

MÉXICO BEYOND 1968

EDITED BY JAIME M. PENSADO
AND ENRIQUE C. OCHOA

MÉXICO
BEYOND 1968

*Revolutionaries, Radicals, and Repression During
the Global Sixties and Subversive Seventies*



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THE OTHER “NEW MAN”

Conservative Nationalism and Right-Wing Youth in 1970s Monterrey

LUIS HERRÁN AVILA

SINCE THE MID-1950S, right-wing students participated in the broader configuration of authoritarian political culture in Mexico. But they did so in contradictory ways. Emphasizing ideas of order and authority, some saw themselves as part of a conservative body politic that needed protection from social and moral subversion. Others embraced the spirit of political and cultural rebellion of the time to forge new forms of dissident conservative subjectivity through the refashioning of notions of tradition and nation. This chapter draws on this apparent contradiction between conservatism and radicalism to examine the case of *Conciencia Joven* (Young Conscience), a right-wing student group from northern Mexico. In particular, the chapter explores the intersections of conservative nationalism, student activism, and entrepreneurial political culture in Monterrey and locates the history of *Conciencia Joven* in relation to the local and global genealogies of the Mexican Right.

Appearing in 1974 at the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey (Monterrey Institute of Technology), *Conciencia Joven* embodied the anxieties of a sector of the *regiomontano* (native of Monterrey) middle and entrepreneurial classes who were historically socialized in a deep distrust of state intervention in the spheres of labor, business, and education. *Conciencia Joven* was a local expression of the disaffections of the Mexican Right with the course of the postrevolutionary state. But from a broader perspective, they were also participants

in a transnational neofascist constellation that emerged in Europe and South America throughout the 1970s to propose “national-revolutionary” solutions to the alleged “global crisis” of the era.¹

With its emphasis on actors and movements on the Left, the historiography of Cold War Mexico has overlooked the centrality of the Right in shaping the political landscape of the 1960s and 1970s.² Yet, with the same energy of their leftist counterparts, the Mexican *derechas* (right-wing forces) reacted to critical national and international moments of the Cold War (the Cuban Revolution, the rise and repression of the 1968 student movement, and the 1973 coup in Chile).³ Seeing themselves as dissidents of the postrevolutionary state but also as interlocutors in the consolidation of its political, cultural, and economic project, the Mexican *derechas* responded to the radicalism of the New Left by reinforcing their anti-statism and antiseccularism, and by proposing alternative conceptions of Mexican national identity. Like their leftist colleagues, moreover, they resorted to ideological repertoires rooted in national experience but that were also transnational in their making. In presenting this argument, I use the category of the “post-Cristero Right” as a way to analyze the crucial legacies of those disaffections with the postrevolutionary state and to examine *Conciencia Joven* in light of the historical trajectories of these *derechas* with respect to local and global interlocutors.

Representative of the post-Cristero conservative youth movements that sought to reshape and mobilize regiomontano middle-class values, *Conciencia Joven* was also a right-wing response to the neo-Cardenista and allegedly Third Worldist platform of the presidency of Luis Echeverría (1970–76), discussed at greater length by Dillingham and Oikión in this volume. *Conciencia Joven* articulated a specific rendering of contradictory middle-class sensibilities, which combined ideas of class harmony and national unity, championed conservative notions of gender and domesticity, and endorsed an anti-liberal “Third Position” between capitalism and socialism.⁴ Similar to other contemporary right-wing movements around the world, its members saw youth as the agents of nationalist restoration and deployed neofascist notions of leadership, authenticity, and “action.” These regiomontano students inhabited an unorthodox ideological space within the post-Cristero Right and inserted themselves in the spirit of youth revolt of the era through the idea of a nationalist-conservative “New Man” that could become the agent of transformation of Mexico’s economy, politics, and society.

"MONTERREICH": THE POST-CRISTERO RIGHT AND REGIOMONTANO IDENTITY

As the last major conflict of the Mexican Revolution, the Cristero War (1926–29) pitted federal troops against Catholic peasant militias, predominantly in western Mexico, who reacted against the government's ban on political proselytizing by the Church, the closing of temples, and the expulsion of foreign priests.⁵ The Cristero movement was a foundational moment for future generations of politically active Catholics who begrudged the limits on ecclesial participation in politics and the secular character of public education as attacks on religious freedom and as clear signs of the regime's authoritarianism. With the restructuring of Mexico's most important lay organization *Acción Católica Mexicana* (Mexican Catholic Action, ACM), the formation of the *Unión Nacional Sinarquista* (National Synarchist Union, UNS) in 1937, and the creation of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (National Action Party, PAN) in 1939, these conservative dissidents to the postrevolutionary state remained divided over the most effective method to reconstitute their social bases.⁶ Throughout the twentieth century, these actors of the post-Cristero Right rebuked the legacies of postrevolutionary authoritarianism while seeking to resignify the revolution as a struggle of Mexico's Catholic popular classes and to place the Cristero War as an episode of martyrdom for Catholics in and beyond Mexico.⁷ During the Cold War, post-Cristero Right organizations held a key and still understudied presence in the increasing politicization of Catholics, including anticommunist civic organizations and right-wing student groups that, like their leftist counterparts, shaped the cultural and political landscape of the 1960s and 1970s in Mexico.

