twenties and early thirties, and who gradually acquired more functions and responsibilities within the consolidation project of the new regime. They would be the operators of what later (in 1934) would be called the '*expresión más directa, intensa y sistemática del sentido cultural de la Revolución Mexicana*', constituted by '*el movimiento educativo que el Estado*

[11] Knight calls the latter '*intelectuales pueblerinos*' ('village intellectuals'): Alan Knight, 'Los intelectuales en la revolución', *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, vol. LI, no. 2 (1989), p. 53.

[12] On the effect of 'circularity' see M. M. Bakthin, *Estética de la creación verbal. Lingüística y teoría literaria* (Mexico, 1982); other authors speak of the 'reciprocal influence' in the relationship between different 'culture levels'. See C. Ginzburg, *O queijo e os vermes. O cotidiano e as idéias de um moleiro perseguido pela Inquisição* (São Paulo, 1987), pp. 25–6; P. Burke, *Cultura popular na idade moderna. Europa 1500–1800* (São Paulo, 1989), pp. 20–1.

[13] Compare with Sayer: 'It is usually intellectuals in positions of power who articulate what they *claim* is already there as *vox populi*'. Derek Sayer, 'Everyday Forms of State Formation: Some Dissident Remarks on "Hegemony"', in Joseph and Nugent (eds.), *Everyday forms of State Formation*, p. 372.

[14] Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, 'El indio y la reinterpretación de la cultura', in Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán (ed.), *Antología de Moisés Sáenz* (Mexico, 1970). Obviously, this does not include the ideas formulated by Sáenz at the beginning of the thirties that he later gathered in anthologies such as *México Integro*; see also Mejía Zúñiga, *Moisés Sáenz. Educador* and John Britton, 'Moisés Sáenz: nacionalista mexicano', *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1972), pp. 77–97.

viene desarrollando, *de tiempo atrás*, *entre las masas campesinas*'.[15] So the new publication offered important spaces for teaching correspondence courses, by defining the exact content of the subjects and information directed to the *campesinos*[16] and, just as important, it generated a unifying doctrine which allowed the rural teachers to keep informed '*de un modo perfecto*' of the vision of national problems that the postrevolutionary State needed to establish and consolidate as the new social 'imaginary'.[17] This task of monitoring the ideological orthodoxy as it developed according to circumstances, in the heat of debate between various groups of intellectuals engaged in their own power struggles. This became evident on the occasion of the second anniversary of *El Maestro Rural*, when the magazine stopped being a mere aid to the work of the Cultural Missions and was finally given '*finalidades específicas*' which turned it into the '*órgano ideológico representativo del esfuerzo cultural del Estado en el medio campesino … e instrumento de orientación doctrinaria al servicio del antiguo ideal de la unificación de la enseñanza nacional*'.[18] This toughening up of the ideological functions of the magazine must have been a response to the lack of control felt by the central governing elite, in charge of the federal educational project, over the thousands of rural schools which had become intermediary cultural centres. If, as Rockwell has shown for Tlaxcala in the early twenties, a serious tension had sprung up between the local, municipal, authorities and the growing administrative state and federal bureaucracy, it is very likely that a similar tension (perhaps even greater) was developing between the intellectual elite in charge of the federal pedagogic project and the local operators who had to put it into practice. In spite of the enormous growth of the State bureaucracy under the governments of Obregón and Calles (1920–24; 1924–28), these tensions had not been entirely resolved by 1933.[19] The divergencies expressed in *El Maestro Rural* covering the main alternatives in the construction of the new *campesino* between the '*productivista*' current, more concerned with the macro-variables of the national economy and the function of the *campesino* within it, and the '*culturalista*' current, mainly concerned with ethnic identities and local traditions and striving for integral acculturisation, provide evidence of this dichotomy.

[15] 'El segundo aniversario de *El Maestro Rural*', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. IV, no. 5 (1934), p. 3.

[16] 'Nuestro objeto', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. I, no. 1 (1932), p. 5.

[17] 'Segundo aniversario', p. 3. On the construction of the social 'imaginary' during the course of revolutionary processes and/or of violent change, cf. B. Baczko, *Los imaginarios sociales. Memorias y esperanzas colectivas* (Buenos Aires, 1991).

[18] 'Segundo aniversario', p. 3.

[19] Rockwell, 'Schools of the Revolution', pp. 183–5.

Postrevolutionary diagnosis and representation

It must be remembered that the diagnosis of the rural situation made by the intellectuals in general (and not only by collaborators on the magazine) was clearly negative. In fact, the *campesino* was thought of in terms of a backward individual – or more frequently a group or community – endowed with cultural characteristics and production practices which reproduced and ultimately explained this backwardness;[20] he was cut off from the rest of the nation, and this isolation created a duality which the ideologists never managed to resolve. It was considered to be both the cause of the problem but also the principal 'defence' of the *campesino* communities. This point is displayed below. At best, the *campesino* was seen as an incomplete being, as a member of a community who could hardly be expected to contribute anything to the nation, although some associated traits such as simplicity, innocence, etc., would be valued in the postrevolutionary vision which combined bucolic, Rousseau-like aspects with local versions of social-revolutionary Russian populism. This diagnosis defined the type of *campesino* which the revolution needed to construct, a definition couched as much in terms of an economic project – the need to increase agricultural productivity – as of a cultural project – the desire to forge a 'national culture'. The aim was to synthesise all the influences and traditions accumulated in the territory of Mexico, providing the cornerstone for 'national integration' and modernising methods of production in rural areas. In these definitions one can also detect the outline of a political project, far less obvious than those above mentioned, but of great import at the time. This political diversion was very significant in the balance of ideas present in the early thirties, but was forgotten over the long years that followed: a project of promoting the assimilation of traditional community systems of (democratic) representation into the political life of the nation.

However, both the bucolic image of the *campesino* and the image of incompleteness were displaced by a more powerful and generalised

[20] An article from 1933 summarised the vision that the intellectuals developed regarding the condition in the country as follows: '[...] al contemplar el estado de la población campesina en nuestro país, aparece antes que todo un cuadro de estancamiento. El indio, en muchas regiones mexicanas, vive como vivían sus ancestros de hace un milenio. En otras, vive como vivían sus abuelos sometidos a la encomienda, al diezmo y a la cura de almas, que era también sabrosa explotación de cuerpos. El tiempo ha pasado; ni la independencia, con su desfile glorioso de héroes; ni la Reforma, con su falange victoriosa de pensadores y de caracteres; ni siquiera la Revolución, vieja ya de dos décadas, que ha conmovido y transformado en grado tan evidente muchos de los aspectos mexicanos, han logrado influenciar a esas tribus, a esas poblaciones, a esas masas humanas de intrincadas y recónditas regiones nuestras'. 'La agitación de la conciencia revolucionaria', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 13 (1933), p. 3.

representation: the *campesino* who, come what may, must always continue to be a *campesino*. He would have to be improved, modernised and educated. But this would never be to the point of changing his productive activity, of precipitating uncontrolled social differentiation. His education should be focused on the following precepts: '*la escuela debe proporcionar al campesino las técnicas y conocimiento que el campesino necesita para su trabajo, y NO OTRA COSA .... El niño campesino debe educarse en su ambiente y adquirir o descubrir conocimientos que le sirvan para su vida de campesino.*'[21]

Agricultural labour, the main activity in the life of a *campesino*, was frequently represented as being an activity which made it difficult, indeed practically impossible, for *campesinos* to become integrated in modern culture. This was because the rigour and effort of peasant life forced other activities – even education itself – into a secondary position in rural priorities. At a time when psychology, as well as sociology, was seen as 'the' science which would revolutionise the very concept of humankind,[22] the capacity of the *campesino* to 'know himself', was considered nil or too insignificant for him to be considered as a possible client for the new tendencies. Moreover at a time when, in urban Mexico, movements for the emancipation of women were beginning to appear on the political and cultural scene, the contrast with the position of the *campesina*, conceived as a submissive and dependent being, only reinforced the picture of atavistic backwardness pervading rural society. To crown it all, the diagnosis made frequent reference to the *campesino* mentality as closed to rational thought, usually as a result of cultural restraints imposed by the characteristics of rural productive activity at the base, or in the structure of his way of being.[23] Thus, as other authors have pointed out, in many ways the nineteenth century liberal concept of the *campesino* community, seen as an obstacle to progress, continued unchanged.[24]

[21] [Aureliano Esquivel], 'Las escuelas rurales juzgadas por el Prof. Esquivel: Su idea de lo que son y de lo que deben ser', *ibid.*, vol. I, no. 6 (1932), p. 3.

[22] Cf. A. Molina Enríquez, *Clasificación de las ciencias fundamentales*, (Mexico, 1935).

