

## REVOLUTIONARY FEMINISM, REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS: *Suffrage under Cardenismo*

On February 25, 1937, Mexico's ruling political party, then called the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), announced that for the first time it would permit "organized" women to vote in internal party elections.<sup>1</sup> "Organized" was code for members of labor unions, agrarian leagues, or other groups supportive of the government. The decision reveals that the PNR, under the leadership of revolutionary general and president Lázaro Cárdenas, had found itself in a situation similar to that of other progressive parties throughout the hemisphere. Although many PNR leaders, including the president, had come to support women's suffrage in principle, their shared conviction regarding the essential conservatism of most Mexican women put them in a tight spot. If universally enfranchised, women might thank the party by voting them right out of office, or force them to employ unmanageable levels of electoral fraud to prevent such an outcome. The 1937 ruling conveniently allowed them to be for and against women's suffrage at the same time. Suffragists, however, were not satisfied.

The largest of several national women's organizations, the Frente Único Pro-Derechos de la Mujer (FUPDM), decided to test the limits of the new rule by running two of its members as candidates for public office.<sup>2</sup> Soledad Orozco

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This article draws on evidence from national and regional archives, including the Archivo General de la Nación [hereafter AGN], the Centro de Estudios de la Historia Mexicana [hereafter CEHM] Condumex, and the Centro de Estudios de la Revolución Mexicana [hereafter CERM], which is in Jiquilpan, Michoacán. In particular, the CEHM houses a file of communications between Cuca García and her campaign manager, Gabino Alcaraz, that reveals much of the contrast between her public version of events and what actually occurred. Additional correspondence between García and President Cárdenas resides at AGN. The municipal archive in Morelia holds a significant collection of documents relating to women's organizations in the state from that period, remarkable in part for their lack of references to suffrage.

1. Jefe del Departamento to Secretario de Gobierno, July 30, 1937, AGN-DGG.2.311D.F.(13)22762, caja 36. Women in Mexico City had voted in internal elections since 1935.

2. Esperanza Tuñón Pablos, *Mujeres que se organizan: el frente único pro derechos de la mujer, 1935–1938* (Mexico: UNAM, M. A. Porrúa, 1992). This work remains the best source on the subject of the FUPDM.

Ávila ran for *diputado local* (state representative) from the second electoral district in Guanajuato.<sup>3</sup> María del Refugio “Cuca” García, the Communist co-founder and secretary general of the FUPDM, ran in the seventh electoral district of her home state of Michoacán.<sup>4</sup> New archival evidence from García’s campaign reveals a purposeful shift as suffragists moved from insisting on recognition of existing rights to demanding new ones. This shift is clearly important, but it is rarely acknowledged and has never been explained.<sup>5</sup>

Both women’s campaigns were part of a larger strategy to compel the government to determine publicly whether women were already citizens. If they were, the electoral law that prohibited women from voting was unconstitutional. If they were not, a constitutional amendment would be necessary to grant them that status. Other groups, notably María Ríos Cárdenas’s Confederación Femenil Mexicana (Mexican Women’s Confederation), had struggled toward the same objective, but with limited practical success. Mexico’s constitution, like many in Latin America, contained ambiguously gendered language, making it unclear whether women should be able to vote or not. In countries as diverse as Chile, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, liberals and progressives rhetorically championed the vote for women but tactically delayed it, leaving suffragists in limbo, sometimes for decades. In Mexico, the FUPDM conceived of a plan that would force the government’s hand, and both the 1937 congressional campaigns and the fabrications that followed—the latter published widely and later accepted by historians—were part of that plan.

Traditionally, scholars have conceptualized women’s suffrage as something that exceptionally persistent, smart, and energetic activists “won.” The implication of a win is that it was achieved by somehow persuading powerful men to do something against their own interests—in short, to lose. While the extraordinary efforts of suffragists should never be discounted (one can hardly imagine we would ever have voted without them), this view fails to acknowledge sufficiently the power dynamics that explain why in some countries women gained the vote almost in the absence of a suffrage movement (Peru, El Salvador), while in others (Mexico, Costa Rica, Nicaragua) even vigorous movements were ineffectual. Eugenia Rodríguez has written that analyzing pro- and anti-suffragist rhetoric in Costa Rica does not explain why passage of the

3. Rosalia M. D’Chumacero, *Perfil y pensamiento de la mujer mexicana* (Mexico: Edición de la Aurora, 1974), pp. 254–257.

4. The seventh electoral district covered the municipalities of Uruapan, Tingabato, Nahuatzen, Cherán, Paracho, Charapan, Parangaricutiro, La Huacana, Nuevo Urecho, Ario de Rosales, Ziracuaretiro, and García’s native Taretan. See Tables 1 and 2.

5. For a recent example, see Ana Lau’s excellent treatment in *Orden social e identidad de género: México, siglos XIX y XX*, María Teresa Fernández Aceves, Carmen Ramos-Escandón, and Susie S. Porter, eds. (Mexico: CIESAS; Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2006), p. 96.

women's vote there was delayed until 1949 and suggests that to understand the phenomenon it is necessary to analyze the struggle for power.<sup>6</sup>

## REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS

Politics in revolutionary Mexico was a complicated set of negotiations over power, held at multiple levels. With her candidacy, García was making a gendered challenge to political power at the national level. To win, she would have to navigate both state and local political structures, which functioned semi-independently from those of Mexico City. Like Porfirio Díaz before them, revolutionary leaders had come to power under the banner of effective suffrage, yet elections in revolutionary Mexico typically failed to proceed in a “conventional liberal democratic” manner, as Alan Knight has observed.<sup>7</sup> As he put it, “The popular mobilization of the 1930s . . . was not characterized by limpid elections and Gladstonian notions of civic responsibility.”<sup>8</sup> Certainly, the winning of electoral contests was rarely a reflection of votes cast. This is not to say that elections could not matter. Ben Fallaw has done particularly important work showing how they could.<sup>9</sup> Even Knight allows that the “liberal failings did not make the process wholly unrepresentative.” The corporatist political forms that emerged in the early revolutionary period contained democratic elements that blended in complex ways and at multiple levels with clientelist mechanisms. *Caudillismo* shaped and limited, but did not nullify, participation from below. Many powerful individuals, caudillos among them, were influential precisely because they had access to or control over strategic bases of popular support. Ironically, the ruling party's vulnerability to electoral upset may have contributed to its tolerance of local caudillos who, Fallaw shows, sometimes forfeited revolutionary goals in exchange for maintaining the party's power.

As Mexico emerged shakily from the violence of revolution, the nascent state rested precariously on a spider web of popular organizations, which frequently represented only a minority (sometimes an unpopular one) of a given local population. Marco Antonio Calderón has demonstrated that even during Cárdenas's presidency, which represented the apex of populist mobilization,

6. Eugenia Rodríguez, “La lucha por el sufragio femenino en Costa Rica,” in *Mujeres y naciones en América Latina: problemas de inclusión y exclusión*, Barbara Potthast and Eugenia Scarzarella, eds. ([Madrid: Vervuert Iberoamericana, 2001], p. 174.

7. Alan Knight, “Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26:1 (February 1994), p. 95.

8. *Ibid.*

9. See for example Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 59; and Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 2–5, 51–58, 93, 101–107, 147, 163–170.

“military support for agrarian leaders was crucial in maintaining order.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it was frequently necessary to arm supporters in order to combat those who opposed the government and its policies. Attempts at cultural change like the “defanatization” campaign aimed at the Catholic devout were particularly resisted, and even the agrarian reforms were often rejected.<sup>11</sup> It is understandable, then, that members of pro-government organizations would expect rewards (land, rights, and political voice) in exchange for loyalty. Party leaders ignored the opinions of their followers at their peril. Organized, pro-revolutionary associations of peasants and workers debated the relative merits of party candidates at the local level, both in formal assemblies and during informal conversations, then sent their endorsements to regional and state leaders—with the understanding that their opinions mattered.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, these endorsements underscore the fact that, while elections were held, and votes were cast and counted, adherence to formal electoral procedures was relatively unimportant. The critical stage in selecting representatives usually centered less on the general election than on ratification of the primary election. Ratification was decided on within the institutional structure of the party, but it did not follow any predetermined legal procedure. Additionally, while leaders listened to the opinions of the base, dominant members of the PNR at the local or state level, such as municipal presidents or governors, could and did exercise arbitrary power at their own discretion. In Michoacán, leading members of the Confederación Regional Michoacana del Trabajo (CRMDT) also exerted enormous influence.<sup>13</sup> Even the CRMDT, however, would bow to the wishes of its founder, now president of the republic.

In trying to challenge masculine power at the national level, Cuca García found herself in the position of having to navigate multiple and profoundly disparate levels of the power structure simultaneously. Documents from

10. Marco Antonio Calderón, “*Caciquismo* and *Cardenismo* in the Sierra P’urépecha, Michoacán” in *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, Alan Knight and Wil Pansters, eds. (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2005), p. 149; Paul Friedrich refers to Cárdenas as an “agrarian military caudillo” in *The Princes of Naranja: An Essay in Anthropological Method* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 148.