In the northern city of Monterrey, the configuration of a local dissident conservative coalition relied on the social hegemony of powerful business groups that clashed with the federal government on matters beyond the religious question, making the memory of the Cristero War acquire different meanings. Historically, the regiomontano private sector resented what they perceived as the excessive interference of the central state in the economy, labor, education, and local elections. While the PRI regime attempted to subordinate local actors to its own corporatist project, the power and influence built by *Grupo Monterrey* (The Monterrey Group, a conglomerate of petrochemical, food, and mining companies) epitomized the quasi-autonomous status of the city as a regional anti-statist stronghold for Mexican capitalists.⁸

Since the 1930s, Grupo Monterrey effectively kept state unionism (the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicano, or Confederation of Mexican Workers, CTM) at bay through its own corporatist, paternalistic system of company unions. These unions succeeded in rallying workers, often coercively, against outside labor organizers and against state mediation in labor disputes. The Grupo sponsored union demonstrations where regional identity and patriotism were seen as instruments to defend its workplaces and employers from communist influence.⁹ For its defiant stance against these actors and agencies of the central state, the Grupo acquired the negative reputation, particularly among official and academic circles, as the quintessential national bourgeoisie with reactionary values. The regiomontano elites' sympathy for, and even militancy in, movements and organizations of the post-Cristero Right was consistent with a history of suspicion toward state intervention and the alleged hidden designs of communists infiltrated in the government. Playfully coined by a critical commentator of the Grupo's role in regiomontano society, the label of "Monterreich" invoked this convergence between anticommunism, social conservatism, corporate paternalism, and the concentration of economic power. This matrix of values permeated the forms of indoctrination and labor discipline enforced by company unions and reproduced a sense of exceptionality of the social and economic order of Monterrey.¹⁰

The conflicts between Grupo Monterrey and the federal government became the basis for the strong sense of self-sufficiency of regiomontano capitalism and its social and political isolation from Mexico City.¹¹ Historically, the Grupo had been defiant of state-sponsored business and industry organizations, which it saw as too nationalistic, anti-American, and excessively dependent on protectionism.¹² While leading the creation of a nationwide, independent business federation in 1929, Monterrey's entrepreneurial classes saw themselves as distinct from those of Chihuahua, Guadalajara, and Mexico City. They were, in the praising words of local historian José Fuentes Mares, "not a mere *association* of interests, but a *community* of principles," a "spiritual unity" linking two generations of entrepreneurs as active agents of the city's industrial prosperity.¹³ Over the years, regiomontano entrepreneurs turned the city of Monterrey into a symbolic site of autonomous power with remarkable capacity to influence local politicians and place them in the structures of the official party.¹⁴ Although federal labor laws, official socialist rhetoric, and state-sponsored unionism confronted them with the government of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40), by the 1940s the Grupo Monterrey ultimately reconciled with the policies and discourse of

"national unity" of Presidents Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940–46) and Miguel Alemán (1946–52).¹⁵

As Mexico entered the Cold War period, the metropolitan area of Monterrey became an important epicenter of Catholic anticommunist activism. Like other states with a strong conservative presence, such as Jalisco and Puebla, business groups and the clergy in the state of Nuevo León collaborated against the power of the interventionist secular state in favor of building a Christian social order.¹⁶ A trademark of lay Catholic movements, the project of re-creating "the Kingdom of Christ on Earth" was central to the alliance between actors who sought to defend and promote regionmontano social and cultural values against the alleged intrusion of "outsiders," be it federal authorities, radical students, labor organizers, or progressive priests. In Puebla, Jalisco, and Mexico City, these alliances mobilized civic and student organizations, in violent and non-violent ways, to counter the increasing leftist influence in public institutions, including the universities. In these cities, the emergence of right-wing student organizations, such as the *Movimiento Universitario de Renovadora Orientación* (University Movement for a Renewed Orientation, MURO) and the *Frente Universitario Anticomunista* (University Anticommunist Front, FUA), was the product of cross-sectorial and cross-class concerns. These and similar student organizations emerged to protect universities, churches, and businesses as important spaces of autonomy, crucial for the social reproduction of middle-class conservative sensibilities.¹⁷ In Monterrey, these alliances were rooted in the history of collaboration between company unions and anticommunist Catholic civic groups to break or prevent strikes and promote notions of class cooperation and corporate loyalty among workers.¹⁸

