

INDUSTRIAL SECTORS AND UNION POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENTS:

Light and Power Workers in Argentina and Mexico

James P. Brennan
Georgetown University

The March 1976 coup that overthrew a turbulent Peronist government in Argentina also ended one of the few experiments with worker control of industry in Latin American history. For nearly three years, the Buenos Aires local of the country's strong light and power workers' union, the Sindicato de Luz y Fuerza, administered the great public utility SEGBA (Servicios Eléctricos del Gran Buenos Aires), provider of electric power for the capital city and much of the province of Buenos Aires. This experiment with worker control was all the more noteworthy because it was not undertaken by the maverick Cordoban local of Luz y Fuerza, led by Agustín Tosco, principal spokesman within the labor movement for socialism. Rather, the initiative was taken by a bastion of traditional Peronist trade unionism led by Juan José Taccone, the implacable foe of Tosco's *clasista* positions.¹

The reasons underlying the experiment with worker control were complex. Partly, they represented Juan Perón's wish to win support from this strategic union for his austerity measures and his generally conser-

1. *Clasista* is a shorthand term used to differentiate the heterogeneous Marxist trade unionism of the 1960s and 1970s in Argentina from its Peronist rival. Although Córdoba was the center of *clasismo* and Tosco the left-wing labor movement's most important figure, the *clasistas* properly speaking originated in the local autoworkers' unions. Because recently the term has come to include all the Marxist tendencies at work in the labor movement of those years, it will be used here to distinguish the positions adopted by the Cordoban light and power workers' local from those of the Buenos Aires local. The best study of the union's administration of SEGBA is Richard Graziano, *La gestión sindical en SEGBA* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1989). Luz y Fuerza's secretary general, Juan José Taccone, left a testimony on his experience in overseeing the "autogestión" of SEGBA in *900 días en la empresa* (Buenos Aires: Fundación 2001, 1977). Taccone was an advocate of worker self-management along the lines practiced in the European social democracies, but he rejected socialist economics, arguing instead for a "labor-capital community" while linking economic development and social and political progress to a heavy state role, or what he called "una sociedad estatal." See N. Domínguez, *Conversaciones con Juan José Taccone* (Buenos Aires: Hachette, 1977), 42.

vative economic program. The motivations also embodied the ambitions of Taccone, secretary general and dominant figure in the Buenos Aires union, who saw an opportunity to realize the Peronist public-utility development programs that he had been urging for more than a decade.² The need to vindicate Peronist economics was all the more imperative for Taccone because Tosco had been gaining influence steadily in the national union, with a number of important light and power locals allying intermittently against the Buenos Aires organization. This trend was particularly marked in the Paraná industrial belt (which includes San Nicolás and Villa Constitución), the most important industrial center in the Argentine interior after Córdoba. The initiative was nevertheless a significant departure for the Peronist movement, which had never gone far in establishing the kind of industrial democracy promised by its populist rhetoric, much less in granting worker control of industry.

Perón's efforts to mollify this particular union and assure its support by ceding control of SEGBA to it represented the culmination of Luz y Fuerza's growing influence in Argentine politics. Always a strategic union, its influence had been expanding in the labor movement since the early twentieth century. By the early 1970s, Luz y Fuerza was recognized as one of the three arbiters in the country's trade-union movement, along with the Unión Obrera Metalúrgica (UOM) and the Sindicato de Mecánicos y Afines del Transporte Automotor (SMATA). Of the three, Luz y Fuerza was noted for the capacity of its leadership, Peronista and clasista alike, and for its ongoing interest in economic policy, especially the relationship between the problems of the energy sector and Argentine economic development. The cogency of its proposals, which transcended parochial union interests to advance national economic programs of varying ideological hues, made Luz y Fuerza an active player in national politics and one of the most effective union interlocutors with the military and civilian governments of the period. Not coincidentally, it was also one of the unions battered hardest by the post-1976 military governments, as evi-

2. As in all things, the Peronists advocated a nationalist, anti-imperialist program in electric power development and supply. Luz y Fuerza could be considered labor's chief proponent for Peronism's historic positions on questions of national economic development in the union's support for nationalization and state administration of electric utilities and its opposition to investment in energy development by foreign capital (in contrast with national capital). Its positions on these issues are best set forth in the union's magazine, *Contorno*, as well as its 1972 publication, *Pautas para una política nacional* (Buenos Aires: Sindicato de Luz y Fuerza, Capital Federal, 1972). Taccone also published his own magazine, *Dinamis*, which was devoted to problems of national economic development with a particular concern for energy issues. Taccone's and the union's support for the 1966 coup was unsurprising in this regard because they perceived Onganía's economic program as offering the best chance for the structural reforms that would create a modern capitalist sector and eventually offer the unions a partnership in industry. See William C. Smith, *Authoritarianism and the Crisis of the Argentine Political Economy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989, 116–17); and Domínguez, *Conversaciones con Taccone*, 123–30.

denced by the high number of *desaparecidos* among its ranks. Its secretary general, Oscar Smith (Taccone's heir), was kidnapped and presumably murdered after Luz y Fuerza became the first union to oppose openly the junta's antilabor policies.³

The growing power of Luz y Fuerza had a counterpart in the labor movement of Mexico, another of Latin America's most industrialized countries. Mexican light and power workers had constituted one of the most powerful unions since the early twentieth century. Electrification of vital economic sectors, notably mining, had proceeded faster in Mexico than elsewhere in Latin America, giving their unions early strategic importance despite their relatively small numbers. Mexican light and power workers participated actively in union politics during the revolution and, more than any other sector of organized labor, were responsible for organizing the 1916 general strike, the first in Mexican history. They continued to influence labor politics greatly, despite their reluctance to affiliate with the main Mexican labor confederation of the 1920s (the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana, or CROM) and their generally independent strategies in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴ The piecemeal nationalization of the electric power industry in Mexico and the postrevolutionary state's industrial relations policies led to serious organizational divisions, with two and sometimes three separate unions representing light and power workers. But the strategic power of the unions always offset their organizational divisions, and they continued to be a powerful sector of the trade-union movement.

In both Argentina and Mexico, the influence of light and power workers expanded after 1945. This trend mostly resulted from the shift in the balance of power in their labor movements accompanying rapid post-war industrialization. Whereas unions servicing the export sector, especially the railroad and dockworkers' unions, had once been the most strategic and hence the most powerful unions in their countries, the shift to predominantly industrial economies servicing domestic markets and the increasing tendency to move freight by truck and people by bus rather than rail (more pronounced in Argentina than in Mexico), boosted the power of the new industrial unions while the traditional unions de-

3. Mario Baizán and Silvia Mercado, *Oscar Smith: el sindicalismo peronista ante sus límites* (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1987). For a brief discussion of Luz y Fuerza's history during the military governments (1976–1983), see David Pion-Berlin, *The Ideology of State Terror: Economic Doctrine and Political Repression in Argentina and Peru* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1989), 107–18. An interesting study of Luz y Fuerza's early resistance to the military junta as having been undertaken largely to protect the union's self-management of SEGBA is Sandro José Montali, "Resistencia obrera a la dictadura: el caso de Luz y Fuerza de Capital (1976–77)," in *Tres jornadas interescuelas: Simposio Historia del Movimiento Obrero en la Argentina, 1955–1990* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios de Historia Obrera, 1991).

4. See Mark Thompson, "The Development of Unionism among Mexican Electrical Workers," Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1966, 59–60, 106–7, 120–31.

clined.⁵ By the late 1960s, government officials in Argentina were reacting with relative calm to strikes by the two railroad workers' unions. Similar strikes by the light and power workers' union, however, entailed disruption of a service that had become the lifeblood of the national economy, the nexus for nearly all other economic sectors, and the source of crucial urban services such as lighting and water supply. Although Luz y Fuerza's administration of SEGBA represented the apogee of influence for the light and power workers in Argentina, it also symbolized the emergence of electric power workers generally as key players in Latin American postwar industrial economies.

The role of light and power workers is thus essential to understanding the history of workers in the "modern sectors" in postwar Latin American labor movements. Workers in these dynamic sectors of the industrial economies (which included automobiles, steel, petrochemicals, and electric power) led the trade-union movements of their countries in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and also spearheaded many of the great working-class protests and union reform movements of these years. A detailed analysis of this industrial sector can also illuminate the sources of working-class politics in general. Regime type, political culture, union leadership, and ideology have all been considered as factors in analyzing workers' political activity. This article will consider a variable that has frequently been ignored: the nature of the productive activity, meaning the specific workplace context and the character of labor-state relations in one particular industrial sector. The underlying argument being made is that such industrial sectoral politics help shape workers' political and economic attitudes and influence workers' collective actions.⁶

5. In Argentina in the late 1970s, an estimated 95 percent of all overland freight was being moved by truck rather than by rail. For changes in the Argentine labor market during these years (a useful barometer for gauging shifts in trade-union politics), see Adriana Marshall, "Labour Markets and Wage Growth: The Case of Argentina," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 4 (1980):37–60. In Mexico the traditional powerhouses of the labor movement, such as the railroad and petroleum workers' unions, retained more of their power, but even there they ceased to be the sole arbiters of trade-union politics. Among the factors that upset the balance of power was the modern sectors' connections to foreign capital, which gave them a strategic importance that the traditional unions (all nationalized in the 1930s and 1940s) simply lacked.