[23] A representative list of peasant 'deficiencies' compiled by a rural teacher can be found in Urbano Méndez S., 'La Escuela Rural y algunos de sus problemas', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 7 (1933), p. 22; evidently, that 'discovery' of the *dead weight* in peasant culture is not an accomplishment of the thirties but the sophistication of previous reflections, revolutionary and pre-revolutionary. Vaughan rescues similar concepts published during the first years of the twenties in the Boletín de la SEP in *Estado, clases sociales y educación*, p. 319–20.

[24] Knight, among others, has stressed the prevalence of the liberal vision during the revolution (and, in general, the curious persistance of 'conservative' and 'liberal' lines in some regions); Knight, 'Intelectuales en la revolución', p. 54–5. Alan Knight, 'Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910–1940', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 74, no. 3 (1994), pp. 406–7, 437–8. The chief advocate of this vision is, of course, Jesús Reyes Heroles, *El liberalismo mexicano* (Mexico, 1957–61).

The campesino *and the problem of national integration*

The old problem of national integration was naturally the background for the construct of the 'new *campesino*', and one of the first and most persistent preoccupations dealt with in the magazine. In its first editorial the magazine established clearly that its main objective was to collaborate in this process of integration, upon which the 'future of Mexico' was said to depend. But, in order to integrate it would be necessary to homogenise society: '*esta integración no puede realizarse sino cuando se haya logrado dar a todos sus habitantes una lengua común*, *ambiciones idénticas*, *necesidades iguales y los mismos medios de satisfacerlas*'.[25] Evidently here was the kernel of the problem: the diversity of cultures in the rural areas of Mexico, particularly the question of assimilation of the pre-literate (oral) indigenous and *campesino* cultures into a system of education based on the written word.[26] Of course, the obsessive insistence on the subject of national integration and the unifying meaning that should be contained in the cultural and educational policies of the revolution were a response to the specific problems of the situation which had been inherited from the times of the Porfiriato. This insistence was also the *leitmotif* of the period when the ideology of all totalitarian regimes: of the Soviet Union under Stalin, of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, together with their followers in other countries, advanced triumphantly flaunting as their own the ideas of race, of the masses, of the people, these great unifying and all-embracing instances which were certainly also used, often to excess, in Mexican postrevolutionary rhetoric.[27] Lastly and above all, it was a political and intellectual response to positivist theories concerning the incorporation of dispossessed peoples into modern Western culture.[28]

[25] 'Nuestro Objeto', p. 4.

[26] On this issue, see L. King, *Roots of Identity. Language and Literacy in Mexico* (Stanford, 1994), pp. 62–6.

[27] On this thematic relationship of the different kinds of totalitarianism, cf. G. Balandier, *El poder en escenas. De la representación del poder al poder de la representación* (Barcelona, 1994), pp. 20–1.

[28] *Incorporationism* and *integrationism* were opposite projects in the field of post-revolutionary cultural policies during the second half of the twenties and the first years of the next decade, when the thesis of an *integral* approach to the Indian-peasant problem finally was imposed. The *incorporation* thesis – which implicitly contained the notion of the modernisation of the Indian-peasant life by means of its *civilisation*, that is, the converting of the Indian into an acculturated westerner – originates, in its Mexican version, in A. Molina Enríquez but has its greatest impulse with M. Gamio in his *Forjando Patria* (Mexico, 1916). Sáenz, who supported this outlook during the second half of the twenties, fought against it at the beginning of the thirties and opposed it to the *integration* theory. Cf. Moisés Sáenz, 'El indio y la escuela' in Aguirre Beltrán (ed.), *Antología*, pp. 23–5. For a sharp analysis of the meaning and contradictions of *incorporation*, see Aguirre Beltrán, 'El indio y su reinterpretación', pp. xxvi–xxx.

The role of the *campesino* in the life of the nation was central to the subject of integration. The rural teachers and 'intellectual pedagogues' based their arguments on the premise that in Mexico there was a predominant progressive urban life as opposed to a 'retrograde' rural life.[29] The *campesino* had to be assimilated to '*formas y sistemas de vida social que se conocen con exactitud*', which meant those defined by patterns of urban coexistence; but this had to be done carefully, to prevent the loss of their specific *campesinidad* under the impact of city life.[30] Here certain contradictions in the pedagogical discourse become evident. At every step taken in the name of national integration, these intellectuals came up against the paradox of the need to keep the *campesino* population separate from the rest of society. This need arose from the argument that the differences between rural and urban life were so great that isolation was indispensable in order to allow the continued existence of both. Here this isolation, which was seen on the one hand to be the source of all rural ills as it 'explained' the backward state of agriculture, was, at the same time, the *sine qua non* condition of the *campesino*'s existence.

On the other hand, there seemed to have evolved the notion of maintaining the *campesinos* not only as a political base in rural areas, but even of using them to purge the 'parasitic' components of urban overcrowding, converting them into rural producers (forty years before the Khmer Rouge attempted to use this policy).[31] In addition, this contradictory desire for assimilation into 'Western civilisation' contained within itself the seeds of destruction of the *campesino* culture, since this represented an obstacle to the development of revolutionary modernity. This desire was based on criteria of productivity which had to take precedence over the aesthetic values that the intellectuals said were intrinsic to the peoples' traditional culture: beautiful but inefficient, emotional but economically impractical. This was a peculiarly 'Narodnikian' concept, which combined a 'return to the people' with the destruction of the frames of reference of a peoples' culture – or perhaps a basic populism struggling to coexist with directives of a strongly Marxist–Leninist sympathy.[32]

[29] The discussion about the 'superiority of what is modern' has allowed some scholars to try to approach the rural education process in Mexico as a paradigmatic case of the modernisation theory, such as Britton, *Educación y radicalismo*. Of course, 'modernisation' and 'modernisation theory' can be two very different things, and they are understood as such in this article.

[30] [Narciso Bassols], 'Plática del Secretario de Educación pública a los miembros de las Misiones Culturales, sustentada en el Teatro Orientación la noche del 4 de marzo de 1932', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. I, no. 1 (1932), p. 5.

[31] L. Enríquez, 'Problemas Agrícolas', *ibid.*, vol. V, no. 2 (1934), p. 17.

[32] Obviously, this formula changed during the Cárdenas years, when the communists greatly expanded their influence in some states. Carr gathers information that 90 per

Needless to say, in the minds of the rural teachers and the 'intellectual pedagogues', the problem of national integration was clearly linked to the task of constructing a nation which would include all its inhabitants, without social, economic and cultural differences. The construct of the *campesino* and the refounding of the nation upon new bases were intended to be simultaneous movements, aimed at creating, in the best style of the times, '*un México integral*'.[33] Sáenz clearly sensed that the construction of a broad, all-encompassing nationality – said to be a task in which the rural school would play the main role – would mean the destruction of the *indo-campesino* culture as it had existed in the thirties. To construct a new nation meant to destroy a mosaic of cultures in which isolation and inequality were inherent, resulting in atomisation and varying degrees of modernisation rather than homogeneous integration; the construction of an integrated *campesino* meant the destruction of the *campesino* immersed in his own culture, and the school had this basic function of homogenising and producing common patterns in spaces where diversity was the rule. '*La escuela es el enemigo de la cultura*' said Sáenz in a phrase that would become famous.[34] However, each piece of the *indo-campesino* mosaic presented particular problems, different currents which prevented the deculturising action from being uniform in its application; they constituted a field of force of extraordinary complexity making the implementation of the State project for a cultural revolution exceedingly difficult.[35]

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cent of the rural teachers in the state of Guerrero and four out of every six federal inspectors were members of the PCM (Mexican Communist Party) in 1939. Barry Carr, 'The Fate of the Vanguard under a Revolutionary State: Marxism's Contribution to the Construction of the Great Arch', in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms*, p. 337; for a completely opposite situation, see Mary Kay Vaughan, 'The Implementation of National Policy in the Countryside: Socialist Education in Puebla in the Cárdenas Period', in Ricardo Sánchez Flores, Eric Van Young and Gisela von Wobeser (eds.), *La ciudad y el campo en la historia de México* (Mexico, 1992), p. 893–904.

[33] Moisés Sáenz, 'La escuela y la cultura', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. I, no. 5 (1932), p. 6.

[34] *Ibid*., p. 7; it should be possible to establish links between the opposition 'school' and 'culture' on the one hand, and the opposition established in the German theoretical debate at the end of the century regarding 'civilisation' and 'culture', on the other hand. One must not forget the influence the controversy surrounding *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* had upon many Mexican intellectuals of the postrevolutionary period; this influence can be traced to the works and classrooms of Antonio Caso, where the discussion and the thinkers supporting it were mentioned; cf. the second edition of his *Sociología, genética y sistemática* (Mexico, 1932), a work which was republished several times after 1927 and that was circulated throughout Latin America. I thank Prof. Francisco Gil Villegas for his information regarding this point.

