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Clashing Views on Modernization and Socio-economic Rights: Mexican Reception of Frank Tannenbaum's Mexico: The Struggle for Peace and Bread

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Abstract

The Alliance for Progress was not the only Cold War era ideological vision emanating from North America to critique existing conditions in Latin America and promote alternative models of economic and social development. Nor was the Alliance for Progress the only development discourse that met resistance south of the border. Focusing on Frank Tannenbaum's Mexico: The Struggle for Peace and Bread (1950) and Mexican commentary on it, this essay examines an earlier North American critique of Latin American social and economic development, informed by a distinct perspective and set of concerns, as well as Latin American reception of North American "wisdom." A famous author and friend of Mexican President Cárdenas, Tannenbaum was arguably the most prominent foreign supporter and ideologue of the Mexican Revolution, particularly its agrarian component. Peace and Bread was Tannenbaum's critique of the new developmental vision that emerged in Mexico (and much of Latin America) in the 1940s: industrialism. Tannenbaum argued that insufficient industrial resources and inequalities generated by the industrial model—deteriorating conditions for industrial workers and the rural majority—meant that industrialism was doomed to failure and should be abandoned. He advocated a radically different "philosophy of small things," in which Mexico would return to its agrarian focus and develop small-scale crafts industries. Tannenbaum's book was very poorly received in Mexico and he turned from hero to villain. Along with refutations in Mexican dailies, an entire issue of the prestigious Problemas Agrícolas e Industriales de México attacked his book. The Tannenbaum Controversy provides a window into a foreign socio-economic critique of Mexican modernization and a Mexican counterargument, grounded in the nation's revolutionary legacy of social justice, that championed the simultaneous advance of economic modernization and socio-economic rights. By comparing Peace and Bread and Tannenbaum's subsequent writings at the onset of the Cuban Revolution, the final section of this essay considers the relevance of the debate over Peace and Bread to later discussions of rights and development in the age of the Alliance for Progress.

Keywords: Socio-economic Rights, Mexico, Frank Tannenbaum, Modernization

1. Introduction

In the midst of the age of the so-called "Mexican Miracle" (1940s-1960s) of high growth rates, industrialization, and economic modernization, the post-World War II era was a time of grandeur and national pride in Mexico. American public intellectual Frank Tannenbaum, the long-time friend of Mexico and arguably the most important foreign defender and interpreter of the 1910 Mexican Revolution and subsequent agrarian reforms, however, wasn't celebrating. His discontent became clear in his 1950 book, *Mexico: The Struggle for Peace and Bread*, which articulated a scathing social critique of Mexican industrialism and economic modernization. Mexican intellectuals and the popular press weren't having any of it (on the response in daily newspapers see the "Frank Tannenbaum" archive at Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada in Mexico City). They refuted his book and villainized him, and he became persona non grata in Mexico (Krauze, "Frank Tannenbaum" 29). Despite the polemic over his 1950 book, most scholarship

on Tannenbaum's Mexico connection focuses on his writings about the Mexican Revolution published in the late 1920s (*The Mexican Agrarian Revolution*) and early 1930s (*Peace by Revolution*), including his relationship with Mexican elites in the 1930s (mostly notably, President Lázaro Cárdenas). Furthermore, Tannenbaum continues to be influential in scholarly debates today about the nature of the Mexican Revolution (Knight and Vinós, "Frank Tannenbaum y la Revolución Mexicana" 45). The controversy over Tannenbaum's 1950 book, *Mexico: The Struggle for Peace and Bread*, has received less scholarly attention. Nonetheless, this article maintains that the controversy was an important early episode in the intellectual history of the tensions between economic modernization and socio-economic rights, particularly in less advanced nations (e.g., Latin America).

The debate over *Peace and Bread*, termed the "Tannenbaum Controversy" in this article, is briefly discussed in some works on either Tannenbaum or the Mexican Miracle era (Knight 33-4, 47; Krauze, "Frank Tannenbaum" 26-7; Niblo 361). And there are two articles dedicated to the Tannenbaum Controversy, one by Enrique Montalvo, the other by Enrique Rajchenberg. The focus of both of these articles is the debate over the industrial versus the agrarian model that Tannenbaum's book inspired. However, coverage of the debate is very brief in both writings, perhaps, in part, because both articles are interested in lessons the Tannenbaum Controversy has for contemporary Mexico. Both works, published at the end of the 20th century, argue that Tannenbaum's critique of industrialism, despite the strong attacks it faced when published, has relevance to the problems Mexico faces as it enters a new century. Krauze has a somewhat similar approach folded into his broader coverage of Tannenbaum in Mexico, since he, too, weighs in on the debate over *Peace and Bread* and supports Tannenbaum (Krauze, "Frank Tannenbaum" 23).

One thing that differentiates this article from these earlier publications by Enrique Montalvo and Enrique Rajchenberg is the depth of coverage, for this essay provides a much more extensive examination of the Tannenbaum Controversy. More importantly, this essay's perspective is distinct. While it examines the agriculture versus industry debate, the focus, in keeping with the theme of this special issue of *fiar*, is on the topic of human rights and development. The Tannenbaum Controversy provides an ideal window into the relationship between rights and development because Tannenbaum's critique of Mexican industrialism focused on rights. Furthermore, he shaped the terms of the debate, so his Mexican detractors highlighted rights too. This essay's characterization of human rights is shaped by the concept of rights that informed the Tannenbaum Controversy, as the essay is primarily interested in shedding light on the perspectives of participants in the dispute. Academics sometimes make distinctions between types of rights by dividing them up into different categories: economic, social, cultural, civil, and political (Gunduz 6). Tannenbaum and his detractors focused much more on economic and social rights than civil and political rights. Consequently, this article stresses the social and economic realms, and labels them "socio-economic" rights owing to the interconnections between them.