11. See for example Marjorie Becker, “Black and White and Color: *Cardenismo* and the Search for a Campesino Ideology,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29:3 (July 1987), pp. 453–465.

12. A substantial body of work has emerged on the complex relationship between what are often called top-down and bottom-up politics, in cultural and related senses. Gil Joseph, Daniel Nugent, and Mary Kay Vaughan have been joined more recently by Chris Boyer, Adrian Bantjes, Marjorie Becker, Ben Fallaw, and Jeffrey Rubin, among others.

13. The CRMDT was founded by Lázaro Cárdenas while he was governor of Michoacán. Like Felipe Carrillo Puerto’s Partido Socialista Yucateco and Tomás Garrido’s Partido Socialista Radical Tabasqueño, the CRMDT was intended to create a populist power base for Cárdenas’s reformist policies, often making use of existing *cacigazcos* to organize peasants and laborers into bases of support that at times were armed. For many years, it supplied all successful candidates for elected office in Michoacán. See Christopher Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920–1935* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 212–216, and 222, for a useful discussion of the CRMDT.

García's spring 1937 campaign reveal a seasoned political actor who understood the complexities of revolutionary politicking. However, at the time of her candidacy, she was closer to politics and political personalities at the national level than she was to those at the local and state level. As she put together her campaign, she chose to concern herself somewhat less with gaining groups of adherents in her electoral district of Uruapan than with garnering the personal favor of individuals, especially in Mexico City, who could promote her candidacy. She relied on the Communist Party for her local campaigning and networking, and some extremely well-placed friends for influence-peddling. Importantly, none of these parties had a stake in advancing women's suffrage. Those who did, the members of her own organization, the FUPDM, were not powerful enough to be of much assistance during her campaign. Their role would come later, after she had lost, an eventuality for which she was well prepared.

If either García or Soledad Orozco had been seated in Congress, the FUPDM would have attained its goal quickly and easily, but neither woman anticipated that outcome. As Orozco later put it, "I well knew I wouldn't win."<sup>14</sup> But they had a contingency plan. In the likely event that both García and Orozco failed to win their seats, the FUPDM would assert that the two women had been denied their posts because of their gender. Then, rather than continue to argue that women were already citizens, they would instead work toward a constitutional amendment. They counted on being able to harness a national and international feminist infrastructure that had been constructed over the previous few decades to mobilize an energetic appeal and push Cárdenas's already sympathetic administration into action.

The FUPDM's near-miss at gaining the vote for women in the 1930s illustrates how revolutionary politics could trap both caudillo and clients. Those, who like Cuca García agitated from below, could never fully exercise control, no matter how artful their strategy. Yet, Lázaro Cárdenas was similarly constrained. Even at the apex of his power, he balanced a fragile revolutionary state on a narrow fulcrum between too much and too little participation from below. He claimed, probably sincerely, to support women's suffrage, yet it was almost certainly he who made the final decision to prevent women from voting in the crucially important 1940 presidential election. Mexican women did not get another opportunity until 1953, by which point the party, rebaptized as the PRI, was no longer in any degree of danger, and elections had become even less meaningful. What is remarkable about the period between February 1937 and December 1939 is how close the FUPDM came to overcoming the multiple obstacles that

14. D'Chumacero, *Perfil*, p. 258.

stood between themselves and full citizenship. Their story cuts to the heart of one of the central frustrations of the Mexican Revolution: suffragists cued up behind peasants and laborers to lose out on promises of inclusiveness and equitable distribution. It is also a story in whose narrative we see revealed the basic contours of suffragist struggles throughout the hemisphere. The specific circumstances of the Mexican case were unique, but the dilemmas faced by Mexican suffragist activists were not.

### STAGE ONE: RUNNING FOR OFFICE

Cuca García's long public career was marked by a dual commitment to radical politics and women's rights. She was born on April 2, 1889, in Taretan, Michoacán, a small town in the state's seventh electoral district (Uruapan).<sup>15</sup> She joined the revolution as a teenager and developed close friendships with fellow *michoacanos* Francisco J. Múgica and Lázaro Cárdenas.<sup>16</sup> She joined Múgica's Partido Socialista early on, supporting him during his unsuccessful first bid for governor, following him to Veracruz after his loss to Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and then returning to Michoacán for his second campaign.<sup>17</sup> In December 1919, almost as soon as it was formed, she joined the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM).<sup>18</sup> During Múgica's unpopular period as governor, she worked first as a government *maestra rural*, then as federal school inspector in Zitácuaro, and later as a teacher in Morelia.<sup>19</sup> During the same period, she was given the opportunity to lead a group of educators on a visit to Yucatán, where they studied Felipe Carrillo Puerto's experiments in feminist organizing. She later attended a feminist conference in Michoacán, and then a series of three important national women's conferences in Mexico City, the first in 1931.<sup>20</sup> She emerged as a leader of the Communist-led radical faction that argued against the creation of an independent women's movement

15. For a long time, we could not say with certainty when García was born. Her friend Verna Carleton Millan described her as a "woman of forty" in *Mexico Reborn* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939). Shirlene Soto placed her birth between 1898 and 1900, but does not cite a source. Soto, *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: Her Participation in Revolution and Struggle for Equality, 1910–1940* (Denver: Arden Press, 1990), p. 53. Verónica Oikión Solano finally located García's baptismal certificate and published her birthdate in the most complete biographical treatment to date, "María Refugio García, mujer y revolución," *Legajos* 7:1 (July–September 2009), p. 79.

16. Millan, *Mexico Reborn*, p. 166.

17. Verónica Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo en Michoacán. El periodo de los gobiernos militares (1914–1917)*, (Mexico: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992), p. 499; Oikión Solano, "María Refugio García," p. 80.

18. Oikión Solano, "María Refugio García," p. 83. Oikión Solano maintains that she left the PCM of her own accord, but other sources report she was expelled from the party in the purge of 1939.

19. Literally, rural teacher. Those designated "maestros rurales" in the Cárdenas period brought to the countryside the ideals of the Revolution as well as the benefits of primary education.

20. In Esperanza Tuñón Pablos, *Mujeres que se organizan*, there is an extremely helpful treatment of these conferences.

on the premise that sexism was a by-product of capitalism, which would fade away under a more just social system.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, following the final conference in 1934, she helped to found the FUPDM and forge its struggle for women's rights. Eventually, the FUPDM allied with the revolutionary party and became the largest women's organization in the country, with 800 affiliates and 50,000 members.<sup>22</sup>

By 1937, when García and Orozco ran for office, prominent women like María Ríos Cárdenas and Margarita Robles de Mendoza had already put considerable effort into demonstrating the unconstitutionality of the country's electoral law (*Ley Electoral*). Robles de Mendoza contacted politicians who had been present at the 1917 constitutional convention in Querétaro, extracting from them (untrue) public assertions that they had intended women to be included as citizens all along.<sup>23</sup> No one wanted to go on record as having opposed votes for women, even though published transcripts clearly showed they had. Presumably, some of them had changed their minds in the interim. Regardless of their true opinions, the international feminist movement had by this time successfully associated itself with desirable modernity and forward thinking, making it awkward for would-be progressive leaders to oppose women's rights openly.<sup>24</sup> At the conclusion of her survey, Ríos Cárdenas sent a memorandum to the Senate—months before García and Orozco launched their campaigns—declaring that no changes to the constitution were needed for women to assume their full political rights.<sup>25</sup>

In a parallel but most likely unrelated effort, García turned to the distinguished Frente Socialista de Abogados (Socialist Lawyers' Front) to ask two favors. The first was that the Front bolster the legitimacy of a constitutional interpretation

21. After the "left turn" at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, the PCM declared that the governments of Plutarco Elías Calles and Emilio Portes Gil were "social fascist." Facing dwindling membership and a growing global threat from fascism, the Comintern reversed itself in February 1934. The new policy attempted to achieve a popular front and allowed the PCM to pursue alliances with others on the left, including in this case the PNR. See Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), pp. 8, 43–48. On García's brief imprisonment during the first conference, see Millan, *Mexico Reborn*, p. 167. Both Ward Morton, *Woman Suffrage in Mexico* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1962), p. 15, and Shirlene Soto, *Emergence*, p. 125, cite Millan.

22. These numbers come from Millan, *Mexico Reborn*, pp. 164–165. As far as I can determine, all subsequent scholars trace these figures to her book. Back-of-the-envelope calculations show the numbers are plausible.

23. "El Gral. Múgica opina como consuyente en favour de los derechos de la mujer," *Excelsior*, September 24, 1936, CERM Fondo Francisco J. Múgica [hereafter FJM], Hemeroteca, vol. 2, doc. 118; Félix Palavacini to Alberto Bremauntz, CERM Fondo FJM, vol. 155, March 30, 1937. The transcripts from the proceedings of the convention indicate otherwise.

24. In truth there were several international women's movements. The two that mattered most to Mexican suffragists were one that connected feminists in Europe and the United States and another that connected women from north to south throughout the Americas.