6. In the 1960s, French labor sociologists pioneered the idea that the history of the working classes and their view of their world cannot be separated from the problems surrounding work and the workplace. The spatial location of industry, the characteristics of a specific productive activity, the strategic importance of an industry, and the structure of authority within the firm were all viewed as helping shape workers' attitudes and thus trade-union politics. Recent elaborations of this idea, still predominantly the work of sociologists, include Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production* (London: Verso, 1985); and Renaud Sainsaulieu, *L'Identité au travail* (Paris: Foundation National des Sciences Politiques, 1988). Among labor historians, Charles Bergquist suggested something akin to this concept in his important study *Labor in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986). The problem with Bergquist's analysis is that he views these factors as nothing more than

ELECTRIC POWER IN LATIN AMERICA

The increasingly strategic nature of the electric industry is one reason why these workers emerged as active and powerful participants in the Latin American labor movements after World War II. Another factor that encouraged taking a leadership role in working-class politics during these years was the business and work context of electric power production. In the case of Latin American light and power workers, the history of their unions cannot be explained without some understanding of the history of electric power production in the region. In the United States, Canada, and Western Europe, domestic capital financed the first electric power companies, and state intervention later promoted integration of large regional systems through high-voltage transmission networks, or grids. In Latin America, in contrast, the history of electric power was one of foreign control, fragmentation, and undersupply.

A crucial difference in the history of electric power in Latin America when compared with industrial development in the United States, Canada, and Europe was the nature and effectiveness of state involvement in the industry. The history of electric power in the United States and Europe is yet another example of how a liberal credenda of *laissez-faire*, free-market economics was contradicted in actual practice. The state quickly became involved in electric power production and supply in order to rectify the inadequate planning resulting from the natural workings of the market, specifically to overcome the market's inability to maintain the large integrated systems required by an industrial economy while balancing the power needs of society at large. As Thomas Hughes, the leading historian of the industry, has noted, the purpose of these new integrated and interconnected systems was to knit together entire regions and consolidate utilities that had evolved independently. These grids of high-voltage lines ringing a supply region, called "polyglons," meet at major load centers and were necessary to produce profits on electric power that can justify the huge capital outlays required. But the logic of profits and the interests of society were not necessarily compatible, and

the outcropping of the world system and fails to integrate them into the valuable insights offered by the new labor history, especially its focus on the relationship between culture and consciousness. For an excellent critique of Bergquist's arguments, see Jeremy Adelman, "Against Essentialism: Latin American Labour History in Comparative Perspective, A Critique of Bergquist," *Labour/Le Travail* 27 (Spring 1991):175–84. For reasons related to the history of this specific industrial sector in Latin America, as discussed in this article, the so-called workplace influences relevant to the orientation of Latin American light and power workers reside more in certain characteristics of the electric power business than in the labor process itself. An "industrial-sector approach" to studying trade-union politics would encompass both sectoral and labor process influences according to their relative weight in the economic activity being considered, although not to the exclusion of other factors that also influence union politics, such as labor-state relations, rivalries among trade-union leadership, gender issues, and culture.

the history of the industry after 1930 evidenced increasing state involvement in the United States and Western Europe.⁷

The initial reasons for state intervention in the industry were more financial than technological. Production and transmission of electric power have been the most capital-intensive undertakings of the modern industrial era, with electric power's ability to keep pace with growing demand depending on access to massive amounts of investment and working capital. In the United States, this problem was first resolved by concentrating and pooling the capital resources of power monopolies. Yet electric power's character as a public-service industry limited its ability to finance expansion through increased profits. The low profit rates on investment and the constant need for massive infusions of capital ultimately pushed the industry into the Wall Street stock exchange. This outcome, however, led to speculation and overexpansion, with companies often being saved from bankruptcy only by huge rate hikes for consumers or by government intervention. In the 1980s, the enormous capital needs of private power companies in the United States were reflected in their issuance of half of all new common industrial stock every year and their absorption of one-third of all corporate finance.⁸ U.S. state and municipal governments, the industry's silent partners and key sources of capital and investment via financing of infrastructure and resource development, began to assert regulatory control of electric power at an early date, refusing to let planning depend on the caprices of the power companies. By the 1980s, most electrical utilities in the United States and much of Canada were operating as members of power pools interconnected in a single gigantic power grid, the North American Power Systems Interconnection. Although each individual utility operated independently and controlled its own finances, it was also subject to governmental supervision and assumed contractual obligations with regard to increasing generation and scheduling operations, all of which imposed strict limits on the utility companies' independence.

7. See Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880–1930* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 325, 401, 464–65; and Scott A. Fenn, *America's Electric Utilities* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 42–46, 113–17. In the United States, the 1930s witnessed great conflicts between the Franklin Roosevelt administration and the power trusts that culminated in creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the passage of the 1935 Public Utility Holding Company Act. Even in the era of the “systems builders,” when entrepreneurs had a relatively free hand in constructing electric power networks, the industry came under increasing public scrutiny and state regulation in some cases. Several European countries—France, Great Britain, and Italy among them—nationalized their electric power industries in the period following World War II in response to public criticism of the inability of unregulated, privately owned systems to address national needs and the perceived danger of power trusts.

8. Richard Rudolph and Scott Ridley, *Power Struggle: The Hundred-Year War over Electricity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 13.

All the weaknesses displayed by the U.S. industry appeared in more aggravated form in Latin America. The most serious problem was again financial. In Latin America, capital markets were so shallow that not even domestic monopolies could resolve the problem, and the only solution devised by national governments was to relinquish control of the industry to foreign investors. A power glut developed in the 1930s, when the problem was not expanding production but increasing the market for power. After that time, demand has always been much greater than supply, with the major purchasers of power no longer being urban transit systems but residential and industrial consumers.⁹ The financial resources needed to meet ballooning demand and increased production consolidated control by the foreign power companies. Moreover, the industry's high ratio of capital investment to the gross or net value of annual production scared away the few domestic capitalists in Latin America with the means to invest in the industry. Finally, before the 1940s, Latin American governments were unable to offer even regulation along U.S. lines, much less propose nationalization and outright ownership of the industry as a solution. Meanwhile, foreign ownership did little to resolve power shortages, and after World War II, most expansion resulted from government subsidies and public financing of the host countries.¹⁰ State support exacerbated inflation, however, because government deficit-financing came directly out of annual state budgets and neither the power companies nor the central bank were held accountable for investment in expansion. Consequently, electric power production was increasingly unable to meet demand, and power companies became targets for attacks by the state and the unions as well as by consumers.¹¹

Electric power and the role of the foreign power companies emerged first as a nationalist issue in Mexico. Beginning in the 1920s, foreign-owned electric utilities were criticized in Mexico, although the first rumblings came not from the nationalist sectors of the postrevolutionary governments but from business groups. Textile industrialists in

9. David F. Cavers and James R. Nelson, *Electric Power Regulation in Latin America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), 12–15. See also Alfonso Fernández del Busto, Oscar Enríquez, Basil Nikiforoff, and Alejandro Páez Urquidi, "Mexico's Electrification Program, Parts I and II," *Electrical Engineering* 65 (May–June 1946):193–97, 245–51.

10. Cavers and Nelson, *Electric Power Regulation in Latin America*, 33.

11. In addition to the works already cited, other useful studies of the electric power industry in Latin America are J. R. Bradley, *Fuel and Power in Latin America*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Trade Promotion Series no. 126 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1931); Ernesto Galarza, *La industria eléctrica en México* (Mexico City: Comisión Federal de Electricidad, 1941); and Gerhart Jacob-Wendler, *Deutsche Elektroindustrie in Lateinamerika: Siemens und AEG, 1890–1914* (Stuttgart: In Kommission bei Klett-Cotta, 1982). The Brazilian electric power industry has been particularly well studied. See Mario Marcondes de Albuquerque, *História da Energia Elétrica no Brasil* (Curitiba: Gráfica Groeml, 1982); Duncan MacDowall, *The Light: Brazilian Traction, Light, and Power C. Ltd, 1899–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Judith Tendler, *Electric Power in Brazil* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); and A. Veiga Fialho, *A Compra da Light* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1979).

particular complained about the greater cost for electric power when compared with big purchasers (mining and petroleum interests), a complaint that was soon being voiced by other small users and eventually by consumers.¹² In Argentina the nationalist faction of the military that took power in 1943 clashed repeatedly with the power companies and refused to let utilities like Compañía de Electricidad del Sud Argentino, Compañía Luz y Fuerza Motriz de Córdoba, Compañía General de Electricidad de Córdoba, and Compañía de Electricidad de los Andes make the rate hikes they claimed were necessary to keep pace with rising fuel and labor costs. Perón's acrimonious ongoing disputes with the power companies culminated in the first steps toward nationalization of the industry, which were taken during his presidency.¹³

The nature of electric power as a public utility providing essential services to consumers made it particularly vulnerable to nationalist sentiments and political pressures. Rate-setting alone made it the object of suspicion and resentment. The fixing of rates was a constant point of friction between governments and companies. After World War II, despite the virtual freeze on investment and expansion by private power companies (and subsequent deterioration in their service), the electric utilities resisted public pressure to keep rates low. But the governments of that period opposed rate hikes, and the rate problem became chronic throughout the industry and inspired acute criticisms by Latin American light and power workers' unions.¹⁴

Companies, governments, and unions were all able to agree on one point: electric rates in Latin America had been unable to meet the industry's operating and expansion costs. Its huge capital demands and the failure of the market to provide such capital were aggravated by state interference that merely reacted to pressure from consumers and lacked effective planning. In the mid-1950s, rates in Latin America as a whole were already estimated to be 60 percent lower than those in the United States.¹⁵ Problems with the rate system were further complicated by a policy of rate discrimination by postwar governments in both Argentina and Mexico that kept rates artificially low for the larger, more capital-intensive industries. Hence Latin America posted some of the lowest average ratios in the world of electricity costs to gross value of

12. Miguel S. Wionczek, "Electric Power: The Uneasy Partnership," in *Public Policy and Private Enterprise in Mexico*, edited by Raymond Vernon (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), 44–50.