An instructive context in which to place this article is the broader discourse about economic development and human rights (specifically in the socio-economic realm), and the tensions between the two. In developmental economics discourse, this division is sometimes termed "growth" versus "development," with the former referring primarily to levels of production (e.g., GDP or GNP), and the latter referring broadly to socio-economic development (and sometimes an even more comprehensive or holistic notion of what constitutes "development" that goes beyond socio-economic indicators). In developmental economics, a discourse of economic "growth" dominated from the WWII era until the mid-1960s, and from the mid-1960s onward (especially from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s) developmental economics placed greater emphasis on "development" (Arndt ch. 3 & 4; Gundoz 8). Additionally, there was an ongoing discussion about the interrelationship between "growth" and "development," including analysis of the tensions and contradictions between the two (Gundoz).

The Tannenbaum Controversy also explored the tensions between what developmental economists termed "growth" and "development" (what this essay terms economic modernization—especially industrialization—and socio-economic rights). Significantly, the Tannenbaum Controversy pre-dated the mid-1960s heyday of the debate in developmental economics literature by over a decade (the debate, of course, had antecedents; see Arndt 89-90). There's yet another way that the Tannenbaum Controversy was a forerunner. In the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution the United States became even more involved in promoting Latin American development than it had been previously, as illustrated by the Alliance for Progress. Hence, in the 1960s American designs on Latin America became paramount. The Tannenbaum Controversy also highlighted foreign involvement, for the Mexican backlash can be interpreted as a reaction to American meddling in Mexico's affairs. Perhaps the Mexican reaction was especially strong owing to Tannenbaum's great stature in Mexico and Latin America. He was an influential and distinct inter-American figure, a radical intellectual who had close ties with prominent Mexican and Latin American politicians and intellectuals from the 1920s through the 1960s. Not only did he travel south of the American border and dialogue with Latin American intellectuals in their own countries, but he also used his position as an academic to invite them to speak at seminars at Colombia University in New York City (Servín 52). The Tannenbaum Controversy provides insights into both Mexican attitudes about the advice of a distinguished foreign "expert" and Mexican ideas about the impact of foreign economic and political interests on Mexico's economic and social development.

Thus, the Tannenbaum Controversy was not only an antecedent to the 1960s debate in developmental economics about growth versus development but also foreshadowed Latin American reactions to increased American involvement in the region in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution. Consequently, the Tannenbaum Controversy is important in that it was an early episode in the discourse about the tensions between economic modernization and socio-economic rights in Latin America, as well as a precursor to the debate over the impact of foreign ideas and interests on the region. To be clear, a case isn't being made for the Tannenbaum Controversy shaping western development discourse, for the contours of the Tannenbaum Controversy were, in many ways, distinct. And some of the significance of the Mexican case lies precisely in its distinctiveness. In the case of Mexico, in the discourse of both Tannenbaum and his detractors, the Mexican Revolution had a large impact on the discourse about economic modernization and socio-economic rights. Tannenbaum's critique of the "Mexican Miracle," rooted in his embrace of Mexico's agrarian 1910 revolution and his nostalgia for traditional societies (including a stereotypical view of Indians and their traditions), rejected industrialization. Similarly, Tannenbaum's Mexican detractors maintained that the Mexican Revolution was the blueprint for their development model that championed economic modernization and social rights. Despite these distinctions, Mexican detractors' response wrestled with some of the same issues addressed in western development discourse, namely, the tensions between economic modernization and socio-economic rights (what developmental economists termed growth and development). Furthermore, Tannenbaum's Mexican detractors' promotion of modernization in the form of industrialization, at least in part, was shaped by broader Latin American ideas about the importance of industrialization in the "periphery."

This examination of the Tannenbaum Controversy is mostly divided into two parts. The first examines Tannenbaum's *Peace and Bread*, and the second surveys Mexican receptions of his work. In keeping with the essay's contention that the Mexican Controversy was an antecedent to later writings on development and rights, this piece ends with a final section that compares *Peace and Bread* to Tannenbaum's subsequent writings during the Cuban Revolution and the Alliance for Progress, and argues that on the topics of rights, development, and inter-Americanism there was a large degree of continuity between his earlier and later works.

2. Frank Tannenbaum's *Mexico: The Struggle for Peace and Bread*

Peace and Bread was published by Frank Tannenbaum in 1950 and examined the future of the Mexican economy following the upheaval of the 1910 Revolution and the subsequent tumultuous democracy. In 1950, his view of the nation could be summarized by one sentence from *Peace and Bread*, the emphasis of which was Tannenbaum's: "*It really needs a philosophy of little things*" (243). Tannenbaum recommended that Mexico not focus on rapid industrialization like Western Europe and the United States, and instead advocated an agricultural economy that was inspired by his vision of the spirit of the 1910 Revolution. The redistribution of land was of utmost importance, as was a restructuring of the economic conditions for the rural population, which he maintained represented ninety percent of Mexico's population. Among his recommendations, however, could be seen human and labor rights as well as inter-American cooperation, the development of which could be traced back to his involvement with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and through his previously published literature. Finally, he emphasized the importance of an inter-American system to the benefit of both Mexico and the United States.

Inter-American cooperation was an important segment of *Peace and Bread*. The final section of the book, "The Anvil of American Foreign Policy," included aspirations that Mexico and the United States would create a mutually beneficial economic system as well as continue to have peaceful diplomatic relations in the twentieth century. The chapter is established as a synopsis of Mexican-United States foreign relations from the end of the Porfiriato (1910) to World War II. Its setup is significant because it gave Tannenbaum free reign to expand upon his ideal relationship between the two states, in which he emphasized the Good Neighbor Policy and peaceful coexistence to facilitate Mexican self-determination. His ideal Mexico was one in which the presence of the United States was limited and did not involve the grandiose financial investments that he believed had crippled Mexican domestic production in previous decades (Tannenbaum, *Peace and Bread* 242). This mode of thought was in line with his previous human rights beliefs, which emphasized creating an economy in which the Mexican population was not dependent on foreign investors and had greater access to the fruits of their labors. Inter-American cooperation was also based on his heritage and life, since he grew up experiencing the problems of the laboring class and was closely associated with prominent Mexican officials.