25. "Los derechos de la mujer," *El Universal*, September 24, 1936, CERM Fondo FJM, Hemeroteca, vol. 2, doc. 122.

that included women in the term ‘*mexicanos*.’ The second was that the Front assemble a “pro-Cuca García committee” consisting of “lawyers and other prestigious men, including several Congressmen and one Governor” to “undertake a national campaign, not on my behalf, because I am nothing without the workers, but on behalf of the workers of Michoacán.”<sup>26</sup> A month later, timed to coincide with the start of the primary season, the Front released its official statement: “The Frente Socialista de Abogados, having studied the articles of the political constitution of Mexico relative to citizenship, resolves that the same precepts, grammatically and logically interpreted, apply equally to men and women.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the respectable body maintained that “citizens” and “citizen,” although grammatically masculine in the wording of the constitution, applied to both men and women, and that all married Mexicans over 18, and unmarried Mexicans over 21 with an “honest occupation,” had the right to vote.

The pro-Cuca García committee represented the face of the FUPDM strategy that was oriented toward urban, politically involved revolutionaries in Mexico City and international supporters of Mexican suffragists. The candidate’s congressional campaign, however, would have to be aimed toward a very different constituency in García’s mostly rural, largely Purépecha district of Uruapan, where a bloody conflict between political Catholics and government supporters, known as La Segunda (or the “Second” Cristero Rebellion), raged on.<sup>28</sup> The two audiences could not have been more different, yet they were both important because Orozco and García intended to run credible campaigns. Orozco later explained: although she did not expect to win, she wanted “to open a path to show how capable women are of running a campaign, of formulating a program of political action, and of being able to come into their own [*realizarse*] as citizens.”<sup>29</sup>

García had not lived in her home district of Uruapan for 24 years. She had four opponents, but only three had enough support to mount serious bids for office. Roberto Cerda Espinosa was the municipal president of Uruapan,

26. García to Alcaraz, February 23, 1937, Conдумex, CEHM, Fondo MXLVI 6. This letter was sent on a Tuesday, and the PNR made its official announcement on Thursday of the same week, signaling that García had advance notice of the ruling.

27. Copy [dated March 26, 1937] of the March 18, 1937 statement by Valentín Rincón, member of the Comisión de Puntos Constitucionales, approved by majority in the session of March 25, 1937, AGN-LCR 544.4/15. It is possible that this decision is the source of Verna Millan’s assertion that the “Supreme Court” had declared women’s citizenship constitutional.

28. Jean Meyer, “La segunda (Cristiada) en Michoacán” in *La cultura Purhé: II Coloquio de Antropología e Historia Regionales: fuentes e historia*, Francisco Miranda, ed. (Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, Fondo para Actividades Sociales y Culturales de Michoacán, 1981), p. 247.

29. D’Chumacero, *Perfil*, p. 258. Orozco’s actual words were “*abrir una brecha*.”

the largest municipality in the district.<sup>30</sup> He enjoyed the endorsement of the governor, Gildardo Magaña. Ignacio Ochoa Reyes was also an incumbent municipal president, of Ario de Rosales, the second-largest town in the district. He was a supporter of former governor Benigno Serrato, whose conservative policies had divided the revolutionary apparatus in Michoacán during the early 1930s. García felt that her third opponent, Rafael Vaca Solorio, was the weakest of the three. Like García, Vaca was from Taretan and did not have the advantage of a municipal power base. He had recently been caught in an embarrassing embezzlement scandal that she felt would hurt his campaign.<sup>31</sup> She misjudged him. This ex-muleteer and moonshiner seems to have possessed both competence and charisma, having been responsible for some of the most successful labor organizing in the region, in Nueva Italia.<sup>32</sup> Despite public humiliation (and perhaps, one might speculate, thanks to the proceeds from embezzlement), Vaca Solorio ran a well-managed campaign. His publicity plastered the entire district before García had even left Mexico City.<sup>33</sup> In fact, all three of García's opponents seemed to take the voting public more seriously than she did. To her campaign manager's chagrin, all of her competitors had highly visible campaigns in motion well before she arrived in Michoacán. She apparently believed she could accomplish more in the capital than she could in her district, but her perceived detachment from home may have hurt her more than she anticipated.

Before declaring her candidacy, and before communicating with her contacts in Uruapan, García spoke with her old friend Francisco Múgica, who was then Mexico's minister of communications and public works, and with President Lázaro Cárdenas himself, in order to solicit their backing. Múgica, an intimate friend of the president, had influence over the railway workers under his ministry's supervision and access to any number of other powerful michoacanos. Cárdenas, in control of both the party and the national government, could personally decide the outcome of an election. According to García's account, the president reacted to the news of her intended campaign with support, even delight. When she entered his office, he laughed and told her, "Now we will bell the cat!"<sup>34</sup> Múgica likewise assured her of his backing, giving her personal letters of introduction addressed to several of his most

30. The number of delegates representing each municipality that were sent to the party's ratifying convention was determined in proportion to local population.

31. García to Múgica, March 27, 1937, CERM Fondo FJM, vol. 153.

32. Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, p. 198.

33. Alcaraz to García, March 6, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

34. García to Alcaraz, February 23, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6. An expression which refers to Aesop's fable where a group of mice devise a plan to place a bell around the cat's neck in order to give them warning of its coming in time to escape. It implies a daring, final solution to a problem. García took Cárdenas's use of the expression to mean that he would support her bid.

influential friends in Michoacán. At her request, he ordered railway engineers in her district to offer their workers paid leave and transportation to the polls.<sup>35</sup> Her opponents later charged that railway workers additionally were obliged to contribute to her campaign and threatened with dismissal if they were absent from work on election day.<sup>36</sup>

Through her PCM contacts, García sought, albeit with less success, the backing of leaders at the state level as well. She instructed her campaign manager, Gabino Alcaraz, to approach Primitivo Sandoval, leader and state deputy of the CRMDT, with the idea of gaining Michoacán workers' support.<sup>37</sup> Sandoval had influence over a number of workers' organizations, especially in the Sierra region of the district. Although he was more likely to wield his power in support of the *magañista* Cerda Espinosa, García must have realized she was unlikely to succeed without Sandoval's backing.<sup>38</sup> At first, it seemed possible she would have it: Sandoval agreed to contact two other CRMDT leaders, Pedro López and Aurelio Munguía, with whom he said he already had political agreements. López was a strong supporter of the political mobilization of women. He co-founded the first rural women's league in Michoacán, and his wife, Matilde Anguiano, was the leader of the state's umbrella organization for women's leagues, the Federación Femenil Socialista de Michoacán.<sup>39</sup> Although López agreed provisionally to support García's campaign, he must have seemed hesitant. Her campaign manager wrote to say he thought he should try to attend an upcoming meeting between Sandoval and López, in order to influence its outcome.<sup>40</sup> Whether or not he actually attended the meeting, he was ultimately unable to convince the leaders of the CRMDT to lend unified support to her campaign. According to Verónica Oikión Solano, García was deeply involved with the CRMDT during the early 1930s, but her extended absence from state politics in subsequent years may have weakened her ties with its leadership. It is difficult to establish whether sexist bias, concern over

35. García to Múgica, March 27, 1937, CERM Fondo FJM, vol. 153; Múgica to García, March 31, 1937, Condumex, CEHM, Fondo MXLVI 6; Vaca Solorio to Minister of Gobernación, April 9, 1937, AGN-DGG 2.311D.F.(13)22762 caja 36. García was one of Múgica's earliest supporters. See Oikión Solano, *El constitucionalismo*, pp. 498–499. I am not in a position to comment on rumors that Múgica and García might have had a romantic attachment, or when such a liaison might have occurred, if it ever did. For what it is worth, Múgica did experience two unsuccessful marriages before marrying his former secretary, Carolina Escudero. He seemed to demonstrate a romantic preference for charismatic, outspoken, intelligent, feminist women like Cuca García.

36. Sindicato Único de Trabajadores Revolucionarios de Uruapan to Secretario de Gobernación, April 3, 1937, AGN-DGG 2.311.D.F.(13)22762, caja 36, exp. 1.

37. García to Alcaraz, February 23, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

38. In their support of the more radical governor Gilardo Magaña, the *magañistas* stood in opposition to the CRMDT faction that supported Benigno Serrato.

39. On López, see Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 92. On Anguiano see the letter from the Federación Femenil Socialista Michoacana (FFSM) to Lázaro Cárdenas, October 31, 1934, AGN-AP-LCR, Exp. 404.4/64.

40. Alcaraz to García, March 6, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

García's disconnection from local politics, or a combination of these and other factors prevented them from supporting her.