13. U.S. Dept. of State, "Difficulties Encountered by Public Utilities Companies in Argentina," No. FW 835.5034/1-1546, 23 Jan. 1946, U.S. Dept. of State Papers Related to the Internal Affairs of Argentina.

14. Silvia Gómez Tagle, *Insurgencia y democracia en los sindicatos electricistas* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1980), 86–89. See also "Sobre la reestructuración de las tarifas eléctricas," *Solidaridad*, nos. 96–97 (10 Aug. 1973):7–9.

15. Cavers and Nelson, *Electric Power Regulation in Latin America*, 81.

industrial output or value added to manufacture.¹⁶ This situation only discouraged expansion even more because industrial rates are usually the most profitable market for power companies, and Latin American governments of that period were unwilling to accept the companies' recommendation of higher consumer rates to cover the deficits. Only in authoritarian regimes like those in Brazil after 1964 did power utilities (by now mostly state-owned companies) have a freer hand in adjusting consumer rates to compensate for the lower rates awarded to big industries.¹⁷

The legacy of the rate problem was greater cost per kilowatt generated because of the inability to increase the load factor (the average ratio of average use to minimum use). Because electricity cannot be stored or stockpiled, profitability depends on carefully coordinating production and consumption. An increase in the load factor reduces the cost per kilowatt-hour of a power plant and thus affects the labor force. Succinctly, higher costs per kilowatt-hour of electric power means that labor is less cost-effective. Mexico, for example, had labor-cost ratios of 2.17 compared with 1.93 for the United States in the late 1950s.¹⁸ The U.S. industry was able, despite rising salary and wage scales, to hold its labor costs down by increasing load factors. The Latin American power companies accomplished this end by freezing and even reducing the size of their labor forces. Jobs in the industry became much more difficult to obtain, and holding down labor costs in this fashion also meant allowing service and maintenance to slip. In Argentina, the Cordoban light and power workers' local complained frequently throughout the 1960s and 1970s about inad-

16. *Ibid.*, 94.

17. Tandler, *Electric Power in Brazil*, 44–45.

18. Cavers and Nelson, *Electric Power Regulation in Latin America*, 91. In contrast with their Latin American counterparts, the U.S. light and power workers' union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), historically a very conservative union in the U.S. labor movement, was part of an overexpanded industry where collective-bargaining negotiations and work stoppages focused on wage and benefits issues. Strikes were relatively infrequent in the industry. Review of the trade journal *Electrical World* for these years shows only one other source of labor conflict for the IBEW: opposition to hiring private contractors to construct power plants. In early postwar Japan, in contrast, light and power workers' unions operating in that country's nationalized electric power industry had a history with much in common with their counterparts in Latin America. According to Andrew Gordon, "the constant dealings with the bureaucracy and the relevance of central political decisions to the fate of the industry created a politically concerned corps of union members. In a 1947 poll, 57 percent of the employees supported the Socialist Party and 13 percent supported the Communists." See Gordon, *The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japan: Heavy Industry, 1853–1955* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 352. In postwar France, a nationalized industry under expansion received lavish state support and conceded an important role in planning and administration to the union. The industry thus fostered an ideology of "heroic productionism" among French light and power workers and tempered the communist positions of its union leadership. See Robert L. Frost, "Labor and Technological Innovation in French Electric Power," *Technology and Culture* 29, no. 4 (Oct. 1988):865–85.

quate manpower and lack of equipment to service their deteriorating local electric power industry.¹⁹

The Cordoban light and power workers were equally aware that a major source of their industry's problems was the ineffectiveness of the rate system. Liberal scholarship's presumptions of worker passivity and limited understanding of the technological, organizational, and financial operations of their industry have not been borne out in the history of production and distribution of electric power in Argentina. Light and power workers in Córdoba (and apparently elsewhere in Latin America) understood that employment opportunities and working conditions in their industry depended on investments to provide essential line expansion and load increases. Due to low worker turnover in electric power utilities, construction has become the point of entry into the industry, after which a worker will often move into technical or maintenance specialization. Without new construction for distributing and generating power, there would be no opportunity for new workers to enter the industry or for established workers to move up in job categories. Light and power workers consequently were well aware that insufficient rates and failure to increase load capacities were limiting their own job prospects.

Worker perception of the industry's specific problems and their relationship to national economic policies and the political regimes implementing them helps to explain the ideological positions and political behavior of the Cordoban light and power workers. Such perception also seems to have influenced unions in this industry elsewhere in Latin America. Ideology and politics were shaped by a labor force that was smaller, more homogeneous, and more skilled and educated than in most industries as well as by union structures that were more independent and democratic. At the same time, specific sectoral influences, especially the peculiar working environment created in a technologically sophisticated public-service industry like electric power, also influenced the unions' ideological and political formation.²⁰

19. See the union's in-house annual report for 1964–1965, "Memoria y Balance," Sindicato de Luz y Fuerza de Córdoba, pp. 67–70; and for 1966–1967, "Memoria y Balance," Sindicato de Luz y Fuerza de Córdoba, pp. 69–70.

20. The arguments made in this article take issue somewhat with a recent attempt to suggest a "sociology of labor" that seems willing to incorporate influences of skill, education, union structures, political regimes, and economic policy as influences in shaping union politics—virtually everything but what is often central to the lives of working people, namely their work. See Francisco Zapata, "Towards a Latin American Sociology of Labour," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22, pt. 2 (May 1990):375–402. The "working conditions" that the author claims are crucial to understanding labor politics are vaguely defined and do not seem to include the concept of work as an analytical tool, much less a worthy object of study in its own right independent of trade-union politics. Nor is the importance of specific industrial influences such as an industry's strategic position in the national economy recognized. In the case of light and power workers, this omission leads to a fundamental misinterpretation of the sources, nature, and outcome of their union mobilizations in the 1970s.

ELECTRIC POWER AND UNION POLITICS

The electric power business can be broken down into two basic components: generation and distribution. Technologically intensive, generation consists of selling power at high voltage to a few large customers. Generation is thus somewhat separate from the rate problem because it sells electricity in large blocks to either state or private companies. Because the labor force involved in generation is small and highly skilled, most of electric power's labor force is occupied with distribution. Its many responsibilities include administering transmission substations, maintaining the system, collecting bills, repairing equipment, and expanding lines. Distribution workers are aware of their dependence on the well-being of the generation sector and realize that without expanding load capacities, the distribution of power becomes more expensive and less efficient. Because workers in distribution are close to the structural problems of the industry, they understand the implications of the rate problem for their working conditions and the industry's overall soundness. For example, light and power workers in both Argentina and Mexico objected to massive rate hikes for small users not only as consumers but out of their awareness of the deeper structural problems in the industry. They realized that price increases in this sector of the power market would be mere palliative measures, stopgaps that might alleviate but could not resolve its financial problems.²¹

Light and power workers also understood that their industry was locked into a vicious cycle. The Argentine and Mexican governments were assuring low rates to keep consumers content and subsidizing power production as necessary to keep production stable and protect selected industries. Under governments with chronic budgetary deficits, this practice exacerbated inflationary pressures by raising the costs of the power produced and discouraging the little investment in expansion that private companies were willing to undertake. The practice thereby prevented building well-integrated systems that would increase load factors and make companies more cost-efficient. None of these problems were solved by the nationalization and creation of mixed public-private enterprises regulated by government agencies that transformed the electric power industries in Argentina and Mexico in the 1960s and 1970s.²²

21. This position was expressed repeatedly in the union publications and papers consulted on Argentina and Mexico. For a statement representative of the position of light and power workers on this issue in both countries, see the Mexican union STERM's previously cited assessment of the role of rate hikes in *Solidaridad*, "Sobre la reestructuración de las tarifas eléctricas." In Argentina, near unanimity existed among distribution workers on the need to reform the rate structure and make big block purchasers, not small consumers, finance the costs of energy development.

22. International Labor Office, *Conditions of Work and Employment in Water, Gas, and Electricity Supply Services* (Geneva: ILO, 1982), 11. Perón began nationalizing the electric utilities

By the 1960s, neither public ownership nor state regulation was any longer regarded as a single solution by sizable sectors of the light and power workers' unions. A minority began to question whether their industry's problems could be resolved at all within a capitalist framework. Others supported reforms that would maintain a heavy state presence in planning and regulation while allowing national capital to invest in the industry, with unions overseeing daily operations in management and work assignments. Hence for Latin American light and power workers' unions, industry-related problems ultimately became political questions. All the industry's needs depended on improving load factors and creating more integrated systems. All its difficulties—increasing the supply and lowering the costs of electricity, guaranteeing technological improvements in the energy sector, and adequately servicing existing lines and plants—seemed resolvable only through some variant of a planned economy. The similar problems faced by light and power workers in Latin America and the strategic position occupied by their industry created a history with much in common. The leadership role assumed by this sector of the working class in recent Latin American labor history is not merely coincidental. Yet distinct national and even regional contexts determined the behavior of the unions in Argentina and Mexico. Each country's electric power industry, labor movement, and political system displayed significant differences, and they help explain the nature of the union rebellions in each country and the purpose and limits of their reform movements.