[35] See William Roseberry, 'Hegemony and the Language of Contention', in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms*, p. 365. The subject of the *cultural revolution* during the decades of 1920 and 1930 has been discussed by several authors, in particular Knight, 'Revolutionary Project' and 'Popular Culture'; see also Adrian A. Bantjes, 'Burning Saints, Molding Minds: Iconoclasm, Civic Ritual, and the Failed Cultural Revolution',

The discovery of this *campesino* universe in the thirties and the spread of this new knowledge to broad sectors of the intellectuals – and not to a mere half-dozen specialists – produced a new way of looking at knowledge covering Mexico's recent past. It was as if there had been a sudden unfolding of 'national reality', a new dimension, as if the reflection of a double could be seen in the light of a recently discovered perspective. This process of re-discovery was fundamental in the creation of the *campesino* as the 'other' in postrevolutionary Mexico. This was in acute contrast to considering the *campesino* as an undifferentiated part of the revolutionary whole, which was how this sector of society had been conceived of and treated during the period of armed struggle. It is not surprising that the concept of *campesino* as perceived by the intellectuals should arise from the problem of education, because this 'other' had to be defined basically by its diversity in terms of symbolic structures and systems of representation. Bassols said they were dealing with '*dos sistemas ideológicos … dos doctrinas independientes desde muchos puntos de vista*'.[36]

Thus, the shaping of the 'agrarian question' or the '*campesino* problem' in the postrevolutionary period required accepting that it stemmed fundamentally from the area of culture, and facing it as a basic problem of a collective mentality which had to be altered and modernised in order to make possible the assimilation of new technical knowledge and behaviour appropriate to contemporary economies. The 'rural problem', according to another of the 'intellectual pedagogues', '*no podrá resolverse si no es por medio de la cultura y cooperación*'.[37] National integration did not mean the elimination of the 'other', nor his conversion into the 'self' of modernist reflection, but the education of the 'other' so as to integrate him as a fundamental instrument for the final construction of an integrated nationhood as a result of revolutionary synthesis, 'the national synthesis'.[38]

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in William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin and William E. French (eds.), *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance. Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Willmington, 1994), pp. 263–4, who emphasises the project of creating a 'new society' as a central element of the postrevolutionary ideology. The subject is constant in the magazine pages; Bassols, for example ('El Programa', p. 5), close to the Soviet model, speaks of creating 'a new world' through education; more than ten years earlier, Calles had already expressed the need to create a 'new national soul' by means of the school; cit. in Rockwell, 'Schools of the Revolution', p. 170.

[36] Bassols, 'El Programa', p. 4.

[37] Francisco Manríquez, 'El ejido y el maestro rural', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 8 (1933), p. 33.

[38] There exists here a kinship between cultural project and political process, as if we were talking of extraordinarily similar brothers who are not completely identical; see Knight, 'Revolutionary Project', pp. 236–7.

The problem of culture was, therefore, one of the Gordian knots in the process of a truly modern, national integration. This was obvious to Mexicans and foreigners alike, and many of them concluded that one of the solutions would be to collect up the converging elements, the common symbols, representations and myths, that would help to create a sort of 'collective soul' to give substance to the idea of 'nation' (much in advance of Anderson's thesis on the creation of references which facilitate the 'imagination' of a 'national' community).[39] In 1933, in an article about the state of education among the Mexican indians, Eyler D. Simpson considered that if the role of the rural school was central to the drive for the economic recovery of the 'life of the people', it was equally important to tackle the problem of '*la creación de un espíritu de unidad nacional y de homogeneidad cultural*, *en un país donde estas cosas son*, *más que hechos reales*, *aspiraciones y deseos*'. The root of the problem lay in the lack of collective symbols and representations which could draw all the inhabitants of the country to identify with one set of experiences; a 'common fund' of traditions. According to Simpson, Mexico was not a nation because what might be collective symbols of nationality belonged only to an insignificant part of the population.[40] Evidently the efforts of the rural schools, particularly in their History curricula, were clearly planned and directed towards this central objective: to make the patriotic symbols universal, to make the cult of national heroes uniform, to regulate the dates of historic events, to carefully select historic moments which represented points of consensus, to find intermediate points of convergence for the indigenous peoples, the whites, the *mestizos*, the rich and the poor.[41] The notion of 'popular' had yet to be created in Mexico, still

[39] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1990).

[40] Another of Simpson's findings: 'El mito sólo puede ser aceptado si se convierte, para la mirada del individuo, en una suerte de imposición a la que está sometida igualmente toda la sociedad en que aquel participa'. L. Kolakowski, *La presencia del mito* (Buenos Aires, 1975), p. 27.

[41] The establishment of the 'national holidays' and a nationalistic civic calendar has been studied by David L. Raby, 'Los principios de la educación rural en México; el caso de Michoacán, 1915–1924', *Historia Mexicana*, v. 22, no. 4 (1973), pp. 577–8, and Vaughan, *Estado*, *clases sociales y educación*, p. 311. Recently, there has been an avalanche of good studies in this field, as can be seen in Guy P. C. Thomson, 'Bulkwards of Patriotic Liberalism: The National Guard, Philharmonic Corps, and Patriotic Juntas in Mexico', *JLAS*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1990) and 'The Ceremonial and Political Roles of Village Bands, 1846–1974', in Beezley et al., *Rituals of Rule*, pp. 307–42; Mary Kay Vaughan, 'The Construction of the Patriotic Festival in Tecamachalco, Puebla, 1900–1946', in *ibid.*, pp. 213–45; Bantjes, 'Burning Saints', pp. 261–84; Knight, 'Popular Culture', pp. 406–7; Miguel Rodríguez, 'El 12 de octubre: entre el IV y el V centenario', in Roberto Blancarte (ed.), *Cultura e identidad en México* (Mexico, 1994), pp. 127–62; see also *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 45, no. 2 (1995), edited by Solange Alberro on the subject *Rituales Cívicos*; on the beginning of the work on the postrevolutionary historiography,

less the elimination from it of all ethnic and class connotations, so that the term would mean 'national', and the same heroes and symbols could serve to identify all 'Mexicans'. They still had to create what the young sociologist Daniel Cosío Villegas would call, according to Simpson, '*la gran familia nacional*'.[42]

The design and representation of a hero: the rural school-teacher

While the 'intellectual pedagogues' were producing a specific representation of the *campesino* and the problem he posed for the social 'imaginary' they were also, in a dialogical operation, generating the representation of the rural schoolteachers. These, in turn, were evolving a discourse about the objectives of their mission and its setting which implied their own self-definition.[43] The construct of the rural teacher emerged in contrast to the primitive, pre-Revolutionary concept of the *campesino*, who was himself redefined in contrast to his 'civiliser'. This of course created a representation which emphasised the deficiencies of the rural population as compared to the westernised, revolutionary 'self', visualising the *campesino* and the indian, as if they were dark creatures only visible in the reflected light of modern culture. This diagnosis was essential for the postrevolutionary intellectuals if they were to structure the *campesino* problem, centred on a vision of the destruction of pre-capitalist agrarian order, and to elaborate on the figure of the *campesino* before he became a 'peon'. Thus, the disappearance of the *campesino* as a social class and of the *campesino* family as an economic unit, thanks to the expansion of capitalism under the Porfiriato, gradually created conditions for the representation of the rural teacher as a figure with prophetic and messianic features – the creator, the constructor, depicted in the magazine. The publication of *El Maestro Rural*, created an important space for the political and professional exhaltation of this new representation; here his 'specific capital' was given relevance, and over and over again, he was attributed with the power to effect the 'integration of the country'.[44]

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cf. G. Palacios, *Los intelectuales posrevolucionarios y la construcción socio-cultural del 'problema campesino' en los años treinta*, I/3: *Historia, ciencias sociales y religiosidad popular en el discurso pedagógico* (Mexico, 1996), pp. 4–31.

[42] Eyler D. Simpson, 'Estado de la educación de los indios en México al comenzar el año de 1932 [I]', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 13 (1993), pp. 13–4.

[43] The 'empirical subject' of the discourse, the rural teachers at the end of the twenties and beginning of the thirties, has been described generically by the same authors quoted in footnote 3 above. See particularly Raby, *Educación y revolución social*, pp. 19–20.