Tannenbaum was born in Austrian Galicia in 1893 and immigrated to the United States in 1904. In 1906, he left his family and moved to New York, where he worked as a busboy and elevator operator (Hale 216). At this time, he became involved in the IWW and had frequent associations with *Mother Earth*, an anarchist journal. Eventually he became one of the leaders of the IWW during an economic crisis from 1913-1915 (Hale 217-8). He was arrested for leading groups of workers to churches and demanding shelter and food, even disrupting services. While in jail, he wrote about how the prison system should be reformed to improve the treatment of prisoners. In his work as a young man, evidence of his interest in labor can be seen, as can his early concept of human rights that emphasized decent living standards. His interest in the plight of workers would continue to grow and were later seen in his research in Mexico, where he was a friend and advisor to President Lázaro Cárdenas.

Many of his forays into Mexican politics, as well as his support of the original agrarian Mexican Revolution, could be seen as politically motivated. Tannenbaum was not just an academic but was also responsible as a definer of Mexico for the United States. He was extremely influential in conversations between Mexico and the United States, as his scholarly forays allowed him access to the politics and living situations of both worlds. His writings further made him significant, including earlier works like *Peace by Revolution: Mexico After 1910* and *Whither Latin America?: An Introduction to Its Economic and Social Problems*. Both were published in the 1930s and were some of the first works to give a comprehensive yet concise overview of Mexican and Latin American geography, politics, and

culture. His agenda for labor rights and inter-American cooperation could be seen even at this early stage, for both books described numerous issues with the economy and the ways in which industrialization was failing to benefit the working class.

By the time of the publication of *Peace and Bread*, Tannenbaum's concept of human rights in the labor sector had developed beyond his initial forays with the prison system and his association with the IWW. He believed the economy of Mexico should be one of "little things," without the large-scale industrialization that had characterized Western Europe and the United States (243). Among the reasons he listed were: The inability of Mexico's ecosystem to maintain production; the inability of the people in the country to purchase new manufactured goods; a lack of need for manufactured goods among the large rural population; minimum benefits for the population (only those in urban centers would prosper); and an inability to maintain the funding that Mexico would need to shift to an industrial structure (243). According to his analysis, industrialization would only benefit the small upper and middle classes, not the industrial workers themselves. While the middle class was able to purchase consumer goods and raise their standard of living, it was "at the expense of those who could least afford it – the industrial and agricultural laboring population" (221).

Peace and Bead emphasized the Mexican Revolution of 1910, which Tannenbaum believed to have been caused primarily because of an unequal distribution of land. Throughout *Peace and Bread*, his emphasis is on the idea that the revolutionaries will not promote industrialization, and that Mexico's problems will not be solved unless the issue of land was settled. This meant redistribution to the large group of rural poor, not industrialization. The emphasis on "little things" was not an escape from the state, as might be inferred by his anarchist background (Tannenbaum, *Peace and Bread* 242). Instead, it was supposed to prevent Mexican citizens from suffering the drawbacks of attempted industrialization. While he knew most Mexican intellectuals and politicians would be opposed to his critique, he believed they were following an industrial developmental model that was detrimental to laborers, and his book urged Mexicans to change it along his lines. This would mean not investing in the technological industries of Europe and the United States, such as railroads and the manufacture of consumer goods. Instead, the emphasis was on the land and local production of traditional goods and crafts. Tannenbaum's prescriptions for Indians were informed by stereotypes related to nativism.

The nation of "little things" was more in line with his interpretation of the Revolution (Tannenbaum, *Peace and Bread* 242). Although many of these ideas could be viewed as imperialism, and indeed many Mexican critics and reviewers decried his book for that reason, it can also be seen as a continuation of his interests in labor rights. To him, Mexico in the 1950s was "a nation divided between those who live in a modern world and those who live in a primitive world" (173). Mexico's industrializing economy was only benefitting a small urban middle class, not the many thousands of agricultural workers or laborers in rural regions and mines. The current agricultural and attempted industrial systems could not provide workers with a minimum standard of living that would allow the people to support themselves and their families in a way reminiscent of the recent human rights decisions by the United Nations. The nation of "little things" was built on the idea of communities thriving and providing for themselves through the small-scale production of essentials like textiles and tools that could be traded with one another, omitting the ominous middleman of foreign enterprise and investment (243).

Tannenbaum said in many ways in *Peace and Bread* that among his chief concerns was the living situation of Mexico's population: "If the Mexican government wishes to meet the basic issue confronting it – that of finding a means of livelihood for its rapidly increasing population – it will have to devise an alternative program, one more consonant with Mexican realities, and one that it can carry out with greater freedom from dependence upon foreign loans and investments" (Tannenbaum, *Peace and Bread* 242). He also believed that the rural population, which comprised the majority and consisted of agricultural and industrial workers in industries

like mining, was the most important section for Mexico. He stated: "There is no virtue in destroying the Mexican rural community. It is the best thing Mexico has; that is where its strength and resiliency lies. The Revolution proved that certainly" (242). Human and labor rights could be seen in Tannenbaum's work through his emphasis on the plight of the worker, and his belief that the government owed its citizens minimum living conditions. He separated the rural sector from the urban and described an economy of "little things" designed to benefit them with minimum foreign invasion (243). In redesigning the Mexican economy of the future, he emphasized the state of the large agrarian population, drawing upon ideas from his earlier literature like *Whither Latin America*, published in 1934.