In the 1960s, one of the most important movements backed by the *Grupo Monterrey* (aside from MURO) was the *Cruzada Regional Anti-Comunista* (Regional Anti-Communist Crusade, CRAC), the local protagonist of a nationwide campaign of anticommunist propaganda and civic mobilization that emerged in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution. CRAC's platform emphasized notions of the common good, Christian social justice, and a rejection of communism for its atheism, its abolition of private property, and its tyrannical conception of the state.¹⁹ Allied with local PAN politicians, the local press, the *Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia* (National Union of Parents, UNPF), the *Movimiento Familiar Cristiano* (Christian Family Movement, MFC), and the Knights of Columbus, CRAC rallied against secular education and the "imposition" of official textbooks, which, according to them, violated parents' rights to

educate their children according to Christian and “Western” principles.²⁰ In April of 1963, CRAC and the Nuevo León Parents’ Association mobilized to shut down a festival organized by leftist youth activists in the city of Sabinas Hidalgo, some sixty-five miles north of Monterrey. Known as “El Sabinazo,” the ensuing violence resulted in several injured students, the burning of leftist literature, and the cancellation of the event.²¹ Although we know of the presence of MURO in Nuevo León throughout the 1960s and of the participation of young people in El Sabinazo, we lack analyses of the regiomontano right-wing youth who also participated in this type of mobilization against local leftists. While the organic top-down linkages between groups like CRAC and the Grupo Monterrey are important, the existence of a young constituency within the local and national conservative body politic needs to be accounted for. As I will show in the following pages, this conservative youth was embedded in the social and cultural milieu of Monterreich, of the post-Cristero derechas, and of the global Right more broadly.

CONCIENCIA JOVEN AND THE CONSERVATIVE NEW MAN

A central piece in the efforts of the Grupo Monterrey to reassert its autonomy was the founding of the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey (hereafter, El Tec), an institution of higher education that specialized in business management, sciences, and technology. With industrialist Eugenio Garza Sada as its main benefactor, the central goal of El Tec was to train a new generation of *empresarios* (businessmen), well-versed in the values of capitalist entrepreneurship and capable of defending the “regiomontano faith,” in a society “open to opportunity and trusting of the unlimited possibilities of individual action.”²²

Conciencia Joven (hereafter CJ) was, in many ways, a showcase for the type of youth conservatism that permeated the private universities founded by the managerial classes across Mexico. Similar to the extreme Right Los Tecos (The Owls) at the Autonomous University of Guadalajara, CJ was marked by the disaffections of the post-Cristero Right, namely the convergence of Catholic antisecularism and private sector distrust of government interference.²³ Operating in a more plural environment and in coexistence with leftist student organizations, its members did not embrace the intolerant Catholicism of Los Tecos.²⁴ Instead, they adopted a form of right-wing nationalism shaped by regiomontano conservatism and the global emergence of Third Position movements.

Created in 1974 by a small group of engineering and business management students, CJ published a monthly newsletter—*Conciencia Joven*—that put forward the idea of the youth as the leading agent in transforming the social and political reality of the country. Referring to the early 1970s as a period of agitation and “disruptive action,” the leading voices of CJ aimed to contribute “con la pluma y la acción” (with the pen in action) to “purify” the young national consciousness. They saw journalism as a labor of political education aimed at their fellow students at El Tec, which they complemented by organizing public talks featuring noted figures of regiomontano entrepreneurial and academic circles.²⁵ Among others, these included Ricardo Margáin, head of the advisory council of Grupo Monterrey; Alejandro Junco, director of the influential newspaper *El Norte*; and Agustín Basave, a conservative philosopher who, like Junco, served as faculty at El Tec.²⁶ This convergence of business interests, the press, and conservative social thought channeled Grupo Monterrey’s entrepreneurial, conservative, and oppositional ethos, which deeply shaped CJ’s own political and cultural project.

During its brief existence (1974–76), *Conciencia Joven* put forward a platform that was reminiscent of early twentieth-century ideas of Mexico as an “unfinished” young nation that, like the rest of Latin America, would be the repository of the future of humanity.²⁷ The publication focused on the idea of the youth as “a social reality . . . a state of the soul, a spirit of sacrifice, responsibility, and capacity in labor”; it was “a strength of the will and a desire for self-improvement.” The mission of its young readership, or “The Great War,” as the journal called it, was to fight “our inner old man, to defeat him continuously and let the New Man be born.” For CJ, “a New Man walks on Earth. In his right hand, he holds a sword, with the word Duty engraved in it. There is a glimmer in his eyes, caused by the discipline of his customs. His heart beats emboldened by Valour, Dedication, and Sacrifice. He is sure of himself because he loves, and he is not alone. He loves his family, his Homeland, his race, the fraternal races, the human species; he loves the Truth.”²⁸

To become this New Man it was necessary to “search within Man himself” and reach for the “arcane treasures of our civilization,” which would provide the strength to “cleanse civilization of the dead weight and the dust of centuries, to reveal its hidden youth.”²⁹ In this way, CJ posed the idea of a generational break to differentiate itself from the cultural nationalism of the past and to redefine the “arcane treasure” of tradition as a weapon against the decadence of modern liberal and socialist materialism.