INDUSTRIAL AND UNION REFORM MOVEMENTS

The Argentine unions, Peronista and clasista alike, offered more elaborated and sustained criticisms of their electric power industries and played the larger political role. Argentina's severe power problems and their relationship to the country's economic and political structures were debated constantly in *Luz y Fuerza* locals throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. By that time, the power crisis in the country had reached severe proportions. Brownouts and even major blackouts had become common with both the remaining private company, the Italo (the *Compañía Italo Argentino de Electricidad*, or CIAE), and the myriad state

in a halting fashion, allowing certain privately owned foreign companies like the *Compañía Italo Argentino de Electricidad* (CIAE, or the Italo) and the *Compañía Argentina de Electricidad* (CADE) to continue operating while nationalizing others, particularly those in the provinces. CADE was finally nationalized in 1961 and its concession given to the publicly owned SEGBA. By the early 1970s, only the Italo remained of the private companies, and it was nationalized during the Peronist governments (1973–1976). Mexico nationalized most of its industry in 1960. The remaining concessions of the *Compañía de Luz y Fuerza del Centro* were nationalized in 1974. The trend in the postwar period moved toward increasing public ownership and control, greater emphasis on hydroelectric power (although less so in Mexico, where ample oil supplies allowed thermal expansion), and a shift away from financing based on profits or funds of private investors to those of public revenues.

companies, all of which were running at full capacity. By 1972 the power deficit was already estimated at 500 megawatts.²³ The dual solution offered by both union factions was expansion to increase load factors and economic mix to diversify energy sources and thereby allow utility managers to balance energy production to achieve maximum efficiency. The difference was that the Peronists believed this goal could be achieved best through a nationalist-capitalist program whereas the clasistas argued for central planning in a socialist economy.²⁴

The factions disagreed less about the precise nature of the problem. Argentina's electric power industry, despite creeping nationalization, remained as badly fragmented as it had been in the days of the private companies, and no progress could be discerned in creating large regional grid systems like those in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. Taccone's SEGBA and Tosco's EPEC (Empresa Provincial de Energía Eléctrica de Córdoba) were planning and administering their segments of the industry separately. The government agency nominally responsible for overseeing the industry, Agua y Energía Eléctrica (A y EE), had turned out to be singularly ineffective. The cause was not bureaucratic sloth as much as the fragmentation of the industry itself, with 22 provincial power companies, the Italo (before it was nationalized), and 663 *cooperativas eléctricas* (independent producers) operating autonomously, all having different load capacities, accounting systems, and billing procedures.²⁵

Most power was now being generated by the public companies, but they were isolated from one another and had load capacities that varied greatly. Unlike most of the industrial world, Argentina did not experience the linking-up effect in which transformer substations were constructed to draw power through extended transmission lines from large modern plants and were then connected to major load centers. What resulted in Argentina instead was a peculiar kind of concentration of power production. The system was concentrated in numerous power-generating centers but was not interconnected. Argentina was thus a world of light and dark, with energy production concentrated in the cities and rural and small-town electrification still extremely limited. Anyone

23. "Buenos Aires Suffered Brownouts and Several Major Blackouts," *Electrical World* 177, no. 4 (15 Feb. 1972):19–20.

24. As Thomas Hughes commented, "System builders knew that the diversity of load that allowed load management, a resulting improvement in load factors, and a lowering of unit capital cost was likely to be found in a large geographical area where the population engaged in a wide variety of energy-consuming activities." The workers knew as well and were similarly aware that having access to various kinds of energy-producing systems—coal, oil, hydroelectric—would make load management easier and thus lower the cost of electricity. Hughes thus expressed in scholarly terms what the workers already knew from experience. See Hughes, *Networks of Power*, 463.

25. Sindicato de Luz y Fuerza, Capital Federal, *Pautas para una política nacional*, 151.

who has traveled in Argentina by night or spent time on an *estancia* or *chacra* in the pampa has noticed the ubiquity of private, gasoline-powered generators to service most electrical needs.

Market forces and poor state administration of electric power left distribution concentrated in the great urban centers and lacking interconnections with other power-producing centers. For Peronistas and clasistas alike, the need to create interconnected systems and increase load capacities became the sine qua non of resolving the country's electric energy problems and improving working conditions in the industry.²⁶ Although rancorous disagreements arose about whether such a system could or could not be developed in a capitalist Argentina, consensus existed on many issues. For example, both factions agreed that the industry had to remain in national hands. They therefore supported the development of hydroelectric and nuclear power over thermal sources, viewing the latter as the traditional preserve of foreign concessions that would lead to distorted energy development and the stunting of Argentine technology and scientific research.²⁷

The Cordoban electric power industry depended chiefly on abundant hydroelectric sources afforded by the nearby sierras, and the union was therefore less outspoken in supporting nuclear power than the Buenos Aires union. The Córdoba local never wavered, however, in its adherence to the positions of the Peronist-dominated FATLYF (Federación Argentina de Trabajadores de Luz y Fuerza) on the need to discourage thermal development and preserve some kind of state monopoly over electric power. Similarly, Córdoba members agreed with the arguments of Taccone and the FATLYF on the need to separate electric power from Agua y Energía Eléctrica and create a distinct national electric power company that would coordinate planning and investment, foster research and development, and reform the rate structure.²⁸ Because interconnection was

26. The union's positions contained an element of institutional self-interest as well. As Taccone noted, in a union that never exceeded fifty thousand members, there was an awareness that Luz y Fuerza's continued importance in the labor movement, its influence in national politics, and its ability to finance the costly medical clinics, vacation colonies, and retirement programs that it had developed over the years all depended on this change. Interconnection would give the union more strategic weight, permit coordinating general strikes for all Luz y Fuerza workers, render credible the threat of national blackouts as a bargaining tool, and make the industry more efficient and cost-effective and less dependent on deficit state financing. Interconnection would also counteract the weakness created by Luz y Fuerza's federative structure, a characteristic of power unions throughout Latin America that was encouraged by governments to decentralize collective bargaining and weaken the unions' strategic power. Personal interview with Juan José Taccone, Buenos Aires, 27 June 1989.

27. "El Chocón, un paso hacia el futuro," *Contacto* 3, no. 16 (Feb. 1967):36–38.

28. "Sin energía no hay progreso," *Contacto* 7, no. 82 (Sept. 1972):4–5. For the Córdoba local, reform of the rate structure came to be viewed as ultimately resolvable only in a socialist economy. Luz y Fuerza denounced the attacks made against the deficit-creating state power companies, noting that the deficits were due largely to the preferential rates

mostly a financial problem rather than a technological one, much consensus existed on the need to eliminate rate discrepancies among provinces, maintain some degree of decentralization to deal better with specific local problems in energy production, and eliminate the “*provinciación*” of electric power that allowed companies like SEGBA and EPEC to operate as virtual fiefdoms with no concern for national planning. Such a company was created by a Peronist government in 1975, but it was abolished by the military junta the following year.²⁹

The leadership role that the Cordoban light and power workers’ union assumed in Argentina’s dissident labor movement in the 1960s and 1970s arose from numerous sources, but as in the case of the Buenos Aires union, influences specific to the industry helped shape ideology and inform a political orientation. By the early 1960s, Córdoba’s once formidable electric power resources had fallen into a state of near crisis. Up to that time, Córdoba had possessed the country’s most extensive hydroelectric power network, one so well developed that no shortages of generating capacity or restrictions on consumption had occurred as late as the 1950s. This situation contrasted starkly with the power scarcities found in other parts of Argentina, especially in the interior. In fact, the abundance and low cost of electric power had enticed the automobile industry to set up operations in Córdoba.³⁰

By the end of the 1950s, however, increased demands resulting from the great wave of automotive, mechanical, and metallurgical industrialization had begun to overtax available power production. Córdoba boasted impressive hydroelectric resources: numerous fast-running streams, rivers, and falls in the nearby sierras and especially the dikes and dams built by a local Radical government in the 1930s as part of an extensive public works project. But the province’s power isolation was threatening

given to private interests. In the case of EPEC, big-block purchasers like IKA-Renault, Fiat, and the local metalworking industries were essentially receiving state-subsidized power. Luz y Fuerza called for a national debate on the rate issue, or what it called “*el régimen tarifario anti-popular*.” See “La situación económica-financiera de la Empresa Provincial de Energía de Córdoba: una contribución sindical a su solución,” *Electrum* 16, no. 65 (Aug. 1972):6–11.