The main reason why *Peace and Bread*'s conclusions could be seen as human rights is the emphasis on viable economic conditions in Mexico that would improve the lives of not just the urban middle class but also the economically struggling masses. These rights included access to food, clothing, and other necessities that could be constructed in communities and shared amongst each other. It also included the adequate redistribution of land as inspired by the 1910 Revolution, so that hunger and starvation would not be the major concerns they were in 1950 (Tannenbaum, *Peace and Bread* 243). Inter-American economic cooperation fulfilled a similar purpose by eliminating what Tannenbaum viewed as predatory practices by nations such as the United States in investing in industries that Mexico would never be able to manage on its own, and using money that Mexico could never pay back while depriving the nation of already limited natural resources. However, Tannenbaum's ideas were not received in this manner when *Peace and Bread* was published in 1950.

In contrast to the focus on socio-economic rights illustrated by his promotion of better living and working conditions and a more equitable distribution of wealth, Tannenbaum paid little attention to the issue of individual liberties. He listed the individual liberties protected under the 1917 Constitution in a single sentence (Tannenbaum, *Peace and Bread* 59-60), but didn't elaborate. Nor did he justify his brevity, but there are some possible explanations. One is Tannenbaum's overriding concern since his early life with issues of social justice and adequate living and working conditions. Another is Tannenbaum's positive assessment of Mexico's Revolutionary state combined with his analysis of Mexican society. Rather than expressing concern about state repression of individual rights, he was concerned about historic inequalities in Mexico and saw the state as a force to rectify injustice. For example, he maintained that the Constitutional Convention was concerned with "rectifying grievances and establishing justice" (103). The Constitution enhanced the power of the state in the realm of property rights to carry out a social justice mission. Owing to historical inequality in Mexico, it appears that Tannenbaum thought the state was best equipped to play this role in social leveling. Tannenbaum's analysis of labor rights was similar. While he acknowledged individual labor rights, he didn't emphasize them. He wrote, "If the labor law does not repudiate the individual liberties consecrated in the Constitution of 1917, it gives them a new direction" (119-20). He maintained that under the state-supported labor unions ushered in by the 1917 Constitution, labor rights were more collective than individual. In Tannenbaum's analysis of property and labor, the state was a potent force of social justice, implicitly suggesting that rights (which were perhaps more collective than individual) weren't in jeopardy.

Tannenbaum examined politics at greater length, but his analysis was similar since he downplayed the significance of individual political liberties and democracy. He explicitly stated that democracy did not exist in Mexico, and explained how the undemocratic system operated. He partially attributed the existence of undemocratic politics to the historical legacy of caudillo rule. However, he didn't critique the undemocratic politics from the perspective of individual liberties by attacking the system for limiting political rights and freedoms. On the contrary, he noted positive outcomes of undemocratic politics, maintaining that Mexico's one-party state made violence during transitions of power less likely (95). Tannenbaum's analysis suggests he didn't

critique one-party rule because it provided stability and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) had a legacy of dedication to social justice, equality, and the redistribution of wealth. The fact that Mexico's one-party system was ruled by the PRI, a party dedicated to creating an equitable society, appears to explain Tannenbaum's lack of concerned about Mexico's undemocratic politics.

3. Mexican Reception of Tannenbaum's *Mexico: The Struggle for Peace and Bread*

In 1951, *Problemas Agrícolas e Industriales de México*, a leading Mexican economic journal that promoted debate and dialogue on important economic issues, dedicated an entire edition to Tannenbaum's *Peace and Bread.* Fourteen important Mexican public intellectuals commented on his work. This was a diverse group of prominent intellectuals, including economists, philosophers, linguists, journalists, and engineers, referred to as "commentators" in this essay. Their responses varied significantly in content, focus, style, and length (some were as short as 2-3 pages and the longest was about 60 pages). Nevertheless, everyone commented on Tannenbaum's three chapters 11, 12 and 13 on the economy, the most controversial section of his book.

It will be useful to explain the concept of human rights articulated by the commentators at the outset. Perhaps inspired by Tannenbaum's critique of the negative social impact of Mexico's industrial policies, most commentators broached the issue of rights and they broadly conceived the concept in similar ways. Rather than a precise and consciously constructed concept, their notion of human rights was vague and based on unconscious assumptions. In other words, they were not engaged in a conscious discourse about "rights." Perhaps partly shaped by their response to Tannenbaum's criticisms, commentators' discussion of what is conceived of as human rights in this essay referred to socio-economic rights, especially the quality of life and work of industrial workers and rural campesinos, and the extent to which these groups were able to meet their basic material needs. Issues pertaining to the material and social conditions of the workplace received the most attention, including wages, working conditions, and workers' benefits (Aguilar; Cosío Villegas; Facha Gutiérrez; González Casanova). While commentators discussed both rural and urban working and living conditions, their treatment of the former wasn't a full-fledged "Indigenous rights" discourse but rather more of a "rural labor" discourse. Gender in the form of "women's rights" was even more invisible than "Indigenous rights" in this socio-economic discourse articulated by a group of entirely male commentators. Notwithstanding Tannenbaum's discussion of environmental deterioration and the fact that a conservation movement existed in Mexico, commentators were also silent on "environmental rights." Along with a discussion of rights that concentrated primarily on class and region (i.e., urban and rural working and living conditions) and, at least implicitly, on ethnicity, commentators also focused on the level of the nation state. Many commentators discussed the ways "imperialist" forces exploited Mexico and Mexicans (González Casanova; Gortari; Loyo; Mesa), suggesting external forces stifled and impaired Mexican socio-economic development.