Concerned with articulating a discourse of individual transcendence, the idea of the New Man championed by CJ revealed traces of the Catholic thought cultivated by prominent intellectuals of the post-Cristero Right, including Agustín Basave, the regiomontano writer Alfonso Junco, and the self-avowed Catholic “reactionary” Jesús Guisa y Azevedo. This New Man invoked the vitalist ideas of José Vasconcelos and the spiritual patriotism that Junco and Guisa had cultivated for decades: an insistence on the universality of Truth and Love, and the sense of duty, discipline, and sacrifice attributed to Mexico’s essential connection with its Catholic Hispanic heritage.³⁰ These figures of conservative nationalism were deeply influenced by global conservative and fascist fellow travelers of the interwar period. CJ activists were, in fact, open admirers of Francoist Spain as the only true model for Mexico’s rediscovery of its authentic Catholic and Hispanic *ser nacional*, the “national being” that had emerged from the violence of the Mexican Revolution and that was endangered by liberalism and communism. For them, the postrevolutionary state was an anti-Catholic and antinationalist tyranny that betrayed this *ser nacional*.

In its conception of the New Man, CJ looked to the transatlantic impact of fascism. He was akin to the Spanish Falangist ideal of a fascist “Hombre Nuevo,” the “half-warrior, half-monk” whose sense of hierarchy and sacrifice would make him the agent of Spain’s fascist “national-revolutionary” experiment.³¹ Yet, while inspired by *falangismo*, CJ did not aim to become a mass movement, and, as noted above, it remained dedicated to a labor of nationalist edification for the future empresarios and limited to the sphere of student politics.

The post-1968 national and global context of youth radicalization placed CJ’s quasi-falangista “New Man” in dialogue with a more proximate, even if counterintuitive interlocutor: Ernesto “Che” Guevara. The parallels are striking. In his famous formulation of a socialist New Man, Guevara posed the individual as an unfinished product that only becomes full by bringing “the vestiges of the past . . . into the present in one’s consciousness; and a continual labor is necessary to . . . eradicate them.”³² This process had to go “hand in hand with the development of new economic forms” as individuals acquired “more consciousness of the need for their incorporation into society.”³³ Both CJ and Guevara stressed the importance of the youth as the seed of the New Man (“the malleable clay from which the new person can be built with none of the old defects,” wrote Guevara) and resorted to tropes of heroism to articulate a communitarian vision of a utopian future.³⁴ Contrary to Guevara, for CJ, the New Man would not emerge from eradicating the past but from bringing the past into

the present and by emphasizing individual abnegation. For CJ, abnegation was “a negation of the self,” a “creative contradiction” that would integrate the New Man into a larger collectivity for the common good. Unlike Guevara’s, CJ’s New Man was not the product of liberation, but of self-repression in the name of a transcendental national community. In the particular regiomontano context of El Tec, the New Man endorsed by CJ was an invitation to its members and readership to rethink their place as future entrepreneurs by emphasizing notions of leadership and sacrifice, the glorification of the nation, and the scorn for the empty pursuit of material gain and purely technical knowledge.

CJ’s notion of the New Man was rooted in a staunch moral conservatism that defended traditional ideas of the family as the central institution of society, the strict demarcation of gender roles, and a visceral rejection of feminism. For these young conservatives, gender equality—particularly in the workforce—undermined women’s dignity, as it gave them more duties and obligations that clashed with “their authentic and natural inclinations” as mothers, lovers, and companions.

CJ found the “scientific” basis for this naturalization of sexual difference in the writings of Nobel Prize winner and Vichy collaborator Alexis Carrel, who in a famous eugenicist treatise published in 1935 proposed a hereditary biological aristocracy to correct the degeneracy of civilization.³⁵ Following Carrel, CJ activists scorned the disruptive presence of women in the workplace, claiming that women were to “develop their capacities according to their own nature” and without abandoning their “specific functions.”³⁶ They blamed this disruption on both the unchecked demands for increased productivity in capitalism and on the spread of feminism that characterized the 1970s. They saw ideas related to gender parity as “traps of consumer society.” In their view, gender parity translated into the masculinization of women and “the forced feminization of men,” a subversion of gender and sexual roles exemplified by husbands who had relinquished their patriarchal authority and were too attached to the household (*los mariditos muy de su casa*, or “domesticated hubbies”).³⁷ Feminism was thus also a threat to “natural” masculinity as it pushed men into domesticity and away from their role as breadwinners.