29. See “Única Gran Empresa Nacional de Electricidad,” *Contacto* 8, no. 96 (Dec. 1973):14–21; and “Cómo, por qué de la Única Gran Empresa Nacional de Electricidad,” *Contacto* 10, no. 110 (Apr. 1975):20–27. The Cordoban local, aware of the danger to union autonomy implied by centralization, never argued for abolishing EPEC and consistently supported its preservation. The local merely wished to see EPEC function more as part of a nationally integrated system and therefore conceded that some degree of centralization was unavoidable. Centralization thus represented a response to the technological and financial demands necessary to build an integrated system. At the same time, genuine federalism and decentralization were to be practiced by balancing power distribution according to provincial development needs. See “Contra el centralismo portuario,” *Electrum*, no. 395 (6 Apr. 1973):7–8.

30. James P. Brennan, *The Labor Wars in Córdoba, 1955–1976: Ideology, Work, and Labor Politics in an Argentine Industrial City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 29, 32.

its economic base. As early as 1960, engineers warned of Córdoba's vulnerability because of limited transmission facilities. Single-circuit lines connected all the province's substations to their respective transforming stations, and not one of them was tied into a larger grid-work. Thus electric power throughout the province depended on a few highly vulnerable and increasingly inadequate networks of power lines.³¹

Córdoba's central location and abundant hydroelectric resources made it the logical nexus for any future power system that would be nationally integrated. Perón's swift nationalization in 1946 of the two U.S. and foreign-owned power utilities that had been supplying the province with electricity was not coincidental, nor was the strategic importance of the province lost on the union. Work there exposed union members in an immediate way to the contradictions existing between Argentina's electric power potential and its increasing inability to meet national needs. The union newspaper *Electrum* became a forum in which light and power workers in all job categories discussed in homely but insightful terms the particular nature of the country's power problems, Córdoba's possible role in their resolution, and the relationship between national models of economic development and electric power production.³² Here it can be seen that what at times appears to have been ideologically motivated behavior was often due to interpretations of a given political situation from the vantage point of the workers' own industry. Such was the case with the Cordoban union's early opposition to General Juan Carlos Onganía at a time when Taccone and the national union were his strongest supporters in the labor movement. A simple reading of ideology—of Peronism versus Marxism or of the competing political loyalties to Taccone versus Tosco—does not adequately explain the divergent stances taken toward the Onganía dictatorship. The Cordoban local of Luz y Fuerza also objected to specific rationalization plans introduced into the industry by Onganía because they seemed to foreshadow a greater role for private capital. The Cordoban union argued that such a role's damage to the

31. See Tippetts, Abbett, McCarthy, Stratton, Engineers and Architects, and Kennedy and Donkin, Consulting Engineers, "Study of Argentine Power Problems: Company Report," 2 vols., Buenos Aires, 1960. Baker Library, Harvard University, 1:44.

32. This debate was not confined to EPEC engineers or union leadership. The union never numbered more than three thousand workers, and the core of engineers and union leaders are easily identifiable. I conducted extensive interviews with union members and consulted other union sources (in addition to *Electrum*) for these years. All sources leave little doubt that these problems influenced Luz y Fuerza's clasista positions, along with other factors. Although a majority of workers were never concerned with such questions, a sizable minority were, and their preoccupations helped shape the union's politics. For an interesting glimpse of the internal dynamics of Luz y Fuerza at a crucial political juncture, see Iris Martha Roldán, *Sindicatos y protesta social en la Argentina: el sindicato de Luz y Fuerza de Córdoba, 1969–1974* (Amsterdam: Center for Latin American Research and Documentation, 1978). This study is less satisfactory on the multiple and complex influences underlying the union's and its main union activists' ideological formation and subsequent political history.

country's long-range energy needs would ultimately compromise EPEC's independence.³³

Space does not allow a complete discussion of the industrial proposals made by the Cordoban union and their effects on the union's political history during this period. The public history of the union and the leadership role assumed by Luz y Fuerza in the 1969 Cordobazo (the massive working-class and popular protest that shook the city and toppled the Onganía dictatorship) and the great labor mobilizations of the 1970s in the city are relatively well known to students of Latin American labor.³⁴ It is nevertheless important to stress the multiple sources of this militancy. They included the perception among light and power workers in Córdoba that the solutions required to the problems in their industry were not merely budgetary or technological but part of a larger problem with the character of Argentina's capitalist development and structural obstacles to energy independence in a semi-developed country. The same debate took place in Taccone's SEGBA, although it yielded different conclusions. The ideological and political leadership role assumed by these two currents of Luz y Fuerza in the labor movement was not fortuitous. The very nature of their industry and its historical development in Argentina had dictated greater sensitivity to questions of economic development and had encouraged intense interest and involvement in politics that were uncharacteristic of most other sectors of the Argentine working class. Yet the precise expression of those politics reflected multiple influences: the role of the union leadership, power struggles within and among the unions, and the local political culture, among other factors. The combination of all these factors shaped the history of Argentine light and power workers in the 1960s and 1970s and made them key spokespersons for the Peronista and clasista tendencies in the Argentine working class in these years.

The nature of the Mexican light and power workers' rebellion in the early 1970s resembled the Argentine workers' movements in being influenced by the specific common characteristics of their industry but also displayed differences arising out of varying national contexts. As in Argentina, Mexico's electric power industry had suffered fragmentation, rate problems, and severe power shortages during the years of foreign control. In the last decade of the Porfiriato (1876–1910), two foreign-owned companies arrived on the scene: the Canadian-incorporated Mexican Power and Light Company (Mexlight or *Compañía Mexicana*), which supplied power to the federal district and the central states; and the American Foreign Power Company, the U.S. holding company known variously in

33. See *Electrum* 3, no. 83 (Sept. 1966):1–3; and *Jerónimo*, no. 1 (Nov. 1968):17–19.

34. These subjects are analyzed in Roldán's *Sindicatos y protesta social en la Argentina* and in my *Labor Wars in Córdoba, 1955–1976*.

Mexico as the *Compañía Americana*, Electric Bond and Share, or simply "the Bond," which serviced the gulf states and northern mining states. Neither company, however, built systems that could meet the needs of Mexico's increasingly industrial economy.

Also paralleling the situation in Argentina, power production was highly dispersed in Mexico, with lines running to several discrete regional grids that supplied power to the major industrial and mining centers but did not attempt to serve large portions of the country. Power for entire states and regions typically came from a single production center. For example, nearly all the electricity generated in the state of Vera Cruz came from plants in Orizaba, while the New Chapala grid in Guadalajara supplied all of Jalisco's electricity needs as well as those of some surrounding states. The grids functioned as separate entities, with different voltages and load capacities, a situation that greatly hindered the companies' abilities to provide reliable service and produce the profits needed to expand. A few small companies mushroomed in the shadow of Mexlight and the Bond, but most of the power generated in Mexico was provided by the two foreign companies.³⁵

The Mexican state assumed regulatory control of the electrical industry long before governments in Argentina took a similar role. In 1926 the administration of Plutarco Elías Calles passed a national electric code empowering the federal government to set rates and grant concessions in the industry.³⁶ State control was increased in the 1930s when President Lázaro Cárdenas established a federal electricity commission, the *Comisión Federal de Electricidad* (CFE), which began to construct power plants that competed with privately funded plants. Yet Cárdenas's nationalistic moves did not threaten the existing foreign companies' investments in Mexico. On the contrary, the state gave them unrestricted access to CFE-generated power, attempted to keep down labor costs by restraining the demands of light and power workers during collective bargaining negotiations, provided low-interest loans through the *Nacional Financiera*, and served as an intermediary in acquiring foreign loans.³⁷

Despite such pampering, the existing companies resisted expansion. The postwar governments of the 1940s and 1950s responded to company lethargy by broadening the functions of the CFE in energy development and administration. Between 1950 and 1960, the CFE absorbed many of the small companies that had been selling power on a local level to factories and consumers, thus increasing the state's generating capacity. But the technological and financial exigencies of the busi-

35. Thompson, "The Development of Unionism among Mexican Electrical Workers," 11–13.

36. *Ibid.*, 15.

37. Wionczek, "Electric Power: The Uneasy Partnership," 78.

ness still favored the big foreign companies. The Bond and Mexlight continued to dominate the industry, and the CFE's operations ultimately began to supply energy to the two foreign-owned power monopolies. Significant financial concessions were also granted that allowed the companies to raise rates according to increases in labor and depreciation costs (as calculated by the companies themselves), thereby giving the utilities a much freer hand in rate-setting than was the case in Argentina at the time.³⁸

The companies' failure to expand and a steady deterioration of service, accompanied by a virtual freeze on investment throughout the 1950s, ultimately persuaded the Mexican state of the necessity of nationalizing the industry.³⁹ After months of threats and cajoling, the Mexican government finally nationalized it in early 1960. As with Cárdenas's nationalization of the oil industry in the 1930s, political as well as economic considerations contributed to the decision to expropriate the power companies. One light and power workers' union, the Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria y Comunicaciones Eléctricas (soon to be renamed STERM) had been deeply involved in the great labor protests in 1958 and 1959, demanding nationalization of their industry and some form of worker participation in administering the new state company. Light and power workers also pressured for expropriation of the private power companies and made common cause with other sectors of the labor movement in a wave of strikes that confronted Mexico with its most serious labor disturbances in twenty years. The subsequent nationalization was thus partly a concession to a union of recognized strategic importance that was capable of transforming labor unrest into a serious threat to the Mexican state.⁴⁰