Commentator Gilberto Loyo, a prominent demographer who carried out national censuses, was an exception. He was the only commentator who explicitly used the term "human rights." Rather than providing a specific definition, he invoked the term when explaining the difference between "quantitative" and "collective" population growth. He associated the latter, which he called "social" and referred to quality of life as opposed to mere numerical increase, with human rights. For Loyo, the quality of life encompassed both material and cultural elements. In addition to living and working conditions, benefits, and wages, Loyo included "roads, railroads, schools, ejidos, unions, cooperatives, newspapers, theaters, cultural missions, the dissemination of the principles of the Revolution, generate collective demographic growth" (Loyo 203). Thus, while Loyo was in keeping with other commentators by highlighting what is being termed socio-economic rights in this essay, he also included a broader array of features into his definition of social rights. Loyo's uniqueness notwithstanding, commentators' understanding

of rights was imprecise but broadly in agreement and focused on socio-economic issues.

In accordance with the aforementioned nationalist sentiment in commentators' discourse, commentators discredited Tannenbaum by focusing on his foreignness, thereby emphasizing Mexican intellectual sovereignty. Indeed, most commentators discredited Tannenbaum as a foreigner (notwithstanding the fact that some commentators credited him with having insights into Mexico far beyond the typical tourist and praised parts of his book). Tannenbaum's outsider status was a prominent topic of discussion. Some commentators went on for pages about Tannenbaum's foreignness. Academic and journalist Emilio Uranga also emphasized Tannenbaum's arrogance (Uranga 221-2). Two portrayals of Tannenbaum emerged: the ignorant foreigner (with a strong dash of country bumpkin in Carrió's portryal), and an imperialist and enemy, or an agent of imperialist forces (Aguilar; Gortari).

The issue of sovereignty also had relevance when commentators discussed Mexico's blueprint for national development. If there was a desire to limit the power of foreign capital, commentators also pushed back against the influence of foreign ideas. Implicitly and explicitly refuting Tannenbaum and foreign blueprints, commentators asserted that Mexico would plan its own future (Zea 186). Indeed, in accordance with their refutation of Tannenbaum, commentators didn't point to any other foreign thinkers when charting Mexico's course forward. Many commentators placed the origins of Mexico's development model in the Mexican Revolution (e.g., Flores). The Mexican Revolution, with its popular elements and concern with sovereignty, determined the country's direction. Eli de Gortari, an engineer, philosopher of science and logician, maintained Mexico was unique in Latin America owing to its popular revolution. Another commentator asserted that an intellectual maturity developed after the Revolution and Mexicans determined their own course forward. According to commentators, current leaders were a new generation that continued to follow the principles of the Revolution. Loyo, pointing specifically to social issues and human rights, did acknowledge the influence of broader western developments, but maintained that the Mexican Revolution was more influential. Even if there wasn't a single narrative about the Revolution and its legacy in commentators' discourse, some prominent themes emerged in their collective writings: the Revolution put Mexico on its own independent course, one that emphasized sovereignty and social justice.

Along with providing insights into commentators' views on the origins of the Mexican development model, the majority of commentators' writing on the legacy of the Mexican Revolution can be interpreted as a defense of the Revolution's achievements in the social sphere, so commentators' writings may be considered a nationalist defense of Mexico against Tannenbaum, a prominent foreign critic. However, even defenders had mixed assessments, noting both successes and failures (Aguilar; Cosío Villegas; Loyo). And some commentators strongly critiqued contemporary Mexico (Cosío Villegas). Taken as a whole, commentators' assessments of Mexico's advances in the social sphere since the Mexican Revolution were positive but mixed.

To challenge Tannenbaum's association of the Revolution solely with agrarianism, more than one commentator connected the Revolution with an industrial as well as an agrarian impulse. Furthermore, regarding sectoral development, commentators unanimously rejected Tannenbaum's recommendation to discontinue industrialism and focus on agriculture and small crafts production. All agreed that Mexico should continue on its current path of agriculture and industry. One commentator's assertion that Tannenbaum's proposal wasn't controversial on this issue accurately captures commentators' consensus on the importance of industrial development. This wasn't a new idea. Promoting balanced sectoral development including agriculture, mining, and manufacturing had antecedents that went back to the colonial era (including Alexander von Humboldt's famous *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*). While there were debates in the nineteenth century, during the Porfiriato (1876-1910) intellectuals generally agreed on this balanced sectoral approach (Altable et. al ch.

3; Weiner, "Blurred Boundaries" 78-9). Hence commentators' position had strong historical antecedents. Influenced by evolutionism, commentator Manuel German Parra, an economist, teacher, and writer, harmoniously incorporated agriculture and industry into Mexican identity in a chronological fashion, maintaining Mexico's agrarian revolution overthrew feudalism and its current industrial revolution strengthened capitalism (Parra 290). Along with showing that industry had historical roots and was well suited to Mexican conditions, commentators also emphasized its importance to national sovereignty (Noriega Morales).

Further defending mechanization, commentators contested Tannenbaum's claim that industrialization adversely affected the countryside, suggesting a harmonious coexistence between the two. Economist and writer Noriega Morales stated that industrial and agricultural development were compatible (Noriega Morales 229). Some commentators went further, arguing that modernization benefited rural Mexico. Daniel Cosío Villegas, an educator, economist, and social critic, pointed out that cities provided an escape hatch for rural people without local opportunities. Economist and academic Alonso Aguilar maintained that the infrastructure and energy needs of rural areas could only be supplied by a modernized Mexico that Tannenbaum rejected. Aguilar also contested Tannenbaum not by denying his claims about rural poverty, but by countering Tannenbaum's explanation for it, maintaining that social problems in the countryside were rooted in land concentration, not the growth of cities and industrialization (Aguilar 180).