[44] 'Nuestro Objeto', p. 4. Talking in general terms, Vaughan thinks (I consider a bit mechanically) that the process of *empowerment* of rural teachers meant a parallel process of *subordination* of the peasants. See Mary Kay Vaughan, 'Women School Teachers in

The school and the rural schoolteacher became the pivots upon which the construction of the nation hinged within a framework of educational action aimed at building a civilisation and taking as its starting point the dispersion of popular local and regional cultures. The new common culture would finally achieve the longed for status of a 'national' culture. The 'good tidings' broadcast by the Cultural Missions, was precisely that the time had come for the country to march '*hacia la unificación de sus elementos*, *hacia la nivelación de sus aspiraciones y hacia la uniformidad de sentimientos y de ideas*, *de acuerdo con el régimen de su vida y con el descubrimiento de su cultura*.'[45] Above all, the rural school had a political mission and objective. In the words of one rural schoolteacher, it had '*echado a cuestas la tarea colosal de poner al pueblo de pie*, *de enseñarle una nueva vida*, *de trazarle el camino recto que lo aleja de la esclavitud*, *de la miseria y de la humilación*'.[46] Another said that the rural teacher must '*ir al pueblo para infundirle enseñanzas que repercutan más tarde en sus descendientes*, *con resultados de depuración*, *procurando incorporar a sus elementos de lastre a un estado decoroso de cultura que signifique nuestra nacionalidad*.'[47] Thus the school and the teacher together would create a National Culture, starting from the 'transformation' of the *campesino* culture. By drawing on populist images, the idea spread throughout the country that the rural communities were beginning to use the schools as centres promoting a new power structure, controlled by collective bodies made up of democratically elected members of the community itself, working for the good of the community. Under this new scenario, democracy would develop through education, not politics, and it would be the *campesino* teachers, and not the politicians, who established it. This is probably what Sáenz meant when he referred, paradoxically, to the need to create a 'rural spirit' in the communities.[48]

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the Mexican Revolution: The Story of Reyna's Braids', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1990), p. 144.

[45] 'Los nuevos misioneros de la cultura y de la civilización', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. IV, no. 8 (1934), p. 9.

[46] César Martino, 'La escuela y el ejido', *ibid*., vol. I, no. 1 (1932), p. 11.

[47] Adolfo Velasco, 'La acción socializante del maestro de escuela', *ibid*., vol. II, no. 13 (1933), p. 26.

[48] M. Sáenz, 'Escuela y cultura', p. 9; M. Sáenz, *México íntegro* (Mexico, 1939), p. 115. Aguirre Beltrán considers the reference to the 'espíritu rural' as 'una exaltación emotiva de la *Gemeinschaft* de Tönnies [...] su reacción en contra del industrialismo que promueve la corriente desarrollista de la Revolución en la cual él mismo se halla incluido y su apartamiento de esa tendencia para adoptar en su contenido el postulado anárquico del siglo anterior que quiso fundar en la comunidad rural el futuro de una humanidad libre de dictadura y de explotación'. Aguirre Beltrán, 'El indio y la reinterpretación', p. xiii; on the spatial reformulation brought about by the schools in rural communities, see Rockwell, 'Schools of the Revolution', p. 200.

Gradually, as the rural teachers became more politicised and professionally corporate, they developed a strong symbiotic relationship with their *campesino* students, seeing themselves as poor, and as much in need of the Revolutionary State's protection as the *campesinos* themselves.[49] By developing their self-image in relation to the developing representation of the *campesino*, this political awareness sharpened their perception of their deplorable condition, which appeared even worse in their eyes than it did through the eyes of the *campesinos*.[50]

This identification between the subject of the discourse and its object became part of the political strategy which was used throughout the thirties to increase the negotiating power of the rural teachers. It even reached the point where they demanded that the plan for agrarian reform should include them, saying that while their *campesino* students were becoming emancipated from their previous poverty through the distribution of land, they (the teachers) were in danger of sinking to the lowest levels of rural poverty. '*Tierra para los maestros*, *por humanidad y por ideología*,' claimed Isidro Castillo in 1932.[51]

Internal politics within the teachers union, particularly among the rural teachers, significantly affected the construction of the representation of the *campesino* in the thirties. The various factions of the teachers, conscious of their political clout, strove to gain control of this fundamental representation, claiming the right to determine it at the same time as denying this right to their rivals. This became apparent in disputes over the technical and scholastic contents of rural education, disputes which clearly revealed the basic concepts of the *campesino* envisaged by the different groups of conflicting intellectuals. However, apart from their essential disagreements, both '*productivistas*' and '*culturalistas*' employed the same back-drop to the debate, and used the same tone of charismatic salvation which required the presence of the hero, proposing that the teachers should see themselves '*convertidos en campesinos … líderes conductores de nuestro pueblo*', '*que se conviertan en verdaderos líderes dinámicos; en pequeños directores de multitudes.*'[52] In 1933, at the start of the discussion about the

[49] About the organisation of the teachers union cf. Britton, *Educación y radicalismo*; A. Arnaut Salgado, *Historia de una profesión: maestros de educación primaria en México, 1887–1993* (Mexico, 1996).

[50] A rural teacher said: 'dura, áspera y cruel es, sin duda, la vida del campesino; mejorarla es un deber ineludible, inaplazable, es una obligación estricta del revolucionario; pero la vida del civilizado, del maestro rural preparado, de que su vocación o su idealidad lo arrastra a esa convivencia, es más áspera y más dura y más cruel; mejorarla es un deber de humanidad y justicia, también ineludible e inaplazable, es una obligación del culto, es un imperativo de la civilización; abandonarle es un delito de lesa cultura'. Artemio Alpizar Ruz, 'El Ministro de Educación ante el problema de la educación rural', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. I, no. 10 (1932), p. 6.

[51] Isidro Castillo, 'La dotación de tierras a los maestros', *ibid.*, vol. I, 10 (1932), p. 23.

strategy of 'agitation' as an instrument for the ideological education of the *campesino*, the rural teacher was presented as the central figure in this process, which implied 'going out in search of the people', as the Russian social revolutionaries had so often insisted. '*Esta tendencia de ir al pueblo, de bajar hasta él*' according to professor Velazco '*es la característica inconfundible e inigualable del maestro de escuela*'.[53]

To some extent, this heroic construct of the rural schoolteacher suffered a severe setback at the beginning of 1933 when a serious threat of a strike by the teachers in Mexico City put the SEP in a precarious position. The magazine implicitly attributed the discontent to a supposed plan to reduce salaries, and to rumours that the *Secretaría* was going to dismiss thousands of rural teachers, starting with those who had not obtained their certificates of primary education. This last rumour related to the fact that, at that time, the first cohort of teachers was about to graduate from the *Escuelas Normales Rurales*, and these were incomparably better educated than the first batch of teachers in the early years of *campesino* education, which gave rise to the fear that a plan for their replacement was about to be implemented.[54]

[52] Martino, 'Escuela y ejido', p. 12; Marcelino Reyes, '¿Hacia dónde vamos?', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. V, no. 2 (1934), p. 7. Bantjes ('Burning Saints', p. 268) picks up the designation of 'intellectual directors of workers and peasants'.

[53] Velasco, 'La acción socializante', p. 26. 'Agitation and propaganda' as a tool for peasant acculturation was a concept evidently imported from Soviet Russia: see for example, A. P. Pinkevich, *La nueva educación en la Rusia soviética* (Madrid, 1931), p. 443. The populist vocabulary that so frequently appears in the writing of rural teachers seems to originate in the anarchic-populist writings of R. Flores Magón and must have had a powerful source for its diffusion among the magisterial environment with Sáenz himself, who knew Magón's work and, in some aspects, closely followed his same line. Cf. Aguirre Beltrán, 'Aluentes ideológicos de la Revolución Mexicana', in G. Aguirre Beltrán, *Crítica Antropológica. Contribuciones al Estudio del Pensamiento Social en México* (Mexico, 1990), pp. 106–7; *Ibid.*, 'El indio y la reinterpretación', pp. xi–xii, xlv–xlvii. One must recall that since 1922 *El Libro y el Pueblo* published in articles or short translations Tolstoi's work and Sáenz, when he took over the SEP *Subsecretaría* for the first time in 1924, at once redefined the Cultural Missions in clearly populist terms as tools to 'poner los profesionistas que las integran, al servicio de la comunidad'. Quoted in Mejía Zúñiga, *Moisés Sáenz*, pp. 121–2; on the other hand, in a previous work, Carr showed the great conceptual loss of bearings that existed for years in Mexico regarding the ideological meaning of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the terminological confusion it caused, with the indiscriminate combination of Bolshevik and populist, anarchist and liberal terms, etc. B. Carr, *El movimiento obrero y la política mexicana, 1910–1929* (Mexico, 1979), pp. 63–78; A. Villegas, *El pensamiento mexicano en el siglo XX* (Mexico, 1993), pp. 31–3.