Unlike Argentina's piecemeal nationalization, the Mexican government's expropriation was followed by some reasonably effective state planning for the power industry. The Mexican state negotiated sizable foreign loans but invested intelligently in seeking to create integrated systems out of its two fifty-cycle and sixty-cycle grids.⁴¹ Mexico also displayed more resourcefulness than Argentina in attempting to resolve its chronic rate problem. The Mexican government devised a staggered rate system that adjusted rates according to a complex schedule of charges that balanced development priorities with consumer interests. For example, industrial consumers who bought electricity in large quantities and at high voltage rates did not need the entire process of transforming and distributing power. They were therefore charged high tension rates that

38. Silvia Gómez Tagle, *Insurgencia y democracia en los sindicatos electricistas*, 51–52.

39. Thompson, "Development of Unionism," 87.

40. Gómez Tagle, *Insurgencia y democracia*, 59.

41. "Mexico Wants to Integrate Its Many Electric Systems," *Electrical World* 157, no. 21 (21 May 1962):21.

used separate accounting and billing procedures, with charges adjusted to the development priorities devised by the state technocracy, while low tension rates for consumers employed their own rate system.⁴²

By the mid-1960s, administrative (but not industrial) restructuring and consolidation of the electric power industry were well underway. In 1965 the government awarded the CFE broader administrative powers and the sole right to receive and distribute state credits for the industry. Two years later, the state abolished the remaining nineteen subsidiaries under CFE control and transferred their debts, assets, and concessions to a new state power company. Mere administrative streamlining, however, could not overcome the problems inherent in integrating systems and increasing loads. The obstacle remained of the different voltages used within the system. In response, the president and the CFE decreed in 1971 that sixty cycles would be the standard voltage for Mexico.⁴³ But as it turned out, the technological obstacles were easier to overcome than the financial ones, and integration remained elusive.

Another unfulfilled promise of the Mexican nationalization was union participation in administering the industry, a perennial demand of Mexican light and power workers' unions. In the 1930s, light and power workers helped organize a national committee for proletarian defense, which was formed in 1935 to support Cárdenas's labor reforms. These workers also helped establish the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM) in 1936, although one of their unions, the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME), withdrew that same year to protect its independence from increasing state control of labor under Cárdenas. Although the strategic importance of the light and power workers' unions gave them greater leverage in collective bargaining than most Mexican labor unions and encouraged a pragmatic union style that stressed dialogue rather than confrontation, these unions consistently demanded democratization of the labor movement and workplaces. According to the unions, both these goals could be achieved only by safeguarding the autonomy of the trade-union movement.⁴⁴

42. See "Mexico Boosts Power Rates on 'Ability-to-Pay' Standard," *Electrical World* 157, no. 9 (26 Feb. 1962):45, 127; and Silvia Gómez Tagle and Marcelo Miquet, "Integración o democracia sindical: el caso de los electricistas," in *Tres estudios sobre el movimiento obrero en México*, edited by Gómez Tagle, Miquet, José Luis Reyna, and Francisco Zapata (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1976), 167.

43. Gómez Tagle, *Insurgencia y democracia*, 64–65.

44. Primarily a strike over wages, seniority rights, and union jurisdiction, the 1936 light and power workers' strike was also undertaken to protest the disregard shown by CTM president Vicente Lombardo Toledano for union independence. The strike underscored how much strategic weight this union already possessed and why it was treated deferentially by the state, despite its opposition to Cárdenas's labor policies. The strike by Mexico City workers alone triggered a severe crisis when the disruption of electric power cut off the city's light supply, paralyzed industry, and prevented refrigeration of foodstuffs and milk pasteurization. The strike also stopped the pumps servicing the city's water supply, thereby

During the era of the private companies, wage disputes caused most of the work stoppages. Such conflicts diminished after nationalization, when wages were negotiated on a national basis as part of state budgetary arrangements and were regulated according to clearly defined bureaucratic norms. Light and power workers had less reason than other sectors of the Mexican working class to strike over wages. In the postwar period, oil and electric power received lavish state support, which resulted in the best-paid labor forces in the country. Because of the institutionalized nature of collective bargaining in the industry and the favorable treatment awarded the union by the state, relations between the CFE and the labor force were relatively peaceful on these issues.⁴⁵

Despite their privileged character, light and power workers' unions did not follow the path of the Mexican oil workers' union in becoming instruments of corruption, influence-peddling, and nepotism. Two reasons were the industry's strategic importance and the consequent state deference in dealing with its unions. Another was that the unions perceived nationalization as an incomplete process, merely the first step toward alleviating problems in their industry that were resolvable only with basic changes in Mexican society and its political system. The most important explanation was early consolidation of an independent tradition and adoption of democratic trade-union practices in the 1920s and 1930s, largely in response to threats of absorption by the main labor confederations, the CROM and the CTM. Union leaders feared that loss of independence would threaten union careers and subordinate the membership's needs to the CROM's and CTM's political agendas. Thereafter, sectoral characteristics like the small size of the labor force and the decentralized nature of collective bargaining in the industry buttressed union tradition.

For the Mexican light and power workers' unions (unlike those in Argentina), the union rebellion they led in the 1970s revolved around questions of labor-state relations. Disputes over models of economic development and how to resolve the specific problems of the electric power industry were subsumed into political categories for the labor activists who led the reform movements. From the perspective of Mexican light and power workers, deepening nationalization and resolving the industry's problems first required consolidating their unions into a single industrial union and democratizing the Mexican labor movement.

creating a serious public health hazard. See Harvard University Library, British Foreign Office Papers, General Correspondence, "Strike of Employees of Mexico Light and Power Company," A6614/196/26, 22 July 1936.

45. In addition to Gómez Tagle and Thompson, other sources on the history of the Mexican light and power workers' unions are Joe C. Ashby, *Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967); and Víctor M. Sánchez, "Organización y acción en el Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas, 1980," *Iztapalapa* 2, no. 5 (July–Dec. 1981):43–66.

Nationalization had only strengthened the historic division of light and power workers into separate unions. The state had encouraged fragmentation of this powerful sector of the working class even further in 1937 by forming the government-controlled Sindicato Nacional de Electricistas Federales (SNE), which was designed to compete with the Sindicato de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República Mexicana (STERM) and the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME), the two traditional light and power workers' unions. As the state moved directly into production and began constructing its own plants and distribution centers, new workers were automatically affiliated with the SNE. By 1965 the SNE (the only one of the three unions affiliated with the CTM) had become the largest, with a membership estimated at thirty thousand.⁴⁶ The reformers' motivations did not arise strictly from ideology or even from concerns about the organizational and efficiency problems of their industry. Rather, their motivations were largely pragmatic, seeking to protect their unions' independence and their control over jobs and union funds. In the agitated circumstances of Mexico in the 1970s, where all forms of authority were being questioned and the Mexican state's economic policies and political structures were increasingly criticized, the problems involved in developing electric power added yet another element to union dissidents' ideological formation and fueled trade-union opposition.

The two independent light and power workers' unions were already deeply suspicious of the state. Violent suppression of the strikes in 1958 and 1959 had left a legacy of resentment that the government tried to overcome among the light and power workers by respecting the independence of their older unions, notwithstanding establishment of the SNE.⁴⁷ No attempt was made to break up either the SME or STERM or to force affiliation with the SNE. The government allowed both the SME and STERM to maintain their independence from the CTM and even to impose their own conditions on the union unification movement that emerged following the nationalization of the industry. In July 1966, the three unions signed the Convenio Tripartita para la Integración Sindical,

46. Howard Handelman, "The Politics of Labor Protest in Mexico: Two Case Studies," *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 18, no. 3 (Aug. 1976):282. Another reason why light and power workers were able to preserve their independence from the state and maintain their democratic tradition was probably the lateness of nationalization. The bureaucratization and state control over the labor movement ("*charrismo*" as it is popularly called in Mexico) was especially pronounced in industries like railroads and petroleum, which were nationalized in the 1930s and in which the mechanisms of state control or co-optation were perfected in the 1940s and 1950s. See Gómez Tagle, *Insurgencia y democracia*, 96.

47. See Gómez Tagle, *Insurgencia y democracia*, 105–43; and Handelman, "Politics of Labor Protest in Mexico," 277. Although active and enthusiastic participants in the early months of the labor mobilizations, the light and power workers eventually withdrew their support after realizing that Demetrio Vallejo, the protest organizer and leader of the railroad workers' union, was a volatile figure who adopted needlessly provocative tactics that ultimately benefited only the hard-line sectors of the government.

which seemed to presage formation of a single light and power workers' union that would be relatively free of government interference. At the same time, however, the limitations of the government's nationalization were beginning to become apparent to the unions. Although the CFE had promoted development of new power sources, built new plants and transformer stations, and reorganized much of the administration of a once chaotic industry, effective integration proved difficult. Because the regional grids were still functioning separately, the industry remained badly fragmented. This situation affected the unions, particularly STERM and the SME, because of major differences in union structure, administration, wage scales, and benefits that could not be resolved without consolidating and integrating the industry.⁴⁸

By 1969, both STERM and the SME were expressing reservations about proceeding further in union unification without major reforms in the industry itself. They feared that hasty unification under such circumstances would result in insufficient guarantees for established union gains and eventual subordination to the state. Their foot-dragging so exasperated the government, which was now anxious for a single union to facilitate collective bargaining negotiations, that it announced in 1971 its intention to recognize the SNE as the sole union representative for light and power workers beyond the federal district. This announcement signaled the government's intent to undermine the more combative STERM and served as a warning that the SME's failure to cooperate would have negative consequences.