Perhaps in recognition of her failure to elicit sufficient support from local power brokers, García made one last attempt at forming a political alliance. She approached the only other nonaligned candidate, Vaca Solorio, with the intention of running together on the same ticket, one as diputado and one as *suplente* (alternate). She authorized Alcaraz and Abel Carrera to negotiate such a pact in her name.<sup>41</sup> Although Alcaraz met with Vaca Solorio immediately, he apparently refused her offer. In the end, García had to content herself with Múgica's and Cárdenas's support, while her opponents boasted their own influential alliances. Cerda Espinosa was a relative of the governor, and Ochoa Reyes was openly backed by Dámaso Cárdenas, Michoacán's secretary of state and the brother of Lázaro Cárdenas.<sup>42</sup>

A remarkable aspect of García's campaign in Michoacán was its relative lack of references to gender. Neither García's platform nor her campaign apparatus reflected her gender in any overt way. At first glance, this seems illogical. The FUPDM had clearly launched both Orozco's and García's campaigns for the express purpose of attaining citizenship for women. Why should García ignore the issue in Michoacán? Instead, she ran on a platform that closely resembled those of her male counterparts. It did include points which would have been seen as women's issues, such as the struggle against alcoholism and the incorporation of women into the revolutionary struggle. However, these had gained wide acceptance as national objectives of the social revolution, or at least of the PNR leadership, and they were standard elements of any PNR candidate's platform. Their inclusion in her political program would not have drawn special attention, and certainly would not have seemed particularly feminist. García's platform contained a typical list of objectives in line with Cárdenas's six-year plan. These included teaching civic and democratic values to the electorate, promoting good health, elevating the cultural level of the proletariat, defending the economic interests of the working class, popularizing collective forms of labor, and supporting the government's defense of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>43</sup> Arguments for women's suffrage were conspicuously absent.

It also appears that García failed to make a forceful attempt to appeal to female constituents, who were legally entitled to vote in the primary and could

41. García to Alcaraz and Carrera, March 10, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

42. Alianza Popular Electoral Pro-Rafael Vaca Solorio to Ministro de Gobernación, April 9, 1937, AGN-DGG 2.311D.F.(13)22762, caja 36.

43. García to Cárdenas, May 15, 1937, AGN-AP-LCR 544.4/15.

therefore have cast their first vote for a woman candidate. She might have chosen to mobilize the Michoacán chapters of the FUPDM to organize her campaign, or at least to reach out to potential women voters, but there is no evidence that she did so. Although at least one member of the FUPDM worked on García's campaign, it seems that she did not rely on her own organization to promote her candidacy.<sup>44</sup> Instead, she selected Gabino Alcaraz, of the Partido Comunista in Uruapan, as her campaign manager, and worked through the party to promote her candidacy among potential voters and to negotiate endorsements from powerful local men. Thus, in Mexico City and abroad, her campaign had everything to do with gender, but at home, it appeared not to. In fact, she seemed to be doing everything she could to diminish the obvious. It may have worked, in the sense that her local constituents did not necessarily perceive her candidacy as having primarily to do with women's suffrage. Salvador Lemus, who was elected diputado federal from a nearby district at about the same time, remembered García's 1937 campaign well when recalling it in 1999, but he did not recall that it had anything at all to do with asserting women's citizenship.<sup>45</sup>

The absence of suffragist rhetoric underscores the distinction between the face of the FUPDM strategy that was reserved for García's audience in Uruapan and the face that was aimed nationally and internationally. It seems probable that the decision not to stress gender in her Uruapan campaign was calculated—doing so would not likely have gained her many votes there. However, women's suffrage was headline news among the movers and shakers of Mexico City's political elite by 1937. Leading national newspapers regularly carried articles on feminist issues, and some reserved columns for feminist contributors. Cartoonists delighted in frequent opportunities to lampoon women's increasing involvement in politics. Although regional capitals like Morelia also contained moderate numbers of comparatively well-educated women who viewed gaining the vote as an important objective, the rural landscape was different. Revolutionary activists had created hundreds of rural women's leagues, but those organizations had other priorities.

Members of rural women's leagues like those in most provincial towns in Michoacán were typically wives, mothers, and sisters of male *agravistas* (workers for agricultural reform). These organizations did frequently make gendered claims on the state in exchange for loyal adherence to pro-revolutionary

44. Dolores Núñez, also from Michoacán, was prominent in the CRMMDT, though she was, like García, residing in Mexico City at the time of the campaign. Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 90.

45. Interview with Salvador Lemus, March 1999. He also claimed that her electoral failure in the general election had nothing to do with her gender. She lost, he explained, because she did not have the backing of the CRMMDT.

organizations, but they were more concerned with replacing their onerous *metates* with electric corn grinders than with obtaining the vote. Suffrage was never a prominent objective for them; indeed, most members of rural women's leagues were ignorant of the national movement for asserting women's citizenship. In this sense, the nation's elite urban feminists had failed to make their case with most rural Mexican women. This contrasted with the success of urban Catholic women's organizations like the Damas Católicas in bridging the cultural gap between city and countryside. Feminists in Mexico City often believed themselves to be acting on behalf of women workers and peasants, but they did not always share agendas with the intended beneficiaries of their labors.

The national leaders of the FUPDM implicitly recognized this disconnect in constructing their platform. Just as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) had done in the United States, the leadership focused on agitating for the suffrage, while permitting local affiliates to choose their own goals autonomously. Certainly, the chances that rural women adherents of the PNR would have rallied to support García's candidacy in order to advance the cause of women's citizenship were negligible, which is undoubtedly why she chose not to target them as potential supporters. Their male relations, who formed the political base of the party, had been reluctant in the early 1930s to permit women's participation even in anti-alcohol committees, never mind suffragist leagues.<sup>46</sup> It is hard to imagine that making a political issue out of women's suffrage during García's campaign would have won many supporters at all. A more rational calculation, which she seems to have made, would conclude that her gender alone was a sufficient liability without exaggerating its importance.

Choosing the Partido Comunista over the FUPDM to run her campaign was a similarly practical move. The state FUPDM chapters were fledgling entities that lacked popular support even among women, especially outside of Morelia. The PC, at least by comparison, had an extensive and well-organized network. Although considerably less powerful than the CRMDT, the PC nevertheless had influence in key areas, such as Ario de Rosales.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, Communists had managed to place party members within both the CRMDT and the PNR. In short, García was a party member whose campaign was organized by the party. She should have been able to count on the Communist leadership to direct their membership, including the communists within the PNR and CRMDT, to support her candidacy. As her campaign manager commented

46. Stephanie Mitchell, "Por la liberación de la mujer: Women and the Anti-Alcohol Campaign," in *The Women's Revolution in Mexico, 1910–1953*, Stephanie Mitchell and Patience Schell, eds. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), pp. 167–168.

47. See Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*, p. 51, on Ario de Rosales as a Communist party stronghold.

wryly to the leader of the regional committee of the PC, voting as individuals “is not the way of Communists.”<sup>48</sup>

The fact that the PC was in the end either unwilling or unable to unite its membership in support of their own candidate suggests the ways in which both revolutionary citizenship and legal citizenship under the constitution were embodied and gendered male. On March 4, Elías Mendoza, in charge of the sectional committees of the PC, pointed out that he had agreed to form committees to support Cuca García in each *célula* (cell), but that the regional committee, whose decisions should have been enforceable over the entire district, was “showing no signs of life in this respect.”<sup>49</sup> Two days later, Alcaraz made this glum report to García:

There is a genuine confusion among our *compañeros*, consisting in that, as members of the Party, they are supporting non-Party candidates. They [the *compañeros*] continually assert that they have their reasons, and lay all the blame on the leaders of the Communist Party. I do not know to what extent they may be correct, but the important thing is that this is happening.<sup>50</sup>

On a scrap of paper, folded as though kept in a pocket for frequent and anxious reference, Alcaraz had scribbled the names of prominent PC members in Uruapan who persisted in supporting García’s opponent, Cerda Espinosa: these were Ignacio Gómez, Franco Valencia, Pánfilo Saldaña, Ismael Álvarez, [illegible] Gutiérrez, and Andrés [illegible].<sup>51</sup> Of the wayward PC members, Pánfilo Saldaña was the most important. As head of the Uruapan Committee of the PNR, Saldaña had a key role in the crucial step of ratifying the results of the party primary. Barely a week before the election, Alcaraz appealed to the regional committee in Morelia to enforce party discipline: “In my estimation, the Regional Committee ought to communicate to its adherents and demand from them the frank support of the candidacy of the *compañera*, without any vacillation.”<sup>52</sup> They must not have followed his suggestion, however, as Pánfilo Saldaña later refused to ratify García’s victory in the Uruapan primary.

While no one seems to have made an overt argument against García’s candidacy based on her gender, the regional committee’s reluctance to enforce party unity is striking. Although the Comintern-mandated Popular Front strategy

48. Alcaraz to Secretario Gral. del Comité Regional Morelia, March 23, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

49. Elías Mendoza to Alcaraz, March 4, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

50. Alcaraz to García, March 6, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

51. Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6, loose document. Cerda Espinoza was not a member of the PC.

52. Alcaraz to Secretario Gral. del Comité Regional Morelia, March 23, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

encouraged communists worldwide to work together with reformist regimes like Mexico's, the PCM retained its own organizational apparatus, goals, and identity. Like other Communist organizations elsewhere in Latin America, the Communist Party of Mexico sought to influence and infiltrate the ruling party and institutions of government, trading experience in labor and peasant organizing for a seat at the table. If a male party member had been running for the same post, with the same high-level backing, would Communist leaders have taken more active measures to ensure his victory? Jocelyn Olcott has suggested that the "confusion" in fact stemmed from resentment at the regional level over a candidate they felt was being imposed upon them by distant party leadership.<sup>53</sup> If such resentment existed, it may have been exacerbated by the fact that the imposed candidate was a woman.