As imagined by CJ, women would be “virtuous mothers of heroes, thinkers, and saints,” “responsibly free,” dignified, selfless, brave, and willing to submit, with abnegation, to the task of “making history to build a new society.”³⁸ While following the ideas of Carrel, CJ’s antifeminism had roots in Mexican conservatism, well represented by famed regiomontano Catholic writer Alfonso

Junco. In his writings, Junco referred to feminism as *hombrunismo*—that is, as a desire to turn women into an imitation, “a caricature” of men expressed in “licentious manners, careless drinking, and the triviality of smoking.” For Junco, the basis of femininity was in women’s otherness (*ser otra cosa*) vis-à-vis men: in their attention to detail; in the “intelligent and cultivated discretion” of their conversation; and in “the warm softness” of their hands, which “play the piano and display an exquisite ability for sewing, painting, or in the kitchen.” Junco idealized the place of women in domestic life as one of leisure and companionship. He denied longing for the bygone era when women were absent from public life, but wished that they restrain their intellect and sexuality to avoid masculinization: “We don’t want them to be ignorant, nor to be know-it-alls; we don’t want them to be flirtatious, nor do we want marimachos [tomboys].”³⁹ CJ’s exaltation of motherhood equally resonated with Junco’s idea of the home as “a feminine miracle” and with his call to defend the sanctity of marriage from “the great conspiracy against the mother.”⁴⁰

According to CJ, these strict hierarchies of the household were the basis for a nonsocialist organization of the state and the economy. It proposed an organic social-corporatist state where municipalities, unions, and associations mirrored that “natural order” of the family while providing “equality of opportunities for all Mexicans to develop as individuals.”⁴¹ This order would guarantee that cooperatives worked as the basic unit of economic activity, as a solution to demands of social justice, and as a form of economic citizenship. Corporatism, CJ claimed, was the triumph of the true, natural, hierarchical “organic democracy” over electoral politics and Right and Left dictatorships.⁴²

These ideas were part of a global and national milieu that, after the Mexican Revolution, made its way into the platforms of the post-Cristero Right. These ranged from the sinarquista ideal of an anti-liberal communitarian Catholic state and ACM’s grassroots-oriented Christian social order to the PAN’s platform based on charity, private property, and class cooperation.⁴³ CJ’s corporatism was also an expression of regiomontano attempts to provide a concrete answer to the PRI’s system of patronage, which its members saw as an illegitimate organicist model. The “liberal corporatism” of Grupo Monterrey, for instance, emphasized freedom of enterprise, the protection of property and profits from state-sponsored or independent unions, and the promotion of conservative values, class harmony, and social peace.⁴⁴ As critics of the bourgeois liberal ethos that prized material gain, individual effort, and business savvy, CJ was ambivalent toward this entrepreneurial liberal corporatism. For its activists,

liberalism's disregard for spirituality and its indifference toward moral degradation and exploitation bred selfless men, driven by individual or class interests, and produced a disjointed society.⁴⁵ This anti-liberalism seemed to contradict the aspirational middle-class entrepreneurial values promoted at El Tec. As I will further explain below, this divergence was the product of the relative plurality of regiomontano conservatism and the post-Cristero Right more broadly, and also of CJ's appeal to a global fascist repertoire and their attraction to Third Position platforms.

For CJ, the alternative to the alienation caused by liberalism and socialism was an "authentic nationalism" that could create a system based on social solidarity and equal opportunity, free of class struggle, and respectful of the proletarian's individuality.⁴⁶ Like their intellectual mentors, those who joined CJ sought to recast Mexico as a people with one history and one destiny, marked by "the triumph of mestizaje [miscegenation]" and the birth of a "collective consciousness" at the hands of a minority of "true Mexicans" dispersed through the social body.⁴⁷

CJ's nationalism contained other elements that placed the group beyond the context of regiomontano conservatism and in dialogue with the history of the global Right. For instance, the front page of its newsletter displayed the group's symbol, an arrow cross, which for its activists signified universality, with its four arrows indicating the four cardinal points and a blank center representing "the unity of consciousness, vision, and spirituality." This was also the symbol of the Arrow Cross Party, a fascist organization formed in Hungary in the 1930s.⁴⁸ Other similar elements appeared interspersed in the newsletter, often uncited and disguised as generic nationalist messages. For example, the dictum, "a nation is great when its spiritual force is transferred into reality," matched CJ's rhetoric of national vitality.⁴⁹ The phrase actually stems from a famous speech delivered by Benito Mussolini in 1922, when he rallied a multitude of fascist followers in Napoli. Similarly, the phrase "action without thought is barbarism; thought without action is delirium" was widely used by CJ to celebrate its members as men of action and reason.⁵⁰ It belonged to the founder of the Spanish Falange, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, and it is still used by falangistas around the world. Following this parade of the fascist pantheon, CJ dedicated a full front-page article to Corneliu Codreanu, the Catholic-fascist leader of the Romanian Iron Guard, whom CJ admired for his "revolutionary attitude" and leadership skills. These unambiguous gestures were indications of an operation of "concealment," which historian Reto Hoffman has associated with what he calls

“the fascist effect.” In CJ’s rhetoric, we see the unspoken presence of an articulation of fascism that was “nationally specific and structurally transnational,” with notions of masculinity, leadership, and morality that its members sought to adapt to the entrepreneurial world, while connecting their nationalism to other fellow travelers across time and space.⁵¹ This ideological repertoire reveals the local impacts of the historical web of relations built by the constellation of the global Right, which this group construed in more specific Mexican and *regiomontano* terms.