The most prominent refutation of Tannenbaum's vision of an agrarian Mexico, an attack that broached the issue of social development from a nationalist angle, labeled Tannenbaum an imperialist. During the so-called "Mexican Miracle," especially during the Alemán administration (1946-1952), official discourse associated industrialism with sovereignty, modernization, and development. Policies strongly supported industrialization and manufacturing increased at an unprecedented rate. Some commentators represented Tannenbaum's attack on industrialism as an articulation of an imperialist plot to subjugate and exploit Mexico. Economist and journalist Jorge Carrión, linking industrialization to sovereignty, warned that the "capitalist structures threatened to absorb weak nations with limited economic development" (Carrión 308). Pablo González Casanova, an anthropologist and linguist, equated the lack of manufacturing with neo-colonial status, stating that Tannenbaum's ideas had similarities with Europe's "scientific and mercantile" conquest of Hispanic America based on a free trade doctrine that justified the sale of European manufactured goods to the western hemisphere (González Casanova 169). Noriega Morales emphasized dependency, maintaining that following Tannenbaum's prescription would make Mexico a "primary materials producer" dependent on the "highly industrialized consumers of those primary materials" (Noriega Morales 229). He promoted Mexican industrialization and technical modernization to "reduce dependency on the advanced nations," maintaining that economic modernization would raise Mexico to a higher level that was "more dignified and free in the community of nations" (Noriega Morales 230).

Despite concerns about imperialism, commentators didn't call for a total separation from the advanced nations (including the United States), a more radical position that proponents of the dependency theory such as Andre Gunder Frank and others would champion in the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast, Mexican commentators' perspectives during the Tannenbaum episode were compatible with an expanded role of the state but within an international capitalist framework, a position in accordance with the thinking of Raúl Prebisch and the Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA), which called for the utilization of foreign capital for the ends of import substitution industrialization. Furthermore, a Mexican variant of this line of thought developed around mid-century, and Prebisch had established relations with Mexican intellectuals (Weiner "Mexico and Central America"). The commentators' position didn't entirely reject foreign contact, which might suggest that commentators were sympathetic to Tannenbaum's brand of inter-Americanism that called for diminished American power in the

region and championed mutual respect between countries and national sovereignty (e.g., Tannenbaum supported American capital utilized for social good in host countries). However, several commentators criticized Tannenbaum's final chapter on U.S. foreign policy, maintaining it advocated too close a relationship and overlooked American transgressions. Perhaps a larger issue was that despite the fact that Tannenbaum made a case for mutual respect he also, as noted above, still envisioned a Mexico that exported raw materials and imported American industrial goods, a scenario that commentators universally rejected.

Concerns with sovereignty and independence also, at least in part, inspired commentators' rejection of Tannenbaum's "philosophy of small things." Commentators universally maintained that his "philosophy of small things" underestimated Mexico's potential. Even Cosío Villegas, who in other publications had maintained Mexicans had an exaggerated sense of their nation's natural wealth and economic potential (Weiner, "Antecedents" 75), asserted that Tannenbaum underestimated Mexico, contending Mexico shouldn't be compared to countries like Costa Rica and Bolivia (Cosío Villegas 161). Picking a middle position, he suggested Mexico belonged somewhere between these Latin American countries and advanced nations. Other commentators also maintained that Mexico belonged at a middle tier. Along with the issue of sovereignty, perhaps pride also inspired commentators' rejection of a Mexico of "small things." While commentators were silent on this point, it may have been difficult to accept Tannenbaum's position, which diminished Mexico's status on the global economic stage.

Commentators' "middle" position also reflected their approach to promoting economic and social advances. Indeed, possibly a single word that encapsulates commentators' ideas about the relationship between economy and social rights is "balance." When taken collectively (even if not articulated by all commentators), what stands out is the promotion of a balance of economic and social development, what might be labeled balancing growth and development (even if commentators didn't use these specific terms). Veering from Tannenbaum's "philosophy of small things" in part by altering the meaning of the foreigner's terminology, Loyo called for a philosophy of "proportional things," which referred to "balancing economic progress with social justice," a process that entailed promoting steady and even economic progress, addressing imbalances and redistributing wealth, and preventing land concentration and imperialism (Loyo 202). The term "balance" captures the economic vision commentators articulated in their response to Tannenbaum in additional ways. Positioning themselves between Tannenbaum's "philosophy of small things" and his charge that Mexico was growing too fast, commentators advocated measured and steady progress, perhaps partly to balance what economists would later term growth with development. Also, commentators championed balanced sectoral development rather than highlighting one branch of the economy, explicitly refuting Tannenbaum's agrarian nation. Finally, balance characterized some commentators' approach to the economic system. Carrión maintained that Tannenbaum created a false tension between agrarianism and industrialism, but the real dividing lines were imperialism and communism, and that Mexico should steer an independent middle course.

Commentators' ideal of a balanced approach that promoted both growth and development was most evident in their discourse about workers and working conditions. Commentators made a case for both economic modernization and social advance for industrial workers in their critique of Tannenbaum's characterization of industrialism's negative consequences for the workforce. Commentators maintained that Tannenbaum's examples of nineteenth-century Britain and America no longer applied. Developing this critique, González Casanova showed Tannenbaum's position was a rehash of a nineteenth-century social critique of Mexican industrialization made by Justo Sierra, a leading intellectual during the Porfiriato (1876-1910). González Casanova argued that changes brought by the Mexican Revolution made Sierra's critique invalid and characterized the revolution as popular and comprised of a range of groups with diverse interests that placed campesinos' and workers' rights and

sovereignty center stage. He maintained that the realization of revolutionary goals manifested itself in industrialism, sovereignty, and workers' rights. Thus, an industrial model with a mix of social justice was a legacy of the Mexican Revolution (González Casanova 167-8). Without discussing the Revolution, Facha Gutiérrez made a similar argument about contemporary conditions, contending that in contrast to earlier industrialization when capital was king, in the Mexican case issues like adequate wages, good working conditions, and workers' benefits were calculated into the costs. He defined this as the "humanization" of work since social needs were taken into account (González Casanova 225).