Several Communist feminists, including Adelina Zendejas and Concha Michel, later commented on the sexist bigotry they encountered inside the PCM. García had long been frustrated by sexism within the Michoacán party, which ignored her repeated calls to recruit more women and to support the growing women's movement there.<sup>54</sup> Zendejas, Michel, and García may have experienced a kind of sexism that was unchecked in part because it was unacknowledged. Communists tended to think of themselves as liberated from the cruder forms of sexism that impeded women's political participation. Nevertheless, they insisted that the "liberation of the woman" would proceed naturally from the liberation of the working classes. In effect, they collapsed gender into class, rejecting patriarchy's independent influence.<sup>55</sup>

Despite these multiple obstacles, it is at least possible (especially given Múgica's energetic aid in carting voters to the polls) that García did win the popular vote in the primary election.<sup>56</sup> Details of the distribution of delegates and their declared support are in [Tables 1 and 2](#).

Predictably, all of the candidates claimed victory, but García was the only one to produce detailed evidence. According to her figures, she obtained a majority

53. Olcott, *Revolutionary Women*, p. 175.

54. García to Comité Seccional Morelia, December 28, 1933, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6; unsigned letter (not García) to Comité Seccional Morelia, November 13, 1934, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6. See Olcott, *Revolutionary Women*, pp. 56–57, for a discussion of gender and the PCM.

55. Bell Hooks's work from the early 1980s on the US black liberation movement points to a parallel. Black women who identified as feminists were labeled "race traitors." More recent scholarship on liberation movements in Central America and the Caribbean suggests this may be a common pattern in the evolution of feminist consciousness and not necessarily something unique to Communism. Beverly Bell, *Walking on Fire: Haitian Women's Stories of Survival and Resistance* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001); Karen Kampwirth, *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

56. Alacaráz to Secretario Gral. del Comité Regional Morelia of the PC, March 23, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6.

TABLE 1  
*Delegates by Municipality, Primary  
 Election of 1937, Seventh Electoral  
 District, Michoacán*

Municipality	Inhabitants	Delegates
Ario de Rosales	15,953	8
Charapan	3,849	2
Cheran	4,085	2
La Huacana	9,139	5
Nahuatzen	6,339	3
Nuevo Urecho	6,472	3
Paracho	6,885	4
Parangaricutiro	4,058	2
Taretan	3,818	2
Tingambato	4,619	9
Uruapan	23,976	12
Ziracuaretiro	3,702	2
Total	92,895	48

Source: AGN-APLCR 544.4/15. Although the sum for the third column is 54 rather than 48, the compiler of the original document noted that six delegates failed to attend. Thus, I assume that 48 represents the number who attended.

of votes in seven municipalities: Uruapan (1,603), Taretan (1,000), Nuevo Urecho (2,239), Paracho (480), Ario de Rosales (659), La Huacana (850), and Tingambato (243). The other five municipalities, in which she did not receive a majority of the votes cast, were Charapan (178 votes), Nahuatzen (215), Parangaricutiro (78), Ziracuaretiro (237), and Chenin. These results gave García 37 out of a possible 48 delegates in attendance at the district convention.<sup>57</sup>

Although it is impossible to confirm or deny the accuracy of García's accounting, two members of the directive board of the Uruapan municipal committee of the PNR independently confirmed her lead in Uruapan, the most populous municipality.<sup>58</sup> The same two members, Ramón Robledo and Abel Cabrera (the latter an admitted García supporter), also affirmed the bias of the president of the PNR committee, Pánfilo Saldaña, who failed to attend the municipal convention following the election due to his "partiality in favor of the

57. García to Lázaro Cárdenas, May 15, 1937, AGN-LCR 544.4/15.

58. Open letter from Ramón Robledo and Abel Cabrera on behalf of the Uruapan Municipal Committee of the PNR, May 15, 1937, AGN-LCR 544.4/15.

TABLE 2  
*Distribution of Delegate Support, PNR, Seventh District, Primary Election of 1937*

Cuca García		Roberto Cerda		Ignacio Ocho		R. Vaca Reyes Solorio	
Uruapan	12	Charapan	2	Ario de Rosales	*	Ziracuaretiro	2
Taretan	2	Nahuatzen	3	Huacana	*		
Nuevo Urecho	3	Parangaricutiro	2	Urecho	*		
Tingambato	3	Chenin	–	Taretan	*		
Paracho	4						
Ario de Rosales	8						
La Huacana	5						
Total	37		7				2

Source: AGN-APL CR 544.4/15. Five delegates from Ario de Rosales and one from Tingambato did not attend the district convention due to lack of funds. The \* indicates a minority vote.

pre-candidacy of Roberto Cerda Espinosa,” and “because the pre-candidacy of María del Refugio García had received a majority of votes.”<sup>59</sup> They reported that Saldaña, two days after the election, was still lobbying the municipal government on Cerda Espinosa’s behalf. Interestingly, García never mentioned how many votes were cast by women. Some 10,000 women voted for the first time in Mexico City during the same congressional primaries.<sup>60</sup> It is likely that García’s omission was not an oversight, but rather a pragmatic recognition that few rural women like those in her Uruapan district participated in the elections, even though it was perfectly legal for them to do so.

Perhaps more significant than the vote count itself is the emphasis García and her supporters placed on it. Though surely cognizant of the limited role of the suffrage act in the electoral process, García substantiated her claims of victory under the logic of the liberal, constitutional model. Later, both nationally and abroad, she made reference to her supposed victory in the primaries as evidence of having a legitimate claim to office. (She pragmatically glossed over the distinction between the primary and the general elections; for the latter, she could produce no such claim.) Her insistent reference to a legitimacy based on electoral victory suggests implicitly that García’s intended audience at least valued the ideal of the liberal democratic process. Two scenarios seem possible. FUPDM members, other Mexican suffragists, and international feminists may

59. Ibid. They note that they were also unable, due to Saldaña’s partiality, to use the official letterhead and seal of the PNR on their official statement (*acta de constancia*).

60. “3 Shot in Mexico, D.F., in Primary Election; Journalist One of the Victims—10,000 Women Vote for First Time in History,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1937.

have assumed, naively, that voting was more important than it actually was. Arguably, the suffrage movement itself would support this view. On the other hand, it is at least as likely that García and the FUPDM were making a double claim, first for women's citizenship, and second for adherence to an often mentioned but rarely practiced liberal principle. In this scenario, no one was fooled about the realities of the political process. Yet, the strategy may have been a recognition that women were unlikely to be able to advance far with or without citizenship unless the rule of "bossism, violence, vendettas, and corruption," as Knight has phrased it, diminished in favor of the rule of law.<sup>61</sup>

### TURNING POINT: THE PNR DISTRICT CONVENTION

In reality the ballot count played a minor role in the electoral process. Here we should distinguish between two distinct extralegal practices, those engaged in by the candidates and their supporters, and those relating to the vertical power structures of the regional and national PNR. Unsurprisingly, there were numerous complaints of irregularities, political violence, and behind-the-scenes manipulation on the part of the candidates and their followers.<sup>62</sup> This was a standard method of discrediting opponents; it began before the primary and continued until well after the general election. Here again García demonstrated her political *savoir faire*, playing the game in much the same way as her male competitors. A week before the primary, for example, she tried to eliminate two leading candidates on a legal technicality: neither had yet relinquished his post as municipal president.<sup>63</sup> Others similarly accused her of employing unfair tactics. Few believed, however, that the outcome of the election would rest on an impartial review of any of these allegations. All parties understood that the real contest would be decided at the ratifying district convention. All four candidates continued to petition influential figures until well after the primary had ended. They knew their chances of success rested ultimately on their ability to sway prominent delegates to the PNR convention, rather than the voters themselves.

It was during this intermediate phase, after the primary but well before the general election, that García lost her bid for congress. Leading up to the district convention, influential members of the CRMDT and PNR had been divided between support for Ochoa Reyes and Cerda Espinosa. Regardless of the ballot count, it seems clear that delegates supporting García were in the minority.

61. Knight, "Cardenismo," p. 95.

62. AGN-DGG 2.311D.F.(13)22762, caja 36, various. Although it would be difficult to ascertain the veracity of any particular charge, it can be reasonably assumed that any number of irregularities did occur.

63. García to Cárdenas, March 30, 1937, AGN-AP-LCR 544.4/15.

During the convention, however, something unexpected happened. Allegiances of all kinds suddenly shifted in favor of Vaca Solorio. Those who had erstwhile supported both Ochoa Reyes and Cerda Espinosa, as well as those who had backed García, turned and agreed to give Vaca Solorio the nomination when they received word that President Cárdenas had given personal orders to that effect.<sup>64</sup> García was aghast that her powerful friend would betray her in such a way without first informing her why. She wrote to him angrily, using as always the familiar “tú”: “I refuse to believe [that you gave these instructions]. Given our friendship and the frankness with which we have always treated each other, you could have told me yourself.”<sup>65</sup> Despite García’s disbelief, it seems clear that the instructions to ratify the nomination of Vaca Solorio did indeed come from Cárdenas. The news of his directive came from Antonio Mayés Navarro, an influential PNR leader in Michoacán who had up to that point openly supported Ochoa Reyes.<sup>66</sup> There is no reason to disbelieve his version of events, since little else could have caused him to change his mind so swiftly.