As part of this operation of “concealment,” CJ insistently defined its movement as neither Left nor Right. CJ members, in fact, disdained the *regiomontano* entrepreneurial *derechas* for being too fixated with order, for turning a blind eye on injustice, and for dismissing solidarity. For them, these *derechas* had betrayed spiritual beliefs to amass material wealth and “occupy themselves with the vain frivolities of consumer society.” In contrast, they claimed to belong to the *derechas* fighting “the oppression of bourgeois chains,” while also embracing the revolutionary Left’s “desire to change society from one day to another” but under the banner of national unity.⁵² They also embraced the Third Position, a term associated with a sector of the Global Right that, in the 1960s and 1970s, proposed a nationalist, anticapitalist, and anticommunist alternative based on corporatism and the revolutionary dimension of fascism. In Asia, Europe, and Latin America, these Third Position groups combined nationalism, communitarianism, and anti-Semitism together with various leftist elements discussed by other authors in this volume, such as Trotskyism, Maoism, anti-imperialism, and *tercermundismo* (Third-Worldism).⁵³ Rejecting clear-cut ideological distinctions, they revered global “national-revolutionary” figures from Codreanu and Mussolini to Juan Perón and Ché Guevara, for them a national revolutionary warrior and martyr.⁵⁴

CJ carved out a space for its activists within the spectrum of the global Third Position by way of Peronism. The *justicialismo* of Juan Perón was attractive for them due to its platform of humanism and Christian values, its rejection of class struggle, and its claim to harmony between individuality and community, and between matter and spirit.⁵⁵ In the context of the 1970s (with Perón’s return to the presidency and the resurgence of the extreme Right within his party), the attraction to Peronism was a return to CJ’s own nationally specific and structurally transnational sources—that is, a return to the corporatist, syndicalist, and nationalist core cherished by the Mexican *derechas* of the 1930s and 1940s, and which its members shared, in many respects, with their counterparts in the Americas and across the Atlantic.

The members of CJ did not limit themselves to esoteric discussions about man and nation, to ideological proselytism, nor to these implicit or explicit forms of neofascist affiliation. They also commented, with biting critique, about political events in Mexico and the world, often in accordance with the open defiance of regiomontano business organizations toward President Luis Echeverría. On the occasion of Echeverría's 1974 presidential address, for instance, an editorial in the CJ newsletter pointed to the president's failure to appeal to middle-class concerns. CJ did not mention the conflict caused by the introduction of sexual education in public school textbooks, which elicited protests by conservative organizations in Monterrey and across the country. Instead, CJ's critique addressed its idea of reorganizing the economy under a social corporatist system. In view of its members, the middle class was the sector most affected by Echeverría's erratic economic policies, by the legacies of statization and collectivization, and by the regime's refusal to conceive models of private property to substitute ejidos (communal lands). They rejected state intervention while retaining the notion that private property ought to have a social function (an important tenet of Catholic social doctrine). They also expressed concerns about Echeverría's foreign policy, particularly his openness to build bonds with the socialist world, which the organization feared would leave Mexico exposed to the interventionism of Cuba and China. They were equally discontent with the breaking of relations with Franco's Spain and Pinochet's Chile, nations with which, they claimed, Mexico had "shared values."⁵⁶ In contrast to groups like MURO, CJ seldom referred to the activities of the revolutionary Left as a problem. Yet when its leaders did so, their critiques focused on the chaotic policies of Echeverría and his alleged leniency toward the Left.⁵⁷

Startlingly, CJ made no references to the failed kidnapping and killing of Eugenio Garza Sada, Grupo Monterrey's most emblematic figure. Attributed to the revolutionary leftist group Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre (23rd of September Communist League, LC23S, which had Monterrey as one of its main centers of activity), the death of Garza Sada (in December 1973) sparked a large civic mobilization, including a work stoppage by thousands of workers affiliated with the Grupo's company unions who took to the streets to mourn the regiomontano magnate. Garza's coffin was taken to El Tec, where some five thousand students paid homage to the institution's founder and benefactor. During the burial at the cemetery of La Purísima, the head of Grupo Monterrey's advisory council, Ricardo Margáin, gave a public speech accusing the federal government of Echeverría for its infamous attacks on the private

sector and alleged tolerance of Marxism.⁵⁸ Coinciding with a sharp economic downturn, and in the context of Echeverría's neopopulist redistributive policies, rumors of governmental complicity in the killing of Sada represented the highest point in the confrontation between Echeverría and the private sector. As Louise Walker notes, government anxieties about middle-class discontent and the spread of rumors about currency devaluations and capital flight were central to mutually reinforcing narratives of conspiracy: while regionomontano entrepreneurs insisted on Echeverría's complicity with Marxists home and abroad, government agents surveilled the political activities of Grupo Monterrey to back the official narrative of a "fascist" onslaught led by these elites.⁵⁹