Loyo, while acknowledging uneven regional development and continued challenges in the social and economic spheres, maintained that in parts of the country a "new Mexico" had emerged, one that he characterized as a combination of "economic development and social justice." Technology and modernization played a role in this social betterment, which characterized both rural and urban Mexico, albeit only in certain regions. Farms and factories utilized technology, increased productivity, social conditions for campesinos and worker improved, and a new middle class emerged. It appears Loyo, who stated outsiders saw "tragedy" in Mexico, conceived his positive assessment as a corrective to Tannenbaum's negative portrayal, and, more broadly, foreigners' negative assessments of Mexico (Loyo 200).

Some commentators appeared to share similar values about the importance of promoting social development, but had dimmer assessments of current conditions for workers. Aguilar, in a section titled "Industry and Social Justice," highlighted worker repression. He described a dire situation for workers owing to frozen wages, strike restrictions, and dependent unions, all of which impoverished workers and inspired migration to the United States (Aguilar 179-81). Cosío Villegas critiqued official ideology, maintaining it placed a premium on national development thereby marginalizing social development. He asserted that an official ideology that worshipped national "material progress" above all else justified workers' exploitation since it required "order, work, and discipline" for the good of the country (Cosío Villegas 158). These critiques are in keeping with scholarship, which highlights Mexico's emphasis on material progress more than social justice during the "Mexican Miracle" (Krauze, *Biography of Power* ch. 18).

4. Development and Rights in Tannenbaum's later works on the Cuban Revolution and the Alliance for Progress

While the setting changed significantly after 1959, when compared with *Peace and Bread*, Tannenbaum's analysis of the relationship between rights and development in the age of the Cuban Revolution and Alliance for Progress was characterized more by continuity than change. Tannenbaum was highly critical of the Cuban Revolution, but acknowledged it held wide appeal (Tannenbaum, *Ten Keys* ch. 9 & 10). His writings rejected the Cuban model and promoted a different path forward for Latin American countries. Nevertheless, his policy recommendations for Latin America in the era of the Cuban Revolution, in keeping with his analysis in *Peace and Bread*, emphasized the connection between social rights and economic development. Political rights didn't receive as much attention. It's not that he was at odds with the modernization theory and its application as a solution to dilemmas that faced Latin America; he didn't necessarily disagree with Walt Rostow's vision in which foreign investment, economic modernization, political democracy, and social equality all reinforced each other, providing an alternative model to Cuba (Ish-Shalom). But Tannenbaum questioned some aspects of Alliance for Progress's policy implementation, and his focus was distinct (Tannenbaum, *Ten Keys* 227-36).

While his writings at the onset of the Cuban Revolution focused more on political rights and democracy than *Peace and Bread*, social rights nevertheless remained paramount. For example, in the 1955 piece "The Future of Democracy in Latin America," alongside a critique of the lack of democracy, there was a more pronounced critique of social inequality in Latin America. This was also true of some of his writings from the early 1960s in the aftermath

of the Cuban Revolution. He harshly critiqued Latin America's highly stratified social structure (Tannenbaum, *Ten Keys* ch. 10; "The United States"). Furthermore, he traced inequality back more than a century and argued that nothing had changed. His analysis suggested that despite political problems the main issues in contemporary Latin America were social.

The Mexican example provides a case in point. In a brief article he wrote on the 50th anniversary of the Revolution, Tannenbaum argued that the Mexican Revolution ushered in an era of social change with the emergence of a middle class and the possibility for social mobility (Tannenbaum, "The Mexican Revolution"). This was especially the case for "mestizos" in urban areas, but even Indians who remained in villages were "less afraid" than they had been before the Revolution. He acknowledged that advancements in the political realm had been more limited and that Mexico remained an undemocratic one-party state (albeit, he maintained, with some popular institutions for peasants and workers that provided a degree of participation, and a relatively free press). Nevertheless, owing to the social justice mission of the Mexican Revolution and the Revolutionary state, conditions in Mexico were positive. Owing to social advances and contentment, Tannenbaum maintained, it was highly unlikely that Mexico would follow Cuba's revolutionary example. While Tannenbaum never explicitly stated it, his analysis implied that Latin America needed social justice and a social leveling more than political democracy, and if leaders were committed to social justice (as was the case in Mexico) then state-engineered redistribution policy was a viable path forward.

Another continuity with *Peace and Bread* was Tannenbaum's continued focus on rural Indian villagers. His later writings expanded his commentary to include not only Mexico but also other regions of Latin America with notable indigenous populations. In keeping with his earlier analysis, he championed respect for local traditions and practices and a degree of autonomy. Thus, he rejected the imposition of an external model of development (Tannenbaum, "The Future of Democracy" 439-41). Tannenbaum wasn't promoting complete isolation for Indian villages. Rather, in a manner reminiscent of some of Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio's recommendations (*Aspects of Mexican Civilization*), Tannenbaum advocated external aid and support that remained sensitive to local culture and conditions. Perhaps partly in response to concerns about the appeal of the Cuban Revolution, Tannenbaum maintained that his approach, which respected local traditions and allowed a degree of autonomy, would promote political stability in the countryside.