[54] Cf. *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 8 (1933), which is totally devoted to spread the SEP version regarding the threat of strike; Britton, *Educación y radicalismo*, pp. 68–9. Some teachers defended the replacement; one of them remembered that 'una gran mayoría de maestros rurales no son', but rather had been improvised in order to fill the available posts and, referring to the unbelievably low wages of $0.90 a day, stated: 'Sólo quienes

But differences in the levels of professional training did not mean there would be any alterations in the tasks or the positions that the rural teachers had undertaken in the heroic twenties; and still more important, it did not change the self-representation which had been forged, and which, by the beginning of the thirties, had become consolidated. In fact, the new teachers, better qualified and supposedly more aware of their position in the postrevolutionary scene, were assigned the same functions and endowed with the same semi-heroic, semi-evangelical features which had been constructed for the old 'inefficient' teachers of the period of improvisation.[55] So that, the new graduates would have to continue as '*un incansable predicador del bien*'…'*verdadero apóstol del la sagrada misión que le confió la Secretaría de Educación Pública*'.[56] These charismatic and apostolic functions of the rural teachers were the basis for several attempts by the postrevolutionary State to keep these formidable cultural intermediaries away from any political participation, especially during the periods of

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no pudieran servir ni como peones aceptarían un empleo de maestro rural y poco podía esperarse de ellos cuando la sola aceptación de ese pequeño salario advertía que nada podría enseñar quien nada sabía'. Jorge Labra, '¿Los maestros o los niños?', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 8 (1933), p. 11: compare with the advice given by the father of one of the improvised rural teachers studied by Vaughan: 'You have two choices in life. You can be a servant or you can be a teacher'. Vaughan, 'Women School Teachers', p. 150; the content of improvised instruction is concisely outlined on p. 157.

[55] An editorial stated: 'El Maestro Rural no puede ser considerado como un profeta, como un taumaturgo investido milagrosamente por la ignara credulidad con el poder de curar a los leprosos, hacer ver a los ciegos y enriquecer y llenar de regocijo a los pobres y a los tristes. Es un hombre, con facultades y medios limitados'. 'La misión del maestro rural', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 10 (1933), p. 4. On the other hand, in practice, the replacement of improvised teachers by qualified teachers seemed to have been quite limited. Vaughan reports that in Puebla, already in 1936, unqualified teachers, whose only training depended basically upon the Cultural Missions, *El Maestro Rural* and the Co-operation Centres, predominated. Vaughan, 'The Implementation of National Policy', p. 901.

[56] Roberto S. Hernández, 'La Escuela Rural como foco de una comunidad', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 15 (1993), p. 10. Incidentally, Bantjes ('Burning Saints', passim) discusses the anticlerical campaigns in Sonora at the beginning of the thirties and formulates the thesis that as in Jacobin France, there could have been a 'transference of sacredness' (Mona Ozuf) between Catholicism and a 'new civic religion'. It seems to me that the idea is a bit out of place, and a careful reading of the article strengthens that impression because, while it builds up a strong case about the well-known anticlerical actions of what would be phase one (destructive) of the process, it fails to show convincingly, beyond a simple statement, phase two, that is, the *creation* of a revolutionary 'new religion'. It is not enough to mention Cultural Sundays and other inventions, especially if one has as a frame of reference the dimension of the French example. I think that the search for a revolutionary 'religiosity', which in fact became apparent, should rather try to study the *appropriation* – in the discourse and practice of the postrevolutionary ideologues, in the symbolic structures and, particularly, in the lexicon of the old religion – instead of the *substitution* by another religion; see Palacios, *Intelectuales posrevolucionarios*, I/3, pp. 31–8.

electoral campaigns, like the second half of 1933. The lack of definition at the centre regarding the presidential candidate to be chosen for the period starting in 1934, apparently fuelled a fear of the rural teachers' capacity for mobilisation and the exercise of local political influence, and led to attempts to limit them by bureaucratic orders, regulations and circulars, and ultimately to block any attempts at implanting the communist model of '*agit y prop*' in Mexican rural schools.[57] The teachers' mission of 'integration' – whether rural or urban – inspired the severest attack by the SEP against their participation in electoral politics. One of the more dramatic consequences was the emergence of '*actitudes de desconfianza y sorda hostilidad frente al Estado*'. Bassols, who was about to leave the *Secretaría*, asked the question: '*¿Qué instrumentos tendría en el futuro nuestra nacionalidad en formación*, *si los maestros cooperan a disolver nuestra nacionalidad*, *convirtiéndose en ocultos roedores del edificio social que estamos tratando de construir?*'[58]

The disenchantment with the revolution

The main change affecting the new rural teachers was that now the nobility and sanctity of their tasks grew enormously as they were frequently viewed in the context of an anti-industrialist discourse which stressed the 'evils of civilisation' and took advantage of the peculiar atmosphere of the thirties, *perceived* as a time of transition between the old world order destroyed by the effects of the First World War and the new order which had not yet been established. One of the editorials in the magazine declared that '*en este ambiente universal y nuestro*, *la misión del Maestro Rural es rara*, *única*, *apostólica: entregarse por entero a la salvación de la pequeña comunidad indígena que se le encomienda*'.[59]

[57] 'Los maestros rurales no deben actuar como políticos', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. III, no. 2 (1933), pp. 3–4. About the election cf. L. J. Garrido, *El partido de la revolución institucionalizada. La formación del nuevo Estado en México (1928–1945)* (Mexico, 1991); Tzvi Medin, *El minimato presidencial: historia política del maximato, 1928–1935* (Mexico, 1982); A. Córdova, *La aventura del maximato* (Mexico, 1995).

[58] 'Palabras del Secretario de Educación al Cuerpo de Inspectores de Escuelas Primarias del Distrito Federal, el día 16 de febrero de 1934', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. IV, no. 6 (1934), pp. 4–5. Bassols had to resign from SEP in May 1934, the reason given being the generalised rejection of sexual education, although his anticlericalism and leftist tendencies had antagonised important conservative groups in the capital. He was then appointed *Secretario de Gobernación*. Britton, *Educación y radicalismo*, pp. 112–3; the debate surrounding sexual education, which was the same for every kind of school, but having its main impact in urban environments, is in pp. 97–104.

[59] 'La misión del maestro rural', p. 4. According to Aguirre Beltrán, this pessimistic discourse regarding the industrial modernity at the beginning of the century is, again, influenced by Tönnies and his *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*; cf. 'El indio y la reinterpretación', p. xiii. In turn, the populist stance of many rural teachers must have been impregnated – at a time when echoes of the Stalinist collectivisation still had not reached the Mexican countryside in all its tragic dimension – with the known *narodniki*

'*La tierra es fuente de todas las riquezas … asume el aspecto de tabla salvadora en los días actuales, cuando la industrialización en su faz más activa, en vez de reconocerse como manantial de prosperidades y virtudes, ha llegado a ser cáncer indomable cuyos morbosos aspectos se llaman proletarización, miseria, desocupación, competencia hasta la guerra, sobreproducción hasta la bancarrota, y malestar nunca sospechado ni experimentado en los grandes países.*'[60]

The years 1932–3 were a peculiar period in postrevolutionary history, because, due to a curious combination of practical and doctrinal failures, together with the effects of the 'crash' of 1929, there began on the pages of *El Maestro Rural* an unprecedented process of criticism of the policies and courses of action followed up to that moment. It seems that the explosive mixture of the collapse of international trade with the difficulties encountered in the application of the cultural-pedagogic theories, may have prompted some of the contributors to the magazine to visualise the limits that the postrevolutionary projects for a cultural change would soon come up against.[61] This created a climate of disenchantment in many spheres of government thinking, casting doubt on the soundness of the idea of the construct of the 'new *campesino*'. In fact, as professor Aureliano Esquivel, a severe critic of Bassols, said '*El problema más agudo de México, en la actualidad, no es un problema de cultura en el sentido de información libresca, sino un problema de producción. México necesita más que enseñar a leer, escribir y contar, enseñar a producir.*'[62]

In this setting, scarcely four months after the appearance of the magazine, the first proposals for a revision of the rural curricula had appeared. Eight years after the creation of the SEP, several regional reports conveyed the feeling that the postrevolutionary pedagogic experiment was headed for complete failure, with an '*institución escuela tipo* [which was] *en estado agónico de desfallecimiento.*'[63] The magazine expressed a constant criticism concerning the lack of qualifications of the rural teachers and, above all, the distance that existed between the theories which guided the policies of rural education and the capacity of the teachers to put them into practice. At times it seemed that the whole

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theses about the capacity of peasant communities to serve as the foundation to reach 'socialism' without a painful industrialisation period; these theses embraced very important elements for Mexico during the thirties: idealised peasant community, socialism, and crisis – which many considered terminal – of the industrial economies.

[60] 'La misión del maestro rural', p. 3.

[61] In June 1933 the magazine was to publish statements of Calles himself regarding the *failure* of the revolution's educational project. Cf. 'Reorganización del ejido y de la industria', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. III, no. 3 (1933), p. 9.

[62] Aureliano Esquivel, 'Opinión sobre la Escuela Rural', *ibid.*, vol I, no. 3 (1932), p. 9.