STERM's reaction went beyond a fight for self-preservation. The union soon began to question the entire fabric of the Mexican labor movement and the postrevolutionary state itself. STERM quickly allied with dissident factions in the unions of the oilworkers, teachers, steelworkers, university administrators, and railroad workers in establishing the Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT) as an alternative to the CTM. At that point, the government sought to placate STERM by giving it half of the representation in the new national union, the Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores Electricistas de la República de México (SUTERM). STERM's incorporation did not prove to be subordination, however, because it was now prepared to lead its union rebellion from a position of strength as the dominant partner in a single industrial union.⁴⁹

48. Gómez Tagle, *Insurgencia y democracia*, 144–67.

49. Héctor Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer, *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution: Contemporary Mexican History, 1910–1989* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 206–7; Handelman, "Politics of Labor Protest in Mexico," 285–87. Suspicion is widespread in certain union circles and among some students of the Mexican labor movement that the light and power workers' rebellion was organized by President Echeverría himself in an attempt to weaken opponents in the CFE and CTM. I found no evidence to suggest that the light and power workers' militancy responded solely to the scheming of Echeverría and his circle. Although Echeverría and sectors of the government close to him initially looked

Up to this point, STERM workers had expressed their opposition via a union democracy movement that fell short of elaborating a specific electrical energy program (like that in Argentina) or forming part of a coherent ideological and political position. In this regard, Mexican workers were forced to deal with problems long resolved in Argentina. The labor movement in Mexico had to contend with collective bargaining practices that divided the unions along geographic and even company lines. Industrial unionism was weak, lacking any equivalent to Argentina's Luz y Fuerza. But among light and power workers, a consciousness was evolving that linked union democracy to industrial reform. A nationalist-developmental position not unlike that articulated by the Peronists in Argentina, could be traced to union opposition to a CFE-negotiated World Bank loan in 1966. Thanks to heavy-handed government interference in their unions, the opposition gathered force and erupted in the more extreme nationalist positions adopted in the late 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁰

One example of the Mexican unions' dissident character was their opposition to government emphasis on thermoelectric development. In resource-plentiful Mexico, the government preferred thermal sources that would avoid the expense of bringing hydroelectric or nuclear power plants on-line. Light and power workers criticized this policy as short-sighted, a squandering of nonrenewable fuel sources (coal and petroleum) that also hindered Mexico's technological development. Similarly, the unions criticized the CFE's steadily rising debt and increasing reliance on foreign loans to cover the deficits, which the unions perceived as a prelude to a failed nationalization and reassertion of foreign control over the industry.⁵¹

In its attempt to lead the state back to a more nationalist course, SUTERM enjoyed certain advantages over other Mexican labor unions. Its strategic power was unmatched by any other industry. Moreover, light and power workers had considerable organizational strength, boasting the highest rate of union affiliation in the country (97 percent in 1975) and extraordinary levels of rank-and-file participation in union affairs.⁵² Finally, SUTERM's trenchant criticisms of national economic policy com-

favorably on the electrical workers' reform movement and even encouraged it, the movement soon exceeded anything that faithful servants of the postrevolutionary state could have endorsed.

50. The two main publications of the light and power workers' unions for these years were *Luz* (published by SME) and *Solidaridad* (published by STERM-SUTERM). The SUTERM's nationalist positions on questions of economic development are distilled in "Programa de acción," *Solidaridad*, no. 81 (30 Nov. 1972):21. SUTERM's rhetoric was often incendiary, with frequent calls for "revolutionary unions" and denunciations of "la mentira desarrollista" and charrismo. Yet a considerable gap existed between its manifestos and public pronouncements and a union reform movement aimed for most of its history at more modest goals.

51. Gómez Tagle, *Insurgencia y democracia*, 72–88.

52. *Ibid.*, 15.

bined with the sector's history of independence made light and power workers natural leaders in any labor opposition to the government. On the other side of the ledger, two factors were conspiring to defeat its reform movement: the legacy of Mexico's incomplete power development and the strength of the Mexican state, far more formidable in relation to organized labor than the Argentine government.

The fragmented nature of Mexico's electric power industry, which was more divided by geography and technology than in Argentina, had led to the establishment of union preserves and to suspicion regarding competing programs of systems integration. For example, the SME, despite its affiliation with SUTERM and similar nationalist critiques of the CFE's power programs, gave little more than verbal support to the SUTERM-led reform movement out of opposition to integration that would completely centralize the grid system. The SME proposed instead "*zonas de trabajo*" that would recognize the existing boundaries in the system and thereby preserve union autonomy. Consequently, SME participation in the union-reform movement was perfunctory and fatally weakened SUTERM's anti-bureaucracy campaign not out of ideological differences but out of determination to protect an industrial bailiwick and a source of union power that had arisen from Mexico's disjointed power development.⁵³

The second factor, the peculiar relationship between the state and the labor movement in Mexico, buried whatever possibilities remained for a SUTERM-led reform of the Mexican labor movement. Ironically, SUTERM had been favored initially by that relationship. The administration of President Luis Echeverría supported integration of the country's electric power systems as part of a more nationalist economic program and at first viewed eliminating opposition within the CFE and consolidating the light and power workers' unions as desirable. Once the SUTERM movement embraced a broader program of reform and enlisted the support of other disgruntled sectors of the labor movement, however, the state closed ranks to crush it. On 16 July 1976, the army's violent suppression of the SUTERM national strike exposed the limits of union reform in Mexico. In 1978, after most of the dissident unions belonging to the "*tendencia democrática*" led by SUTERM had been repressed, militants from the light and power workers' unions helped form a new group, the *Movimiento Sindical Revolucionario* (MRS). Its program promoted global democratization of the labor movement, now envisioned as part of a socialist program. This ambitious challenge was more a statement of impotence than a meaningful political gesture, however, given that the state and the CTM had already rejected labor reform and dismantled the SUTERM-led union democracy movement.

53. "¡Basta de confusiones y de política de dos caras!" *Solidaridad*, nos. 91–92 (16 May 1973):18–20.

The rebellion of Mexican light and power workers, a political movement of considerable importance in Mexico for several years, differed from that of the Argentine unions. Reform of the trade-union movement was the most immediate and realistic goal in Mexico. In a national context where the state was strong, the unions relatively weak, and the mechanisms for limiting dissent formidable, the character as well as the outcome of the SUTERM movement for union reform were almost predictable. Mexican light and power workers limited their most effective opposition to a reformist political program, presenting it as a fight against corruption, "*charrismo*" (bureaucratization), and state control and manipulation of the labor movement because the historical development of the Mexican state and the Mexican labor movement had determined the situation thus. Yet the characteristics and problems of the electric power industry (as with the Argentine workers) also influenced the nature and outcome of their rebellion. In this instance, a critique of Mexico's postrevolutionary order and the state's vision of national economic policies as represented in the labor movement arose at least in part from a specific work situation. Thus the shortcomings of the postrevolutionary state and the failings of the labor movement were both manifested in the crisis in this industry. Demands for union reform were justified as necessary steps toward resolving the country's electric power problems. As late as 1977, with the SUTERM movement in disarray and its calls for reform becoming increasingly isolated from the workers' daily struggles, SUTERM was still insisting on the link between industrial democracy and the country's electric power needs.⁵⁴ By the same token, the fragmented nature of Mexico's power development and the SME's unwillingness to endorse a thorough integration of the grid system had fatally weakened the reform movement of the light and power workers.

CONCLUSION

For light and power workers, unlike workers in modern sectors like automobiles and steel, the labor process and resulting workplace culture seem to be less significant in their ideological formation and political leadership than certain characteristics of the electric power industry in Latin America: the structural weaknesses of their industry and the workers' corresponding perceptions of the role of private enterprise and the state in resolving these problems. This particular sectoral influence continues to dominate the perceptions of the light and power workers and to shape their political behavior. The most recent evidence is the militant opposition of the Cordoban light and power workers' union to attempts to privatize EPEC and their key role in forming the Congreso

54. See "A consolidarse y desarrollarse en interés de la nación, la industria eléctrica," *Solidaridad*, no. 179 (Oct. 1977):4.

de los Trabajadores Argentinos (CTA) to oppose what the union regards as the generally supine behavior of the CGT in responding to the privatization programs of federal and provincial governments.⁵⁵

An industrial-sector approach to studying labor politics has been offered here as a possible alternative in explaining the important role played by light and power workers in recent trade-union politics in Latin America. Such an approach may also shed some light on the current dynamic of working-class politics under the neoliberal governments in power in the region. Yet the precise expression of union politics depends on multiple factors. Tracing the sources of working-class politics is not a mechanical process but involves explaining a complex weave of social, historical, and cultural influences as well as continued attention to labor studies' traditional and legitimate preoccupations with regime type and labor-state relations. In the electric power sector, the industrial influences sketched out here have been an important factor in the recent history of the Latin American light and power workers' unions, although they were never solely determinative in themselves. As studies of Latin American labor move away from idealized definitions of ideology and simplistic representations of trade-union politics, the multiplicity of influences grounded in the realities and shared experiences of work and the workplace in each industry should help lead scholars to more satisfactory explanations of working-class politics in Latin America.