The likely reason for Cárdenas’s intervention has to do with the weakness of *cardenismo* in his home state, especially in the Uruapan district. He had founded the CRMDT as governor in 1930 in an attempt to unify revolutionary supporters. The organization was to serve two purposes: to mobilize popular support behind his (especially agrarian) policies and to control the state politically. While the CRMDT successfully monopolized political power during most of the decade, it never enjoyed the support of the wider population, whose ideological sympathies tended to be far more conservative, and in addition it had a history of internal divisions. Added to this was the resumption of the religious conflict. Jalisco cooled, but furious opposition to the government, especially in response to Cardenas’s socialist education project, made Michoacán the new epicenter of La Segunda. The state was already experiencing extremely high levels of political violence even by contemporary standards, and even by those who were supposed to be on the same side.<sup>67</sup> Verónica Oikión Solano’s extensive treatment of Michoacán politics under Cardenismo suggests that the president’s primary aim would have been to avoid reigniting tensions between conflicting factions inside the fragile revolutionary apparatus.<sup>68</sup> Judging by the numbers of *agrarista* groups sending telegrams in support of each candidate, he would have preferred that neither Ochoa Reyes

64. García to Cárdenas, May 15, 1937, AGN-LCR 544.4/15.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. See Friedrich, *Princes*, pp. 134–156.

68. See Verónica Oikión Solano, *Michoacán en la vía de la unidad nacional 1940–1944* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, Secretaría de Gobernación, 1995), pp. 43–45. The 1936 gubernatorial election is another example.

nor Cerda Espinosa receive the nomination, as the CRMDT seemed divided between the two. The archives reveal reports of violence between supporters of each side. Had either man become diputado, political tension in Michoacán would likely have increased dangerously. It made practical sense to choose a third, unaffiliated candidate who owed his position directly to Cárdenas.

In choosing between Vaca Solorio and García as that third option, we see how gender tangled with other variables to shape events. García would surely have proven a loyal ally, and she was not aligned with any particular faction inside the CRMDT. Ideologically, she and Vaca Solorio were similar—both were well known for their radical politics, and both were reliably loyal cardenistas. There were only two sharp differences between them, and both likely contributed to Cárdenas's decision. First, García ran the risk of being perceived as an outsider, as indeed she may have appeared to members of the Michoacán PC. Vaca Solorio was not the most popular candidate, but both his agrarian activism and his bootlegging activities had been conducted close to home. His nomination was certainly imposed, but he would have been perceived as homegrown, whereas García might have been seen as an interloper, forced upon them by her friends in Mexico City. Additionally, choosing Vaca Solorio made sense within clientelist logic, since Cárdenas owed what appeared at the time to be a success with the Nueva Italia *ejido* (collective farm) to him.<sup>69</sup> So Vaca Solorio might have had an advantage even if García had been a man. Yet, Cárdenas had purposely backed outsiders on at least two other occasions. In 1932, he had supported Benigno Serrato's candidacy against the interests of his own cardenista faction. Again in 1936, he opposed his own brother's bid for governor in order to impose Gilardo Magaña, another outsider with ties only to himself.<sup>70</sup>

However much García downplayed it during her campaign, Cárdenas's decision also necessarily involved gender. He was deciding whether the moment was ripe for Mexico's first congresswoman. García's term in Congress would have affirmed the administration's commitment to feminism, and Cárdenas was certainly anxious to make this impression. A useful comparison can be made with his choice to appoint Palma Guillén as Mexico's first female ambassador (to Colombia) in 1935. Guillén's appointment was calculated to create an international perception that Mexico was progressive and modern. However,

69. Susana Glantz, *El ejido colectivo de Nueva Italia* (Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1974), is a good book-length investigation into the *ejido*, its creation, and the reasons for its ultimate failure. In 1937, however, it would have seemed a shining example of the possible.

70. Calderón, p. 133. See also Adrian Bantjes, *As If Jesus Walked the Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998), pp. 218–219; and Fallaw, *Cárdenas*, pp. 156–157, on the multiple levels and complex terrain occupied by Caciquismo, regional power, and issues of political stability.

García's success would have had other, more far-reaching consequences. It would have resolved definitively and favorably the question of women's suffrage, which was of course her aim. García had earlier confided in Cárdenas concerns that her gender could make her entry into Congress difficult regardless of what happened in Michoacán: "[It] is possible that it would be ... difficult for me in the Electoral College ... certain interests would oppose my entrance into the House because they would not want to break with old prejudices."<sup>71</sup>

Yet Cárdenas would not have allowed concerns about the Congress to deter him. While constitutionally separate, the legislature was, in practice, subordinate to the executive, and the president would have been able to ensure García's success had he chosen to do so. He was more likely concerned with the same issue that led him to intervene in the Uruapan district election in the first place, which is to say his own government's fragility, particularly at the regional level. Unity among revolutionaries in Michoacán was important due precisely to the strength of the forces arrayed against them—Cárdenas would have been only too aware of Catholic women's contributions to the opposition. When the PNR authorized "organized" women to participate in the primaries, they meant women who had been mobilized by and in support of the state. They emphatically did *not* mean members of the numerous and more popular Catholic women's organizations. Both revolutionaries and anti-revolutionaries understood the importance of Catholic women's participation in the *Cristiada*.<sup>72</sup> The Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa (National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty, the LNDR) knew it had a political advantage among women: the organization pragmatically called for full suffrage in November of 1934.<sup>73</sup>

To have placed García in Congress would have paved the way for all women to vote, including Catholic conservative women. Revolutionary leaders claimed to fear Catholic women's vulnerability to priestly influence. In reality, it was

71. García to Cárdenas, May 15, 1937, AGN-LCR 544.4/15.

72. The classic text on the *Cristiada* is Jean Meyer's *La cristiada* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1970). Our understanding of this complicated event, especially in Michoacán, has grown significantly in recent years with work from Jennie Purnell and Matthew Butler. See Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Matthew Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity in Mexico's Cristero Rebellion: Michoacán, 1927–29* (Oxford; New York: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Butler's edited collection, *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Kristina Boylan has worked on women in the *Cristiada*. Her chapter "Gendering the Faith and Altering the Nation: Mexican Catholic Women's Activism, 1917–1940," in Jocelyn Olcott, Mary K. Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano. *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 199–222, has a short section, but her unpublished dissertation, "Mexican Catholic Women's Activism, 1929–1940," (D.Phil. diss., Oxford University, 2000), is her most complete treatment.

73. Enrique Guerra Manzo, "El fuego sagrado. La segunda *Cristiada* y el caso de Michoacán (1931–1938)," *Historia Mexicana* 55:2 (2005), p. 513–575.

Catholic women's own political agency, often in tension with the Church hierarchy, that posed a threat to the revolutionary program.<sup>74</sup> In a binary choice between furthering the ideals of women's rights and addressing the practical concern of maintaining political control (especially as his national policies provoked organized opposition among, variously, Catholics, small and large land owners, and industrial and commercial interests), Cárdenas predictably chose stability. Although surely tempted to assert Mexico's modernity by seating a woman in Congress, Cárdenas made the safer choice. Vaca Solorio had a demonstrated ability to mobilize campesinos. He was engaged in state politics in a way that García was not, yet he did not threaten division among government supporters. And he would not, as García surely would, open the Pandora's box of women's citizenship.

At no point did Cárdenas (or anyone else, so far as can be determined) declare García's candidacy invalid on grounds that women were not legally citizens. No one challenged the FUPDM's fundamental assertion: that women were already citizens under the constitution, and therefore entitled to vote and be voted for. By the same token, however, it served Cárdenas's purpose to leave that assertion unchallenged. What Cárdenas may not have realized is that García had anticipated and prepared for this outcome.

## STAGE TWO: THE SHIFT

In spite of García's expressed shock and dismay at hearing of Cárdenas's intervention, she had in fact expected to lose in the primary and had already begun the next phase of the FUPDM strategy. During the primary season, she had been forced to narrow her attention to Uruapan, but her principal audience had always been elsewhere. On the same day that the primaries took place, an article ran in the *New York Times* announcing that both García and Soledad Orozco would run in the general election in July, as independent candidates.<sup>75</sup> For that to occur, someone in the United States must have received a wire before the ballots were even cast, let alone counted, and well before the ratifying convention where García knew the final decision would be made. However seriously she tried to win, she expected to lose, and had already planned her next move. This is what sets García's post-election complaints apart from the assertions of fraud made by the other failed candidates.

74. See Ben Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation*, pp. 2–5, 57–61, on the power of the *voto morado*, or Catholic vote. During this period, the institutional Church was often weak. Lay women frequently filled the void.