[63] José Dolores Medina, '¿Cuál debe ser el programa de la Escuela Rural?', *ibid.*, vol. I, no. 10 (1932), p. 10.

cultural effort of the regime was in jeopardy because, according to reports, the incompetence of the teachers in practical subjects that were judged to be of interest to the *campesino* was the reason that great numbers of the rural population still kept away from the schools in 1932, and seemed indifferent to what they had to offer.[64]

Other matters which were not central to the educational process but which played an important part in the general context also came in for a great deal of criticism. The denunciations of irregularities or private interests involved in the distribution of land and the constitution of *ejidos* (communal agricultural land) were recurrent topics in the magazine. Above all, there were accusations that the term *agrarismo* was being used to shield the increase in wealth of some and the abuse of power by others. The difficulties faced by the *campesinos* in organising themselves diminished the benefits that the reform was supposed to have and cast doubts upon its power to effect a change. In 1934 a popular theatre play dealt with the failure of the land distribution as an instrument in the transformation of the *campesino*, where a dialogue between the teacher – a critic of *agrarismo* in the early thirties – and a *campesino* who had been gullible enough to believe everything he had been told, ended by saying:

'*Vino la Revolución. Se pusieron miles de Escuelas por todo el país. Se repartieron tierras. Se prestó dinero a los agraristas. Se les repartieron semillas y maquinaria agrícola, y en fin, se les dió una libertad escrita en la ley y la oportunidad de mejorar mucho su vida. Y cuando uno llega a los Ejidos, salvo en muy contadas excepciones, se encuentra con que nuestros ejidatarios están viviendo como la peonada de los tiempos porfirianos…*'.[65]

In another aspect, the frustrated rural teachers said that it was the very people who were supposed to benefit by the government's action, the *campesino* masses, who put obstacles in the way of agrarian reform, complaining that these people were too ignorant to understand the legal dispositions and the procedures for the distribution of land. Another contributor to the magazine had already warned of the problem of transliteration implicit in attempting to impose culturally alien judicial structures on the masses – how could these people who could not

[64] For example: 'refiérome a uno de los sobresalientes problemas que tenemos en nuestras escuelas: "La falta de asistencia de adultos, principalmente de mujeres, a la escuela nocturna" […] Esto es sin duda, debido a que el pobre maestro sin técnicas, no los ha interesado'. Luis M. González, 'El maestro que necesita la vida rural', *ibid.*, vol. I, no. 12 (1932), p. 11; another participant said: 'Nuestra falta de preparación hace que no podamos definir claramente el objeto de la educación, que no podamos satisfacer debidamente los deseos de la Secretaría para favorecer el desarrollo económico de las comunidades'. Alberto M. Ortz, 'Opinión sobre lo que debe ser la escuela rural', *ibid.*, vol I, no. 11 (1932), p. 12. Naturally, Bassols had already approached that problem in his text about 'El Programa Educativo'.

[65] 'Otro gallo nos cantará. Propaganda en favor de las escuelas centrales agrícolas de la República', *ibid.*, vol. IV, no. 6 (1934), pp. 36–8.

understand Spanish or the cultural context, be expected to understand these new contracts and laws?[66] These were problems (also of linguistics) which the revolution, '*Vieja ya de dos décadas*', had not been able to solve because in '*recónditas regiones nuestras … siguen cultivando – sin hacerlo progresar – el lenguaje que conocían antes de Cortés*'. From this perspective, the postrevolutionary cultural discourse, turned into demagogy, had failed in its mission to contribute to the transformation of the indigenous people and the *campesinos* into persons prepared to face the challenges of the modern world, and it had been unable to inculcate in them 'the individual and social virtues which make a great nation'.[67] Neither had it been able to eliminate the social 'imaginary' which previous regimes had forged in their collective representations:

'*Veintitrés años de revolución*, *hecha gobierno y cuajada de leyes*, *han cambiado poco la vida del país en sus múltiples aspectos. ¿No será que obran como factor de resistencia las conciencias no preparadas para la construcción de un nuevo régimen? entendemos que sí; puesto que en las conciencias hay todavía anacrónicos prejuicios y falsos modos de pensar*, *todos ellos retrógrados. Y con semejante material es imposible la edificación social que se quiere … . Debemos tener en cuenta que una organización social forma en las gentes una manera de pensar adecuada a ella: asimismo crea una moral análoga a dicha organización. Luego al intentar destruir un régimen social*, *debe destruirse también la manera de pensar creada por ese tiempo.*'[68]

Starting in March 1933, *El Maestro Rural* began to publish a section under the suggestive title of '*El verdadero estado del país*', aimed at providing a space for informed criticism of the postrevolutionary situation, particularly in the countryside and in regard to rural education. Some of the articles published there would seem to confirm that projects for social reform were not achieving their objectives in vast *campesino* areas, as expressed in a regretful report of May 1933 which blamed 'religious fanaticism' for the failure of the programmes to promote new forms of entertainment and socialisation.[69] The report made it clear that, so far,

[66] '¿Cuál es el uso posible del Derecho, por perfectos que sean los códigos, para aquél que no podrá ni leer ni firmar un contrato?' 'Quienes ganarán más y quienes menos en la Secretaría de Educación', *ibid.*, vol. II, no. 8 (1933), p. 12.

[67] 'La agitación y la conciencia revolucionaria', p. 3.

[68] Prof. Ramón Berzunza Pinto, 'Hay que continuar la lucha', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. IV, no. 5 (1934), p. 25. This is what Baczko identifies as a 'more general phenomenon': 'Les nouvelles représentations symboliques ainsi que les nouvelles institutions, de nouvelles formes d'action collective, etc., s'installent et fonctionnent dans un *environment culturel et mental* traditionnel, s'amalgament avec des comportements et attitudes "archaïques"'. Bronislaw Baczko, 'Presentation' (Part II, *The New Symbolism*), in Colin Lucas (ed.), *The Political Culture*, p. 94.

[69] On 'religious fanaticism' and its role in the 'cultural revolution' of the thirties, see Bantjes, 'Burning Saints', pp. 263–75; for the religious question background, J. Meyer, *La Cristiada* (Mexico, 1973/4), 3 vols. The very serious problem of the rural teachers' religiosity was also present in the magazine: women teachers in particular were accused (by their male peers) of being 'obstacles' for the postrevolutionary

nothing that had been proposed as a change in this aspect had worked, and that the function of the teachers was limited, at the best of times, to '*discursos que hacen en las reuniones que logran realizar y a las que no asisten en gran número los vecinos del poblado*, *quedando*, *por tanto*, *circunscritos a un estrecho radio de acción*'. One of the most evident failures had been the inability to convince the *campesinos* to attend meetings and evening classes or to get them to bring their womenfolk, '*a las que todavía consideran como instrumento exclusivo del hogar y únicamente útil para procrear.*'[70] The temperance campaigns sponsored by clubs, leagues and associations founded for this purpose were equally unsuccessful. In the whole region visited by this particular informant in 1933, alcoholism was rampant, even among children, where it was generally mixed in the coffee they had in the mornings and evenings. According to this source, it was the local municipal authorities themselves who had a vested interest in the consumption of alcohol – and who put up resistance to any 'regenerating' action – because they were usually the owners of the *cantinas*, taverns, distilleries and distributors, etc.[71] In 1934, Francisca Huerta, a teacher with ten years' experience in rural schools, lamented that in spite of the '*esfuerzos inauditos*' of the SEP, there was still a long way to go before the rural schoolteachers could '*reconstruir la vida del proletariado del campo.*'[72]

The construction of the '*new* campesino' *and the definition of* 'campesinidad'

From the diagnosis of the destruction of the *campesino* by the Porfiriato and from the progressive calculations and definitions of the postrevolutionary intellectuals there emerged the need to construct the 'new *campesino*' and to define what constituted the essentials of *campesinidad*. Isidro Castillo would summarise this task in a simple, yet memorable phrase, when he asserted that the true vocation of the rural schoolteacher was none other than to '*formar campesinos*'.[73] '*Campesinos*' to be understood in the new sense of the word, that is to say, bereft of the psychological and operative trappings represented in the old usage, customs and traditions, and freed

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project, because 'una grandísima parte profesan el fanatismo católico, el más funesto desde el punto de vista obstruccionista para el adelanto de las masas campesinas'; and they not only continued professing the forbidden religion but participated 'ostentatiously' in the religious services in the peasant communities. Cf. Belisario Trujillo Rovelo, 'La historia natural, la historia patria y el civismo contra el fanatismo', 'La Voz del Maestro', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. III, no. 9 (1933), p. 13; Vaughan, 'Women School Teachers', p. 158.

[70] 'El verdadero estado del país', *ibid.*, vol. II, no. 15 (1933), pp. 17–18.

[71] Eliseo Bandala, 'El estudio de la historia es indispensable en las escuelas rurales', *ibid.*, vol. III, no. 2 (1933), p. 10.