55. "En Córdoba prenden velas por la pelea de Luz y Fuerza con Angeloz," *Página 12*, 19 July 1992, p. 6. The union's position on the issue remains much the same, contending that deregulation has not proved successful in the underdeveloped countries that have attempted it. For the union, it is simply a fact that an interconnected system provides the economies of scale necessary to produce great amounts of electric power efficiently and thus leads to the establishment of some kind of monopoly, state or private. The enormous capital demands for investment and the long waiting period before even modest profits can be reaped further reduce the possibility that in this industry, monopoly in generation and distribution can realistically be subject to competition once it has been established. Hence both the technology and the capital demands of the industry encourage monopolistic practices. The question is whether a publicly or privately owned monopoly will best serve a country's energy needs. Vivid memories of the era of privately owned systems have persuaded Argentine workers that the industry must remain in public hands, barring a major technological breakthrough in the industry or state willingness to assume a more vigorous regulatory role than in the past. The latter outcome seems doubtful, given the terms of the privatizations and the disarticulation of the Argentine state currently taking place under President Carlos Menem. Elsewhere in Latin America, engineers and utility managers are beginning to criticize the results of the privatizations. On Chile, where privatization of the power industry was particularly sweeping, see Vivianne Blanlot S., "La regulación del sector eléctrico: la experiencia chilena," in *Después de las privatizaciones: hacia el estado regulador*, edited by Oscar Muñoz (Santiago: CIEPLAN, 1993), 281–321. Ending the state monopoly in Chile led simply to creating a private monopoly that, repeating the behavior of private companies in the past, has preferred to accrue profits on the system's established production. Thus far, the new Chilean monopoly has invested little in the industry and has done nothing to increase generation and distribution capacity in the country.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ADELMAN, JEREMY

- 1991 "Against Essentialism: Latin American Labour History in Comparative Perspective, A Critique of Bergquist." *Labour/Le Travail* 27 (Spring):175–84.

AGUILAR CAMIN, HECTOR, AND LORENZO MEYER

- 1993 *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution: Contemporary Mexican History, 1910–1989*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

ASHBY, JOE C.

- 1967 *Organized Labor and the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

BAIZAN, MARIO, AND SILVIA MERCADO

- 1987 *Oscar Smith: el sindicalismo peronista ante sus límites*. Buenos Aires: Puntosur.

BERGQUIST, CHARLES W.

- 1986 *Labor in Latin America*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

BLANLOT S., VIVIANNE

- 1993 "La regulación del sector eléctrico: la experiencia chilena." In *Después de las privatizaciones: hacia el estado regulador*, edited by Oscar Muñoz, 281–321. Santiago: CIEPLAN.

BRADLEY, J. R.

- 1931 *Fuel and Power in Latin America*. U.S. Department of Commerce, Trade Promotion Series no. 126. Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO.

BRENNAN, JAMES P.

- 1994 *The Labor Wars in Córdoba, 1955–1976: Ideology, Work, and Labor Politics in an Argentine Industrial City*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

BURAWOY, MICHAEL

- 1985 *The Politics of Production*. London: Verso.

CAVERS, DAVID F., AND JAMES R. NELSON

- 1959 *Electric Power Regulation in Latin America*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

CONTACTO

- 1967 "El Chocón, un paso hacia el futuro." *Contacto* 3, no. 16 (Feb.):36–38.
1972 "Sin energía no hay progreso." *Contacto* 7, no. 82 (Sept.):4–5.
1973 "Única Gran Empresa Nacional de Electricidad." *Contacto* 8, no. 96 (Dec.):14–21.
1975 "Cómo, por qué de la Única Gran Empresa Nacional de Electricidad." *Contacto* 10, no. 110 (Apr.):20–27.

DOMINGUEZ, N.

- 1977 *Conversaciones con Juan José Taccone*. Buenos Aires: Hachette.

ELECTRICAL WORLD

- 1962 "Mexico Boosts Power Rates on 'Ability-to-Pay' Standard." *Electrical World* 157, no. 9 (26 Feb.):45, 127.
1962 "Mexico Wants to Integrate Its Many Electric Systems." *Electrical World* 157, no. 21 (21 May):21.
1972 "Buenos Aires Suffered Brownouts and Several Major Blackouts." *Electrical World* 177, no. 4 (15 Feb.):19–20.

ELECTRUM

- 1966 *Electrum* 3, no. 83 (Sept.6):1–3.
1972 "La situación económica-financiera de la Empresa Provincial de Energía de Córdoba: una contribución sindical a su solución." *Electrum* 16, no. 65 (Aug.):6–11.
1973 "Contra el centralismo portuario." *Electrum*, no. 395 (6 Apr.):7–8.

FENN, SCOTT A.

- 1984 *America's Electric Utilities*. New York: Praeger.

FERNANDEZ DEL BUSTO, ALFONSO, OSCAR ENRIQUEZ, BASIL NIKIFOROFF, AND ALEJANDRO PAEZ URQUIDI

- 1946 "Mexico's Electrification Program, Parts I and II." *Electrical Engineering* 65 (May–June):193–97, 245–51.

FROST, ROBERT L.

- 1988 "Labor and Technological Innovation in French Electric Power." *Technology and Culture* 29, no. 4 (Oct.):865–85.

ELECTRICAL WORKERS IN ARGENTINA AND MEXICO

- GOMEZ TAGLE, SILVIA
 1980 *Insurgencia y democracia en los sindicatos electricistas*. Mexico City: Colegio de México.
- GOMEZ TAGLE, SILVIA, AND MARCELO MIQUET
 1976 "Integración o democracia sindical: el caso de los electricistas." In *Tres estudios sobre el movimiento obrero en México*, edited by Silvia Gómez Tagle, Marcelo Miquet, José Luis Reyna, and Francisco Zapata.
- GORDON, ANDREW
 1988 *The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japan: Heavy Industry, 1853–1955*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- GRAZIANO, RICHARD
 1989 *La gestión sindical en SEGBA*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina.
- HANDELMAN, HOWARD
 1976 "The Politics of Labor Protest in Mexico: Two Case Studies." *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 18, no. 3 (Aug.):282.
- HUGHES, THOMAS P.
 1983 *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880–1930*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE
 1982 *Conditions of Work and Employment in Water, Gas, and Electricity Supply Services*. Geneva: ILO.
- JACOB-WENDLER, GERHART
 1982 *Deutsche Elektroindustrie in Lateinamerika: Siemens und AEG, 1890–1914*. Stuttgart: In Kommission bei Klett-Cotta.
- MACDOWALL, DUNCAN
 1988 *The Light: Brazilian Traction, Light, and Power C. Ltd, 1899–1945*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- MARCONDES DE ALBUQUERQUE, MARIO
 1982 *História da Energia Elétrica no Brasil*. Curitiba, Paraná: Gráfica Groeml.
- MARSHALL, ADRIANA
 1980 "Labour Markets and Wage Growth: The Case of Argentina." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 4 (1980):37–60.
- MONTALI, SANDRO JOSE
 1991 "Resistencia obrera a la dictadura: el caso de Luz y Fuerza de Capital (1976–77)." In *Tres jornadas interescuelas: Simposio Historia del Movimiento Obrero en la Argentina, 1955–1990*. Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios de Historia Obrera.
- PION-BERLIN, DAVID
 1989 *The Ideology of State Terror: Economic Doctrine and Political Repression in Argentina and Peru*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner.
- ROLDAN, IRIS MARTHA
 1978 *Sindicatos y protesta social en la Argentina: el sindicato de Luz y Fuerza de Córdoba, 1969–1974*. Amsterdam: Center for Latin American Research and Documentation.
- RUDOLPH, RICHARD, AND SCOTT RIDLEY
 1986 *Power Struggle: The Hundred-Year War over Electricity*. New York: Harper and Row.
- SAINSAULIEU, RENAUD
 1988 *L'Identité au travail*. Paris: Presse de la Foundation National des Sciences Politiques.
- SINDICATO DE LUZ Y FUERZA
 1972 *Pautas para una política nacional*. Buenos Aires: Luz y Fuerza, Capital Federal.
- SANCHEZ, VICTOR M.
 1981 "Organización y acción en el Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas, 1980." *Iztapalapa* 2, no. 5 (July–Dec.):43–66.
- SMITH, WILLIAM C.
 1989 *Authoritarianism and the Crisis of the Argentine Political Economy*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- SOLIDARIDAD
 1973 "Sobre la reestructuración de las tarifas eléctricas." *Solidaridad*, nos. 96–97 (10 Aug.):7–9.

Latin American Research Review

TACCONE, JUAN JOSE

1977 *900 días en la empresa*. Buenos Aires: Fundación 2001.

TENDLER, JUDITH

1968 *Electric Power in Brazil*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

THOMPSON, MARK

1966 "The Development of Unionism among Mexican Electrical Workers." Ph.D. diss., Cornell University.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1946 "Difficulties Encountered by Public Utilities Companies in Argentina." No. FW 835.5034/1-1546. U.S. Dept. of State Papers Related to the Internal Affairs of Argentina.

VEIGA FIALHO, A.

1979 *A Compra da Light*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

WIONCZEK, MIGUEL S.

1964 "Electric Power: The Uneasy Partnership." In *Public Policy and Private Enterprise in Mexico*, edited by Raymond Vernon. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

ZAPATA, FRANCISCO

1990 "Towards a Latin American Sociology of Labour." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 22, pt. 2 (May):375-402.