75. "Women in Mexico Will Vote Today," *New York Times*, April 4, 1937. According to the article, they hoped to force the Supreme Court to rule on the constitutionality of women's citizenship.

After the district convention, she began to mobilize FUPDM chapters around the country, and they responded with a flurry of telegrams to Chapultepec protesting the decision of the Uruapan PNR. A month later, she wrote to Cárdenas, disingenuously reporting that her “furious” supporters demanded she continue the fight and run in the general election as an independent candidate:

[As] your sincere friend, I want you to tell me if, because of political necessity, you have given instructions to support Vaca Solorio. I will in that case try to convince [my supporters] that I should retire from the race, although you know that for a revolutionary this is very hard . . . I lack neither the courage nor the will to run again in the constitutional elections, especially given the likelihood that Cerda will run as an independent and might legally defeat Vaca, as he came in second in the plebiscites.<sup>76</sup>

García’s choice of the word “legally” is noteworthy: it implies a common understanding of the distinction between the vote count and winning an election. Whether she or Cerda had the ability to defeat Vaca “legally” was immaterial. Both did run as independents, but neither had any possibility of winning.<sup>77</sup>

The Michoacán PNR took no chances in 1937; it ensured that only PNR candidates’ names appeared on the ballots. Ramón Medina Guzmán, the official charged with validating electoral results, confirmed that both García’s and Cerda Espinosa’s independent bids met the fate of every other: they were discarded. In his official report to the minister of internal affairs (*Gobernación*), Medina Guzmán wrote:

Among the documents in this file are [various complaints], among these that of C. [citizen] Rafael Vaca Solorio who denounces certain maneuverings against him by C. Roberto Cerda, ex-municipal president of Uruapan, who, breaking party discipline, desired to run as an independent. *What is certain is that the respective municipal authority registered only PNR candidates, just as in all of the other districts. Thus, as only members of the PNR were registered, they had to win.*<sup>78</sup>

Medina did not mention García in the report, probably because her bid was largely for show. Cerda Espinosa’s was the only extra-PNR candidacy robust enough to arouse his concern.

76. García to Cárdenas, May 15, 1937, AGN-LCR 544.4/15.

77. Partido Socialista Unificador del Distrito to Presidente del Ayuntamiento, June 16, 1937, AGN-DGG 2.311D.F.(13)22762, caja 36.

78. S. Medina Guzmán to Secretario de Gobernación, July 30, 1937, Condumex, CEHM Fondo MXLVI 6. Emphasis mine.

García surely realized that it was impossible for her to win the general election without the support of the PNR, but for her purposes victory was not required. All that was necessary was to assert as widely as possible that she and Orozco had been denied their seats specifically on account of their gender, which they immediately set about doing. Neatly sidestepping the distinction between the party nomination and the general election, García told the United States National Women's Party, which published her statement, "I was nominated for the Federal Congress by 10,000 votes, but was not allowed to take my seat."<sup>79</sup> Just what happened next is difficult to say. According to Ward Morton's 1962 *Woman Suffrage in Mexico*, she appealed her case to the national executive committee of the PNR, and her appeal resulted in a party declaration that only a constitutional amendment would permit women to vote and hold public office.<sup>80</sup> Morton cites five sources as evidence, four of which are newspaper articles that do not exist.<sup>81</sup> The fifth, Verna Millan's 1939 *Mexico Reborn*, does substantiate Morton's version, but there is no other evidence to confirm her report.<sup>82</sup> According to Okión Solano, the FUPDM turned to the Supreme Court for a ruling, and the court decided on a definitive rejection of women's constitutional claims to citizenship. Interestingly, no one seems to have tried to prevent García from running in the general election, which she should not legally have been able to do. Perhaps by this time party officials were aware that any resistance on their part would only further the FUPDM's aims.

Certainly, any official rejections of women's constitutional citizenship would have been welcomed, as the FUPDM's contingency plan required reversing the original logic upon which García's and Orozco's candidacies had been based. García once again turned to the Frente Socialista de Abogados, this time to publish a statement precisely contradicting their assertion of a few months previous. Writing on behalf of the Front, Alberto Bremauntz concluded that "the current Constitution does not concede the right to vote to Mexican women, by the express will of the Constituent Congress of 1917."<sup>83</sup> He argued (this time correctly) that, although the constitution did not explicitly define citizenship as masculine, the issue of women's suffrage was discussed and discarded at Querétaro. García and other FUPDM leaders moved to employ the tactic made famous by Emmeline Pankhurst: they staged a hunger strike in

79. "Message of Cuca García to Women of North America," *Equal Rights*, July 15, 1937, AGN-LCR 544/1.

80. Morton, *Woman Suffrage*, p. 29.

81. Two were ostensibly from *The New York Times* and two from the Mexican national daily *Excelsior*. A thorough search revealed no articles on the subject in either paper on or near the dates mentioned in Morton's citations.

82. Millan, *Mexico Reborn*, p. 167. It is certainly unlikely that the national executive committee of the PNR would have believed García if she had presented a claim to victory in the general election. As we have seen, the state PNR apparatus had ensured that no independent candidate even reached the ballot.

83. Bremauntz, *El sufragio femenino*, p. 23.

front of the president's mansion in Mexico City.<sup>84</sup> The FUPDM then made use of the relatively new infrastructure of women's organizations, both at home and abroad, mobilizing their supporters to demand the vote. The executive office was inundated with telegrams and letters, and within just two weeks Cárdenas announced plans to submit a bill to Congress.<sup>85</sup> The legislation proposed to alter the 34th amendment of the constitution, redefining the requirements for citizenship as "all Mexican men and women over eighteen if they are married and over twenty-one if they are not." The FUPDM, together with other national, state, and local women's organizations spent the next two years pushing first for the legislative passage of the bill, and then for its ratification by the states.

Amazingly, and with the sustained help and support of the president, suffragists achieved these goals in time for the 1939 presidential campaign, in which Cárdenas's successor would be chosen. Legally, the only step remaining was the promulgation of the law, which should have been accomplished by its publication in the congressional *Diary of Debates*. In anticipation of being able to vote for the first time in a major electoral contest, women's organizations assembled campaigns in support of all three viable candidates: Francisco J. Múgica and Manuel Ávila Camacho from the Partido de la Revolución Mexicano (PRM), and Juan Andreu Almazán from the newly formed opposition party, Partido Acción Nacional (PAN).<sup>86</sup> They worked under the assumption that women would be permitted to vote, and they exerted themselves to convince women to exercise their new right. As the election approached, however, the announcement of the constitutional amendment failed to appear in the *Diary of Debates*. Eventually, it became clear that it would not appear in time for the election. On December 30, 1939, *Excélsior* reported what seemed to be already known: "The constitutional reform that concedes the vote to women will not be put into effect next year, despite the fact that a majority of the local legislatures have ratified it, as established in Article 135 of the Constitution."<sup>87</sup> In the end, it never appeared.

84. Morton, *Woman Suffrage*, p. 29. Jocelyn Olcott has suggested that the expression "*huelga de hambre*" used by the press may have referred not to an actual hunger strike but rather to a vociferous protest. Perhaps the FUPDM promoted the use of the phrase "hunger strike" in hopes of recalling Pankhurst's successful precedent.

85. The international press was paying attention. "Mexican Women Assured," *New York Times*, August 28, 1937. While there is no way of knowing the extent to which Cárdenas may have helped to orchestrate a scenario in which he would have seemed to bend to pressure in announcing a proposed constitutional change, the possibility of his involvement cannot be discounted. Conversely, it is equally possible that the new FUPDM strategy worked in defiance of his wishes. It is certainly possible that García and Cárdenas had a conversation on this subject during the interim.

86. Cárdenas had restructured the PNR in 1938, rechristening it the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana, or PRM. In the same year, the FUPDM incorporated itself into the party.

87. "Quedó aplazada la ciudadanía de las mujeres," *Excélsior*, December 30, 1939, CERM Fondo FJM, Hemeroteca, vol. 7, doc. 674.

TABLE 3

*Cárdenas's Changes of Position on Suffrage, February 1937 to December 1939*

## February 1937–August 1937

After a brief period of support, Cardenas blocked suffrage efforts in May 1937, and then remained more or less silent on the issue until August of that year.

## August 1937–March 1939

From August 1937 to July 1938, Cardenas showed steady support for suffrage, but took no action for nearly all of the following year.

## March 1939–December 1939

This period marked decisions opposed to suffrage, among them refusing to place publication of the suffrage bill on the congressional agenda for either the extraordinary session (March–July) or the ordinary session (August–December).

Many scholars have debated the cause of this eleventh-hour defeat, which put off the establishment of universal suffrage in Mexico for more than a decade. Publicly, Cárdenas berated the congressmen for refusing to grant the amendment the force of law, but privately the decision was probably his. What we can draw from the events between 1937 and 1940 is that Cárdenas was deeply conflicted about the question of women's suffrage. At four distinct moments we see him change his mind.