Another continuity between *Peace and Bread* and Tannenbaum's writings in the era of the Cuban Revolution had to do with the role of foreigners in Latin America. In keeping with *Peace and Bread*, in his later writings he saw the United States and U.S. capital as a potentially positive force. However, in the age of the Cuban Revolution he expressed significant concerns about the United States' historical involvement in Latin America. Perhaps based on his awareness of growing Latin American nationalism associated with the Cuban Revolution, as well as the radicalization of ECLA with the emergence of dependency analysis in the 1960s, he acknowledged a feeling in Latin America that the United States posed an obstacle to Latin American industrial development. Additionally, Tannenbaum wrote extensively about ways that the United States had blocked progressive change and democracy in Latin America, and even labeled American actions "sins" (Tannenbaum, "The United States"). Perhaps this awareness of American meddling inspired his critique of the policy implementation plan for the Alliance for Progress. Specifically, he critiqued the idea that American aid be dependent upon Latin American behavior. He countered that no conditions should be placed on American aid, and that the United States should continue to support Latin American countries even if they expropriated U.S. interests (Tannenbaum, *Ten Keys*, 227-36). In short, Tannenbaum was aware of America's transgressions, but still believed an enlightened United States could be a positive force in Latin America. In keeping with Mexican commentators' critiques of *Peace and Bread*, Tannenbaum's brand of enlightened inter-Americanism continued to raise concerns among Latin American intellectuals after the Cuban Revolution. For example, Tannenbaum

championed an inter-American alliance that included the U.S. to check the power of Castro in the region, but Carlos Fuentes and other intellectuals on the left associated Tannenbaum's brand of inter-Americanism with American hegemony (Servín 51).

But in contrast to *Peace and Bread*, in his writings from the early 1960s Tannenbaum accepted and even promoted modernization, albeit (as noted above) a form of modernity that wouldn't entirely undermine local traditions. Part of his promotion of modernization hinged on his idea of American "consumer society." He maintained that dramatic social change had occurred in the United States in recent decades that had resulted in the creation of a "consumer society." He emphasized a democratic society in which all Americans had the ability to purchase consumer goods, thereby associating "consumer society" with social advance and equality (Tannenbaum, *Ten Keys* ch. 9 and 10). He maintained that American "consumer society" had worldwide influence and was even more significant than Marx. He suggested that exporting "consumer society" to Latin America could also have positive social consequences (Tannenbaum, *Ten Keys*, ch. 10). Thus, even though his promotion of modernization departed from *Peace and Bread*, his focus on the social realm remained constant. The difference was that now modernization and industrialization promoted equality, a reversal of his argument in *Peace and Bread* about the consequences of industrialization.

Tannenbaum's promotion of modernization and industrialization was also rooted in his understanding of a Latin American perspective, especially the growth of Latin American nationalism. He maintained that being condemned to producing raw materials encouraged a feeling of inferiority amongst Latin Americans, and that a Latin American industrial urge was associated with nationalism and national pride (Tannenbaum, "The United States"). Related to this, Tannenbaum pointed to the great disparity of wealth between the U.S. and Latin America (based on per capita income), and suggested that modernization and industrialization could perhaps reduce inequalities. While Tannenbaum made no references to Mexicans' reception of *Peace and Bread*, perhaps Mexicans' hostile attack on Tannenbaum's agrarian vision partly informed his changing position on Latin American industrialization.

5. Conclusion

The Tannenbaum Controversy was an early mid-century episode in the intellectual history of the tensions between economic modernization and socio-economic rights in the developing world that was distinctly Mexican but resonated with later discourses about growth and development during the age of the Cuban Revolution and Alliance for Progress. The Tannenbaum Controversy provides insights into the complexities and power dynamics of inter-American relations (including a chilly Mexican response to a foreign "expert's" recommendations and preference for a home-grown blueprint), as well conflicting understandings of the relationship between modernization and social rights. Since Tannenbaum critiqued Mexico's industrialization project from a social vantage point and set the terms of the debate (a debate Mexicans were prepared to engage in owing to rhetoric of social betterment associated with the legacy of the Mexican Revolution and the social mission of the Revolutionary state), the dispute highlighted the relationship between economic modernization and social rights.

Highlighting socio-economic issues as opposed to civil and political rights, Tannenbaum argued Mexico's current industrial model had dire consequences for social development. While a minority experienced gains, it was at the expense of declining social conditions for rural Mexico, where the bulk of the population resided. For the social betterment of the many, Tannenbaum argued, Mexico should abandon its industrial project and return to its agrarian roots, a legacy of Mexico's 1910 agrarian revolution. Perhaps informed by a romanticized view of the countryside and a stereotypical notion of Indians in an age of modernization, Tannenbaum imagined a Mexico of self-sufficient rural dwellers living in small flourishing communities that embraced Mexican traditions and customs.

In contrast, Tannenbaum's Mexican detractors were forward looking, even if they

grounded and justified their vision in Mexico's revolutionary legacy. Mexico's popular 1910 Revolution ushered in new sensibilities and possibilities. Building on that revolutionary legacy of sovereignty, modernization, and social justice, many commentators conceived of Mexico's mid-century project as a balancing act that (somewhat) successfully promoted both economic modernization and social advance, and had the added benefit of strengthening sovereignty via industrialization.

This distinctly Mexican mid-century dispute, rooted largely in disagreements between Tannenbaum and his detractors over the historical legacy of the Mexican Revolution, had broader implications for the second half of the 20th century. In the age of the Cuban Revolution, Tannenbaum's prescriptions to pacify Latin America, which emphasized social rights (more than political and civil rights) and inter-American cooperation, largely built on his arguments in *Peace and Bread*, with the notable difference that he came to accept Latin American economic nationalism, perhaps a lesson learned from Mexico's cold reception of *Peace and Bread*. And in keeping with the discourse of Mexican commentators' response to Tannenbaum, developmental economics discourse in the 1960s and 1970s wrestled with the challenges of promoting both growth and development while simultaneously, especially in the case of Dependency theorists, strengthening sovereignty in the "Third World."

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