[72] Francisca Huerta, 'Mi programa ante los maestros asistentes al Instituto de Ixtapa, Chis.', *ibid.*, vol. IV, no. 11 (1934), p. 9.

[73] Castillo, 'La dotación', p. 23.

from the cultural and symbolic context within which they had originally developed their agricultural techniques. Upon destroying this universe of representations and correspondences it became necessary to create another in order to give meaning and coherence to the new ideas that productivity was the centre of *campesino* rationality. In fact, the *productivista* current, headed by Bassols, eventually imposed its doctrine, when Sáenz, the ideologist of the *culturalista* current, was dismissed from the SEP;[74] and, from then on, the pragmatists took control of the definition of the 'new *campesino*', now meaning his new economic efficiency, and they imposed, or tried to impose, homogeneity over diversity, fighting the community traditions as vestiges of the old colonial order, anti-economic and deficient. These were some of the main assumptions in the controversial and contradictory '*educación socialista*' policy of the following years.[75]

The process of construction of the 'new *campesino*' was to be total, universal and inclusive. It would not limit itself to the obvious territory of the re-production of material goods where the *campesino* had to start from scratch and learn everything about the new technologies and techniques of production. He had to learn in other areas, since there was hardly anything in his past that could be employed in shaping the new individual. What Bassols called '*el intento de transformación de las masas campesinas*' included all fields of activity and of human existence, starting from biological aspects connected with reproduction and healthcare. '*Ineficientes y míticos*', the traditional systems of folk medicine allowed the spread of deadly epidemics; *ergo*, the introduction of modern practices and methods of prevention was an indispensable – though not sufficient – condition for the formation of the 'new *campesino*'. New attributes kept being added in this way, attributes which theoretically would satisfy the expectations that the new regime had of him, without his own opinion and participation in the definition of his postrevolutionary profile ever being considered as being convenient, necessary or even possible. More serious problems would no doubt be encountered when the attempt was made to introduce explanations of natural processes based on modern scientific criteria and no longer on the mythical narratives of his traditional culture

[74] Sáenz, who had resigned as subsecretary in 1930, was removed from the SEP in January 1933 by his ardent adversary Bassols, who thus forced him, among other things, to abandon the Carapan experiment. See Mejía Zúñiga, *Moisés Sáenz*, pp. 61–64; on the discussions between Sáenz and Bassols, see Britton, *Educación y Radicalismo*, p. 29.

[75] Vaughan, 'The Implementation of National Policy', p. 894. About socialist education, see also V. Lerner, *La educación socialista*, in *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana*, *1924–1940*, vol. 17 (Mexico, 1982); Raby, *Educación y revolución social*, ch. II: Engracia Loyo, 'La difusión del marxismo y la educación socialista, 1930–1940' in Alicia Hernández, Manuel Miño Grijalva (eds.), *Cincuenta años de historia de México*, vol. II (Mexico, 1991), pp. 165–82.

– which some postrevolutionary intellectuals considered to be the sum of the indigenous peoples' knowledge of nature. The same could be expected in matters much more embedded and vital for the 'old style' *campesino*, such as the need of the family unit to employ its youngest members in the physical work of the community. This peculiarity of pre-Revolutionary *campesino* logic was recognised as a serious problem, and one of the main obstacles encountered by the rural educational programmes when trying to effect the change in mentality required for a thorough reorganisation in the current systems of production in the country.[76]

Many of the changes foreseen in the process of constructing the 'new *campesino*' were directed at modernising his social habits, based on a vision of rural life which nearly always overlooked the traditional ties of solidarity which had existed in the communities for ages. Such changes were aimed at creating associations which would be conducive to the 'healing' objectives of the postrevolutionary programme. It was thought that new activity centres – the hygiene and health clubs, the temperance leagues and the recreational groups – would show the *campesino* 'a better way of life', and would open unimagined opportunities for social improvement. In order to achieve this, it was essential that the rural teachers should organise the *campesinos*. The problem of recreation was particularly difficult, because here, in 'healthy activities', were fixed the hopes of the ideologists for cultural change, in the sense that they expected that the old 'vices' (alcoholism, gambling, etc.) acquired by the *campesino* over the years before the revolution and frequently denounced as the instruments of his exploitation by others, should be abandoned and replaced by basket-ball, base-ball or volley-ball, all these team sports which were becoming popular in the thirties.[77] However, behind these healthy activities other elements were to be found, which made these group recreational activities important tools in the implementation of the

[76] 'En muchas comunidades, hemos observado que los padres de familia retiran a sus hijos de la escuela siendo aún muy pequeños, para dedicarlos a trabajos de campo o a cuidar animales, pues los servicios que los niños prestan de esta forma, significan economías para el hogar. Mucho se ha luchado por desterrar esta costumbre que impide al maestro rural la realización de un trabajo completo […] no hay que hacerse ilusiones sobre el triunfo completo de esta empresa, dado que éste es uno de los problemas cuya resolución no estriba en lo acertado de las medidas que se tomen […] sino en las necesidades inaplazables de la vida'. Eduardo Zarza, 'El Inspector instructor', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. I, no. 15 (1932), p. 6: see also Britton, *Educación y Radicalismo*, p. 71.

[77] Zarza, 'El Inspector', p. 7; [Esquivel], 'Las escuelas rurales juzgadas', p. 4. The introduction of these games in the rural environment started in the twenties; Dewey claims, clearly exaggerating, the 'almost every school in Mexico, no matter how remote, now has a playground and a basketball field'. John Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the revolutionary world. Mexico – China – Turkey* (New York, 1929), p. 164. Soviet pedagogy, as is known, also afforded great importance to physical education and, in particular, collective games.

postrevolutionary project for the construction of the new model, such as the replacement of traditional criteria of (male) prestige by a skill in a modern sport.[78]

Several articles were published in the magazine about the condition of women in the *campesino* communities, and in various of these it was apparent that the rural teachers (who were not, nor could they be expected to be champions of women's liberation) expressed their horror at the situation of women. In general, one perceives in their discourse and in that of the 'intellectual pedagogues', a parallel process for the construction of the representation (and practice) of a postrevolutionary 'new *campesino* woman', forged in the image and likeness of man. She was also supposed to become 'modernised' – by the mechanisation of some of her domestic tasks: by using *nixtamal* mills to grind the corn in the preparation of *tortillas* and by the introduction of the sewing machine – but not so modernised as to acquire urban tastes and lose her *campesinidad*.[79] She was given guidance in matters of hygiene and care of her appearance, but warned against acquiring the habits of urban women.[80] In short: '*A los muchachos deben educarlos para buenos campesinos y a las muchachas para mujeres de campesino*', said a dramatised version for *campesino* audiences.[81] In this way the traditional generic roles were maintained intact: the women continued to be the support of their men. Their cultural 'change' was directed towards greater efficiency in their habitual functions and to become more involved in the mercantile and productive work of the *campesino*'s plot of land and in the rural labour market.

As well as the care and preservation of the *campesinidad* in the communities, the incorporation of Western cultural elements in the construct of the 'new *campesino*', was to be limited exclusively to technical aspects, since in the light of the Marxist–Leninist teachings pervading the pages of *El Maestro Rural*, in its cultural and moral aspects, modern society, inevitably linked to capitalism, had not so far been able to equal the excellence achieved in science and technology. This was possibly one

[78] Vaughan, 'Construction of the Patriotic Festival', pp. 224–6, talks about the impact these novelties had upon the culture of the peasant communities in the Puebla Sierra in the late twenties.

[79] 'Que la mujer y los hijos se conviertan, de elementos puramente consumidores, en factores productivos, que sin duda contribuirán al mejoramiento de la vida campesina'. 'La ayuda de la mujer en el hogar campesino', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. III, no. 5 (1933), pp. 5–6.

[80] 'Mujer campesina, tú eres una mujer humilde, pero no eres una mujer vulgar; por tanto, tienes que atender con todo esmero a tu aseo personal. No te ocurra tampoco dejarte llevar por los ejemplos de las mujeres de la ciudad que luego te visitan y que usan pintarse la cara; esas son extravagancias y engaño a sí mismas'. Elena Torres, 'Aseo personal y aseo de la ropa', *ibid.*, vol. III, no. 2 (1933), p. 35.