In 1975, Echeverría's breaking of relations with Spain in protest for the execution of five leftist and nationalist guerrilleros forced CJ to pose a critique of the contradictions between foreign and domestic policy, shedding light on the views that the group held with respect to political violence. Its leaders asked, "How can one defend the guerrilleros . . . [the so-called] paladins of liberty, when they have murdered police officers?" In that case, they noted, "Lucio Cabañas and all the members of the Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre would be national heroes and we should let them continue killing police officers. In this light, how can we condemn the repression in Spain and not recall the repression of October of 68 and June of 1971 in Mexico?"⁶⁰

Combined with their silence about the killing of Garza Sada at the hands of LC23S, CJ's invocation of such paradigmatic examples of state repression is particularly intriguing, as it seemed to run counter to mainstream conservative views that disdained protesters/victims while supporting the government's authoritarianism. However, I would argue, their observations on the contradictions of Mexico's foreign policy stances and the low tolerance for internal dissent were ultimately part of a broader critique of the government's loss of authority and of the perception that the country was being "dragged towards a dictatorship of the Castroist type."⁶¹

CONCLUSION: CONCIENCIA JOVEN AND MEXICO'S "OLD" NEW RIGHT

Despite its reduced membership and small sphere of action, CJ holds a much broader significance for the study of the Mexican *derechas*. Its rhetoric, intellectual genealogy, and symbols place the group on the wide spec-

trum of the Right, pushing us to reframe the historical constitution of the Mexican *derechas* as oppositional actors embedded in national and regional contexts and yet shaped by transnational trends. With its deceiving challenge to Left/Right distinctions, CJ is in fact quite revealing of the ways in which the global Right underwent a process of pluralization, spanning the rebirth of neofascist violence as terrorism, the revitalization of religious extremism, and the proliferation of Third Position national-revolutionary projects that allowed for otherwise unconventional "contact zones" between the two extremes of the ideological spectrum. Unlike the clandestine and violent models of other right-wing student organizations such as MURO or Los Tecos, CJ's Third Position sought to reconcile a deep-seated conservative nationalism with somewhat atypical claims for social justice. Its members appealed to "revolutionary" traditions within their own intellectual and political milieu, embracing social corporatist ideas, the cultural nationalism of right-wing critics of the postrevolutionary state, and a divergent mix of symbols and discursive tropes from a variety of right-wing, fascist, and neofascist ideologies, including the Peronist Right, Spanish *falangismo*, and European Catholic fascism.

Bearing the deadweight of these intellectual and political currents, CJ was the product of a specific matrix of *regiomontano* values and political culture that, under the shadow of Grupo Monterrey's social hegemony, grew increasingly confrontational with the PRI regime, particularly during the group's brief existence (1974–77). Inextricably linked to the political disaffections of the post-Cristero Right, this confrontation originated in the conflicts over secularism and in the perceived excessive interventionism of the federal government in labor disputes. By the 1960s, the state of Nuevo León became an important stage for leftist student and labor movements, and for conservative groups that reacted to both the radicalizing effects of the Cuban Revolution and to the transformations of certain notions of family, gender, and sexuality that characterized this period. Unlike other right-wing groups, CJ said little regarding the reforms that took place within the Church in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. Instead, it focused its attention on the regime's neopopulist turn but also spouted critiques against other *derechas* for their unfettered materialism and their renunciation of the common good. Here I have argued that the radical conservatism of these students from El Tec was a platform of right-wing dissidence that aligned CJ with other actors contesting the regime. However, CJ's anti-liberalism and its Third Position neofascist

gestures located this regiomontano youth organization in an ideological fringe with respect to its context. And yet, as we research and learn more about other similar organizations elsewhere in Latin America and Europe, we can treat them as indications of a larger reconfiguration of right-wing politics with both local and global reverberations.

To the extent that the identity and political repertoire of the post-Cristero Right had a historical claim to “dissidence,” and that this dissidence was not limited to the national scale, the experience of CJ sheds light on how right-wing youth understood “tradition” as the product of transnational currents, subject to adjustment and adaptation, and as an instrument to interpret and intervene in its own context. In rejecting Left and Right distinctions, these young regiomontano activists sought to redefine the boundaries of conservatism as a form of radicalism to persuade and transform the men and women of their generation.

NOTES

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1. See Mammine, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*.
2. See, among others, Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*; Aviña, *Specters of Revolution*; and Oikión Solano and García Ugarte, *Movimientos Armados en México*. For a recent exception, see Pensado, “To Assault with the Truth.”
3. On the different derechas, see the collection of essays in Pani, *Conservadurismo y derechas en la historia de México*; and Collado Herrera, *Las derechas en el México contemporáneo*.
4. See Walker, *Waking from the Dream*.
5. See, among others, Meyer, *La Cristiada*; Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation in Post-Revolutionary Mexico*; and Dormady, *Primitive Revolution*.
6. Meyer, *La Cristiada*, t. 1, 389–90.
7. See, for example, Capistrán Garza, *La Iglesia Católica y la Revolución Mexicana*.
8. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s*, 82–83.
9. Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey*, 202–28; Nuncio, *El Grupo Monterrey*, 71–74.
10. Nuncio, *El Grupo Monterrey*, 83.
11. Camp, *Entrepreneurs and Politics in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, 210–11.