In February of 1937, when García first met with Cárdenas to discuss her candidacy, he gave every impression of supporting her. The timing of the meeting is consistent with the PNR announcement granting women voting rights in the primary, which occurred just two days later. By May, however, Cárdenas had reconsidered. He could have chosen to promote either García's or Orozco's candidacies, thereby affirming women's constitutional citizenship, but he rejected both opportunities. Nevertheless, by August he was again supportive. He not only introduced the constitutional amendment, but subsequently defended it, calling a special session of the chamber of deputies and putting it on the agenda in order to ensure its timely passage.<sup>88</sup> These actions imply that his determination to give women the vote continued at least through July of the following year.

In March 1939, however, the secretary general of the PCM, Hernán Laborde, asked Cárdenas to include the reform on the agenda of the extraordinary session of Congress just beginning, which would extend through July. Cárdenas refused, saying that the reform would not be considered until both houses

88. "Mexican Women Assured," *New York Times*, August 28, 1937. Esperanza Tuñón Pablos, *Mujeres*, p. 104; Morton, *Woman Suffrage*, pp. 34–35.

met in ordinary session.<sup>89</sup> Congress resumed its ordinary session in August and continued to sit through December, but the bill languished without publication.<sup>90</sup> One can only infer that if the suffragists still had the full backing of the president, he would have ensured the inclusion of reform on the agenda. Most historians agree that this final decision to prevent women from voting in 1939 reflected the power of Catholic conservative women, who were by all accounts better funded, better organized, and certainly more numerous than women revolutionaries. Just before introducing his amendment, Cárdenas implicitly acknowledged his fears, even as he argued against the presumption of women's natural conservatism:

[T]hose who point to the woman as tending towards conservative ideas, toward fanaticism and backward tendencies, forget that the Mexican woman has been participating in the social struggle of this country for many years . . . you see her taking part in the most dangerous activities . . . in favor of the most advanced ideas. . . . [I]f we leave her out of the social struggle, we only leave her in the hands of the enemy . . .<sup>91</sup>

It was common for feminists and antifeminists alike to refer rhetorically to women as singular: *la mujer*. Nevertheless, Cárdenas's actions imply that he was only too aware that his real problem lay in the fact that Mexican women held plural and diverse political opinions. His repeated reversals on the question of women's suffrage lead to two conclusions. On the one hand, he appears genuinely to have desired women's enfranchisement. On the other hand, he seems to have twice found himself in the position of choosing between expanding the franchise and ensuring political stability. In both cases, he concluded that continued exclusion was safer than inclusion. The numerous challenges relating to the 1939 succession doubtless played a part. The same reasons that led him in late February to impose Ávila Camacho at the expense of his friend and mentor Francisco Múgica and his own ideological program—must certainly have informed his decision regarding women's citizenship.<sup>92</sup>

89. Agustín Lanuza to Hernán Laborde, March 29, 1939, AGN-LCR 544/1.

90. December-August, March-July, and August-December of 1939, <http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/DDebates/37/index.html>, accessed April 25, 2015.

91. Tuñón Pablos, *Mujeres*, pp. 103–104.

92. Fallaw, *Cárdenas* p. 157. On the 1940 succession, see Knight, "Cardenismo"; Albert L. Michaels, "The Crisis of Cardenismo," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2:1 (May 1970), pp. 51–79; Héctor Ceballos, "Francisco J. Múgica y la elección presidencial de 1939–1940," *Jornada Semanal*, June 24, 2001; Javier Romero, "Múgica en 1939–1940. La frustrada candidatura a la presidencia," in *VII Jornadas de Historia de Occidente* (Jiquilpan de Juárez, Michoacán: CERM Lázaro Cárdenas, 1985); Michelle Dion, "The Political Origins of Social Security in Mexico during the Cárdenas and Ávila Camacho Administrations," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 21:1 (Winter 2005), pp. 59–95.

A look at the Costa Rican case illustrates a similar dilemma. Eugenia Rodriguez turns to political scientists Fabrice Molina and Ivan Lejoucq to explain why Costa Rican suffragists agitated ineffectually for so long under sympathetic administrations. She explores the “office-seeking” principle, in which parties and politicians “only endorse reforms that favor their ability to obtain or retain control of public offices.”<sup>93</sup> Violations of the office-seeking principle exist, but they are rare. Reforms that increase electoral uncertainty, such as expanding the suffrage or eliminating fraudulent practices occur only under special circumstances, such as a legislative stalemate.<sup>94</sup> The Mexican presidential election season of 1940 already contained plenty of electoral uncertainty without doubling the electorate. The opposition PAN leadership knew they likely stood to gain by enfranchising women, and they sensibly included full suffrage in their platform. However, it is wishful thinking to imagine that suffragists could do anything to alter the basic geography of power, a fact that circumscribed Cárdenas’s freedom of action as much as anyone else’s.

## CONCLUSION

The fact that women failed to become constitutionally recognized citizens in 1939 should not diminish the novelty of the FUPDM undertaking. Prior to this period, women had confronted masculine power primarily as individuals. They had been able to engage in collective struggles together with men, and sometimes without them, over issues like land or rents. Because of the homosocial environment of convents, nuns were sometimes able collectively to resist patriarchal authority inside the institution of the Church. The FUPDM’s push to gain the suffrage for all women was something new, however. It was a broad challenge to the way political power itself had been constructed as masculine. It was also the last attempt by revolutionary suffragists to force the new government to fulfill its rhetoric about revising gender politics.

It seems important to note the remarkable way in which the FUPDM functioned as the tail wagging the dog of the federal government between February 1937 and December 1939. García’s apparent failure to gain the PNR nomination in the spring of 1937 was in fact an opportunity the FUPDM had created for itself to maneuver the Cárdenas administration into confronting the issue of women’s citizenship head on. Yet even the most adept strategy could not change the fundamental political terrain of revolutionary Mexico. The

93. Fabrice E. Lehoucq and Ivan Molina, *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 8.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 10–11. Uruguay is an interesting case study. Christine Ehrick, *Shield of the Weak: Feminism and the State in Uruguay, 1900–1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), p. 148.

failure of women's suffrage under cardenismo is a parable of the contradictions inherent in the revolutionary state-building project. The ruling party was often forced to choose between a pluralism that could result in factionalism, violence, and loss of political control, or a unity that could only be imposed autocratically from above. Ben Fallaw has shown in his work on the Open Door election in Yucatán, which took place during the same election cycle as García's bid for Congress, that even a sincere attempt to make an election meaningful could end in a top-down imposition instead. "The fear of a popular backlash against the shortcomings of agrarian reform," he wrote, "and the need to maintain the support of regional politicians outweighed the desire to democratize the gubernatorial process."<sup>95</sup> Revolutionaries could achieve the kind of liberal democracy envisioned by Madero only at the cost of sacrificing their power to realize what remained of their "social revolution." Cuca García was one casualty among many of those necessary to pursue stability over nearly every other consideration.

Perhaps the most striking thing about García's ill-fated campaign is what it reveals about the nature of revolutionary citizenship. She was able to illustrate Soledad Orozco's point: a Mexican woman was perfectly capable of running a campaign for elected office as well as any man, regardless of the wording of the constitution. Cuca García wasn't legally a citizen, but it didn't seem to matter. Equally irrelevant were the votes cast, during both the primary season and the general election, by men and possibly some women of the seventh electoral district. The vertical structure of the party apparatus, together with the de facto fusion of party and government, rendered a narrowly defined liberal notion of citizenship meaningless. Jocelyn Olcott helpfully conceptualizes revolutionary citizenship as "contingent": voting rights, she explains, "represented only a small slice—and a relatively unimportant one—of the ways in which people lived citizenship."<sup>96</sup> Cuca García's campaign shows how women, without formal suffrage rights, could and did exercise elements of revolutionary citizenship within many of the same sorts of constraints as most men. Nevertheless, García's politicking, however expert, was hindered by sexism. As María Teresa Fernández Aceves, Carmen Ramos Escandón, and Susie Porter have put it, "[C]itizenship is vicarious, dependent, and in every case, *gendered*."<sup>97</sup> Gender, like race and locality, mattered—just not in the way it seemed.

Suffragists who employed slogans such as "The Mexican Woman is a Citizen," were operating, probably knowingly, within a nineteenth-century ideological

95. Fallaw, *Cárdenas*, p. 98.

96. Olcott, *Revolutionary Women*, pp. 6–7.

97. Fernández Aceves, Ramos-Escandón, and Porter, *Orden social*, p. 17. Emphasis mine.

framework that had never been realized in practice. Activists like García must have understood what Joan Scott observed when she wrote that “political movements develop tactically and not logically.”<sup>98</sup> While surely conscious of the limits to the benefit of constitutional citizenship, the leaders of the FUPDM judged it to be a goal worth pursuing. García died in 1973, a full citizen but one whose vote, like everyone else’s, was by then rendered virtually meaningless by the notoriously repressive post-Tlateloco *priista* state.<sup>99</sup> I imagine the irony was not lost on her, in how far women’s liberation had advanced in comparison with the lost causes championed by revolutionary men.

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98. Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 61.

99. Verónica Oikón Solano reports that García’s adopted daughter confirms her date of death. “María Refugio García,” p. 95.