[81] 'La Escuela Rural', *ibid.*, vol. I, no. 5 (1932), p. 15.

of the few points that the Marxist leaning *productivistas* and the populist *culturalistas* had in common. This was where, according to the intellectuals, they should take a step backwards, or rather sideways, and try to rescue some of the elements from popular cultures. In this way, the 'formula' for the new individual was based on the perfect combination of the 'positive' ingredients from the cultural traditions that the revolution had confronted, by putting together '*la estructura espiritual de los indígenas*' with the '*auxiliares insustituibles de la técnica científica*'. They would have to strive to '*salvar del alma indígena*, *todas las virtudes en que*, *sin discusión*, *sobrepasa a los tipos morales del capitalismo contemporáneo*.'[82]

The 'new *campesino*' would have to be, above all, a product of the process of land distribution, which was the basic instrument for constituting the postrevolutionary *campesinidad* and for legitimising the new State in rural areas. This *campesino*, constructed as a concrete empirical subject through the agrarian reform, would have to be formed by the rural school, instructed to fulfil the needs of his new existence and trained in order to operate as the new productive instrument, which would be vital to the new society. Certain features of the previous *campesino*, the obsolete paradigm who had been destroyed by the Revolution, would not be acceptable in the new model. Thus the controversy over the inclusion or exclusion of the 'peon' in the project for agrarian reform centred around the out-dated condition of these pre-Revolutionary individuals set in the pre-Revolutionary context of exploitation, and therefore incompatible with the new form. The peons were a class that had been liquidated by the same armed conflict which had eliminated the land-owners, 'its' dominant class, and there was no future for them in an agrarian society where the predominant design was not to promote wage-earning labour, but rather to turn all agricultural workers into the proprietors of the land they worked. Considered by post-revolutionary standards to have been '*Parias del campo*' during the Porfiriato, after all these years of revolution, the peons now found themselves in the same condition, but now they were in danger of losing the very land where they had been considered pariahs. The 'new *campesino*' was to be the owner of land for cultivation, and not merely a person who could offer his labour: '*se trata de educar en las escuelas centrales agrícolas al hijo del ejidatario y del pequeño agricultor*, *para que vayan a ser factores afirmativos al regresar a su comunidad*, *y serán factores afirmativos porque tendrán tierras que trabajar*.'[83] When he addressed the rural teachers, Professor

[82] Bassols, 'El Programa', p. 7.

[83] [Jesús Silva Herzog], 'La base económica de la escuela rural', *El Maestro Rural*, vol. II, no. 10 (1933), p. 6. The problem of the *peones acasillados* was solved, at least theoretically, with the introduction of the 'population centres' concept substituting the previous

Santos Valdés summed up the problem of the construct of the 'new *campesino*' as follows:

'*Porque no basta arrancar la tierra. Es necesario crear al hombre. Aquélla sin éste, no habrá servido de nada. Me dirás que el hombre existe. Sin negártelo, te diré que existe el que nació, creció, se educó y se multiplicó dentro de un sistema capitalista; te diré que es un tipo de hombre que heredó ideas y sentimientos, fanatismos y miserias que lo hacen ser enemigo de su propia clase. Tú necesitas crear a un hombre que responda al anhelo desorganizado, pero enorme, de millones de campesinos mexicanos que ya no quieren ser esclavos ni vivir en garras de la miseria, de la enfermedad y de la muerte.*'[84]

Final considerations

This article has analysed topics such as: the diagnosis of rural life, the discovery of the *campesino* in his pre-Revolutionary representation, the construction of the rural schoolteacher with reference to the *campesino* of the old regime, the meaning of the debates about the functions of policies for cultural integration in the assimilation of the rural communities into post-Revolutionary society and the State, etc. These topics were at the forefront of the attempts at ideological domination of the *campesino* mentality by the postrevolutionary powers, in the years immediately preceding the Cárdenas presidency. In addition to legitimate symbolic violence from the State there emerged, in those years of the early thirties, the monopoly of official discourse through control of the information media, among which, for the *campesino* population, *El Maestro rural* was certainly the most important. The educational component of the postrevolutionary cultural project, of which the magazine was a central factor, can be seen as a struggle to impose perceptions and categories of perception which would construct insoluble links between the *campesinos* and the postrevolutionary State, committing them to a view of the social, political and cultural reality which arose from the 'imaginary' of the intellectual elites who directed the process. Evidently there is nothing new in this. For one thing, official systems of education are, by definition, vehicles for what Marxist terminology calls 'the dominant ideology'. For another, pedagogic utopias are essential to revolutionary mythical histories, where there is always a proposal to create a New Man; in this

'village' as the basis for the distribution; this extended the right to receive land – and to integrate into the postrevolutionary peasant model – to *peones acasillados*, *aparceros*, *medieros* and 'others'. Cf. the report on the new legislation presented to the rural teachers in 'La publicación del Código Agrario', *ibid.*, vol. IV, no. 8 (1934), p. 29. One must recall that Silva Herzog had recently returned from Moscow where, as representative of the Mexican government, he had witnessed the transformations the Stalinist regime promoted in the countryside and its social costs.

[84] José Santos Valdés, 'Orientación social en la Escuela Rural', *ibid.*, p. 12.

case a New Rural Man.[85] The production of texts to be read by the newly literate, as in the case of *El Maestro Rural* between 1932 and 1936, constituted an attempt to create a framework for a common discourse, which would gradually include the *campesinos*, and within which, it would be possible to work and mould this pre-eminent cultural project of the revolution.[86] The failure of this project can be said to have occurred in 1936, when Cárdenas, in a spurt of political realism, implicitly recognising the sorry results of rural education, ordered that *El Maestro Rural* should stop being a magazine for the *campesinos*, and decreed that it should be directed exclusively to the teachers. Abandoning this idea meant, to a certain degree, weakening a project that had been created in 1922 when Vasconcelos intended to make the cultural revolution the keystone of postrevolutionary power, and the foremost link between the State and the popular classes in rural areas.[87]

In practice, the postrevolutionary *campesino* identity was constructed through the corporate political links with the State and its organisms, the bureaucratic *ejido* structure, the reformed systems for financing the sector,

[85] Baczko, *Imaginarios sociales*, p. 97; Bantjes 'Burning Saints', p. 265, attributes that mission to the 'French predecessors' of the Mexican postrevolutionary ideologues; the subject, in effect, has a Rousseauvian origin and was consecrated in the field of popular education by Robespierre on 29 July 1793 with words that have been repeated since that time: 'Je me suis coinvancu de la nécessité d'opérér une entière régéneration et, si je peux m'exprimer ainsi, de créer un nouveau peuple', cit. in Norman Hampson, 'La Patrie', in Lucas, *The Political Culture*, p. 134. Nevertheless, I believe that Bolshevik Russia's example and its efforts must have had a much more powerful and closer influence than the French, already a century and a half old. It seems that we forget that, in terms of 'models', the Mexican revolution had two phases: from 1910 to approximately 1920, when there could have been a preponderance of the French ideas in their outdated liberal reading; and from 1920 onwards, when the intellectuals – who were sympathisers or members of the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) – imposed the Russian revolution as a combatant model in spite of the repression unleashed against them during 1929–30 and of the confusion prevailing at the beginning of the decade regarding the meaning of 1917. It is clear that the intellectual pedagogues' statements during the thirties, due to the period and their ideological proximity, point towards that direction. One must recall that Spanish translations of Russian books on education and pedagogic theory had been available since at least 1931. On the French experience see Mona Ozuf, 'La Révolution française et l'idée de l'homme nouveau', in *ibid*., pp. 213–32; see also Carlota Boto, *A Escola do Homem Novo. Entre o Iluminismo e a Revolução Francesa* (São Paulo, 1996); on Russia, V. Berelovitch, 'De l'enfant a l'homme nouveau. Le "futurism pedagogique" des annes 1920', *Revue des études slaves*, vol. 56, no. 1 (1984), pp. 115–25 and L. H. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse. Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917–1931* (Bloomington, 1991); on the PCM and its influence during the twenties, B. Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln/London, 1992), pp. 16–46. I wish to thank Prof. Jean Meyer for his references on the Russian case.

[86] Roseberry, 'Language of Contention', p. 354.

[87] Which does not mean that Cárdenas had forsaken the idea of a 'cultural revolution'. See Marjorie Becker, 'Black, White and Color: Cardenismo and the Search for a Campesino Ideology', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (1987), pp. 453–65.

new agrarian legislation, the *campesino* unions and federations, its sector within the official party (the Partido Nacional Revolucionario, later the PRI), all of them the instruments which brought together and consolidated the identity originally designed in the cultural discourse. In the field of social representations, the cultural project, although totally frustrated, managed to impress upon the population in rural areas a new sense of legitimacy and new sources of rights, nearly always focused on the new concept of the *campesino* and in the *agrarista* and *campesinista* lexicon that the rural teachers and the 'intellectual pedagogues' had helped to build. Contradictions grew between the construction of the postrevolutionary *campesino*, as an individual entitled to social justice, and a regime which, after 1940, drew away from the essence of this representation in order to exploit it solely as part of a demagogic discourse. It is partly due to these contradictions that nearly all these problems, 'uncovered' by the rural teachers and the 'intellectual pedagogues' of the thirties in their attempt to construct a new category of *campesino*, still continue to pervade the Mexican political debate at the end of this century.