12. Ibid., 163–64.
13. Fuentes Mares, *Monterrey, una ciudad creadora y sus capitanes*, 58–60. Emphasis is in the original.
14. On the limited capacity of the postrevolutionary state to curtail these challenges, see Hamilton, *Limits of State Autonomy*. On the conflicts between the regionmontano private sector and the postrevolutionary state, see Saragoza, *Monterrey Elite and the Mexican State, 1880–1940*. See also Camp, *Entrepreneurs and Politics*.
15. Nuncio, *El Grupo Monterrey*, 61–62, 102–106.
16. On the contested meanings of the idea of Christian social order, see Andes and Young, *Local Church, Global Church*.
17. On MURO and FUA, see González Ruiz, *MURO: Memorias y testimonios: 1961–2002*; Dávila Peralta, *Las Santas Batallas*; and Gema Santamaria's chapter in this volume.
18. Nuncio, *El Grupo Monterrey*, 83–92.
19. "Declaración de principios de la Cruzada Regional Anti-Comunista," *Cruzada Regional Anticomunista: Mensaje Quincenal*, no. 9 (February 20, 1962): 2–3.
20. Tirado, "Los empresarios y la derecha en México."
21. Treviño Villarreal, *El Sabinazo*, 109–18.
22. Fuentes Mares, *Monterrey*, 155.
23. On Los Tecos, see Romero, "El movimiento fascista en Guadalajara," 31–102.
24. Torres Martínez, "Monterrey Rebelde 1970–1973," 40–50.
25. "Personalidad," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 1 (September 1974): 1.
26. "Actividades de Conciencia Joven," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 1 (September 1974): 1.
27. These ideas seem to stem from Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*.
28. "Hombre nuevo," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 1 (September 1974): 2.
29. "Identidad," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 1 (September 1974): 1.
30. See Guisa y Azevedo, *Hispanidad y germanismo*; Alfonso Junco, *España en carne viva*.
31. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, 261–62.
32. Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba," 216.
33. Ibid., 218.
34. Ibid., 224.
35. Carrel, *Man, the Unknown*, 220–21.
36. Ibid., 75; "La mujer, segundo principio ideológico de Conciencia Joven," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 2 (December 1974): 2.
37. "¿Es el feminismo una trampa de la sociedad de consumo?" *Conciencia Joven*, no. 5 (October–November 1975): 3.
38. "La mujer," 1–2.
39. Junco, *Cuatro Puntos Cardinales*, 26.
40. Ibid., 12.
41. "La sociedad: Tercer principio ideológico de Conciencia Joven," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 4 (June 1975): 2.

42. "Algo nuevo y mejor," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 11 (January 1977): 2–3.
43. See Espinosa, "Restoring Christian Social Order"; Meyer, *El Sinarquismo, El Cardenismo y la Iglesia, 1937–1947*. On the global diffusion of corporatism, see Costa Pinto and Palomanes Martinho, *A onda corporativa corporativismo*.
44. On "liberal corporatism" in the Mexican private sector, see Luna, "¿Hacia un corporativismo liberal?"
45. "La persona, primer principio ideológico de *Conciencia Joven*," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 2 (December 1974): 1.
46. "Las derechas, las izquierdas, y nuestras aspiraciones," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 3 (March 1975): 3.
47. "Conciencia histórica" *Conciencia Joven*, no. 5 (October–November 1975): 4. Like Vasconcelos, Junco saw *mestizaje* as the essence of *mexicanidad* and as having "solved the indigenous question." Junco, *Cuatro Puntos Cardinales*, 57–59.
48. On the Arrow Cross Party, see Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*.
49. "La nación, cuarto principio ideológico de *Conciencia Joven*," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 6 (December 1975–January 1976): 1.
50. *Conciencia Joven*, no. 6 (December 1975–January 1976): 2.
51. Hoffman, *The Fascist Effect*, 2–5.
52. "Conociendo a *Conciencia Joven*," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 5 (October–November 1975): 3.
53. On the links between neofascism and leftist radicalism, see Panvini, *Ordine nero, guerriglia rossa*.
54. On the reception of Che Guevara by European neofascists, see La Ferla, *L'altro Che*.
55. "Justicialismo," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 5 (October–November 1975): 1. On the Peronist Right, see Finchelstein, *Ideological Origins of the Dirty War*. "Justicialismo" refers to the "Third Position" or "middle way" taken by Perón between communism and capitalism.
56. "Algunos comentarios al IV Informe," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 2 (December 1974): 2.
57. "Cuando el río suena . . . agua lleva," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 10 (February 1977): 1.
58. Fuentes Mares, *Monterrey*, 200–202.
59. Walker, *Waking from the Dream*, 63–66.
60. "¿Franco y Echeverría, o España y México?," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 5 (October–November 1975): 2.
61. Córdova Olmedo, "El fuero de los españoles y los mexicanos sin fuero," *Conciencia Joven*, no. 6 (December 1975–January 1976): 6.

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