

EXERCISING THE COSMIC RACE: MEXICAN SPORTING CULTURE AND MESTIZO
CITIZENS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	7
LIST OF TABLES.....	8
ABSTRACT.....	9
INTRODUCTION.....	10
Literature Review: Sports and Mexican History.....	11
Research Methods and Archives.....	21
 CHAPTER 1 -- HARDENING BRICKS AND TRAINING DRAGONS: MILITARIZED PHYSICAL EDUCATION, 1884-1946.....	 23
Porfirian Military Education.....	25
Militarization in the Violence of Revolution.....	33
Reforming the Revolutionary Military.....	39
The Interim Presidencies, 1928-1934.....	49
Sports and Militarization under Lázaro Cárdenas, 1934-1940.....	59
Wartime Physical Education.....	67
The Mexican Scouts.....	75
Pentathlon Deportivo.....	86
Conclusion.....	89
 CHAPTER 2 -- A “NEW RELIGION OF ALL OF THE PUEBLOS OF TOMORROW”: PHYSICAL EDUCATION, INCORPORATION, AND THE NATIONAL SPORTS FUNNEL.....	 91
Porfirian Sports and Physical Education, 1876-1911.....	92
Revolutionary Sport, 1921-1931.....	97
PNR Sports Reformation, 1931-1934.....	111
Socialist Education and the Plan Sexenal.....	118
The Formation of the DEF.....	124
Rural Sports Missions and Delegations.....	132
Indigenous Sports Promotion.....	136
Land and Equipment.....	142
Conclusion.....	147

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

CHAPTER 3 -- BETWEEN “DIGNIFIED SCIENCES” AND “CLUMSY EXPERIMENTS:” MUSCLES, MOTHERS, AND FEMININITY IN WOMEN’S PHYSICAL EDUCATION.....	150
Women’s Education in the Porfiriato	151
Women’s Education in the Revolution	155
Femininity, Health, and Muscles	169
Sports for Art and Beauty	176
Ideal Femininity and Revolution	184
Cardenista Women’s Sports.....	188
Conclusion	196
CHAPTER 4 -- HAY QUE MEJORAR LA RAZA: SPORTS, RACE SCIENCE, AND PUBLIC HEALTH	198
From Herbert Spencer to La Raza C3smica, 1880-1925	199
Vaccinations, Temperance, and Sports, 1920-1930.....	211
Mexican Eugenic Society and Regeneration: 1930-1934.....	225
The C3rdenas Years, 1934-1940.....	237
Conclusion	252
CHAPTER 5 -- UNA ANTORCHA DE ESPERANZA: OLYMPISM, PAN-AMERICANISM, AND THE SURVIVAL OF COMMUNITY SPORTS, 1900-1958.....	256
Early Mexican Olympism, 1900-1936.....	258
Pan-American Sports Competitions, 1931-1941	270
The Central American and Pan-American Games.....	273
Community and Youth Sports after 1946	298
Conclusion	306
CONCLUSION.....	308
REFERENCES	316

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.1: Poster honoring military service, 1938	65
1.2: Voluntary pre-military exercises, 1944	74
2.1: Springfield College Cosmopolitan Club, 1920-1921	107
2.2: "Los Indios Tarahumaras en las Carreras de Texas," 1927	138
2.3: Palillo of the Tarahumara, 1934	140
2.4: Campesinos playing baseball at Xichú, Guanajuato, 1936.....	144
2.5: La novena "Bayer" from Veracruz. January, 1936.....	147
3.1: Ball exercises at the Escuela "General Amarillas" in Mexico City, 1923	163
3.2: Players from basketball team "Oaxaca," 1928.....	166
3.3: Girls stretching during exercise routines at school, 1935	168
3.4: Cartoon sexualizing women exercising, 1928	187
3.5: The Mexican Venus, 1936.....	190
3.6: Young women practicing athletic events, 1936.....	192
3.7: Callisthenic exercises at the Escuela Preparatoria Nacional, 1936	194
4.1: "Alcohol attacks your brain," 1930	221
4.2: Advertising using sports themes, 1928	224
4.3: "Project of Organization of the Mexican Eugenics Society," 1931	230
5.1: Worker's Athletic Tournament, 1928	264

LIST OF TABLES

1.1: Proposed Curricula for the Escuela Militar de Educación Física (1933)	48
1.2: Tepotzotlán Tribus de Exploradores Camp daily food schedule	80
2.1: Federal Rural Primary Schools and Sports in 1929.....	108
2.2: Organization of the National Sports Funnel	118
3.1: Recommended diet for lasting health and beauty	182
4.1: Results of SEP Medical-Physical Exams around DF, 1923	212
4.2: Population Classified by Physical and Mental Defects	226
5.1: Lyrics for the “Himno de los Séptimos Juegos Deportivos Centroamericanos y del Caribe,”by Armando González.....	291

ABSTRACT

Since the achievement of independence, Mexican officials looked for ways to bring together a country of many disparate parts into a single modern nation. Indeed, like their neighbors to the north, many officials supported programs to forge disciplined, productive, and selfless citizens capable of guiding the country in the future through cutting-edge educational programs. When a nearly fifty-year period of civil war and instability came to an end with the rise of dictator-president Porfirio Diaz (1876-1911), the general promoted the first sports programs to toughen up and straighten out a citizenry his cabinet believed had weakened in the country's many refurbished cities. These programs were, nevertheless, exclusionary in practice. The "Indian Problem," as many public officials called it, remained a primary concern as the supposed natural backwardness of the masses was interpreted as a societal disease that, for many, had no known cure.

Diaz's presidency, which directed money and attention to wealthy urban centers to the detriment of the countryside, came to end when the masses rose with workers and women to take the government. This social revolution, which began in 1910, was the first in the world and brought to power a generation of idealistic leaders from all walks of life. These leaders took on the country's most desperate problems with creative cultural programs that were often guided by science. For revolutionaries, sports became a primary means of transforming the disparate masses into ideal athlete-citizens under a mestizo-aesthetic that were enlightened by science and willing to sacrifice personal ambition for the greater good. Officials from the military, public health, and education sectors crafted plans to mold citizens based on their visions of the revolution, but women and indigenous people did as well. In some ways these programs failed to meet the lofty expectations of the most idealistic leaders. In others, the revolutionary sports programs were among the most successful government programs created. The work completed between 1920 and 1946 in sports culture and physical education set the stage for some of the country's greatest sports accomplishments that followed, including winning the right to host the Pan-American Games in 1955 and the Olympics in 1968.

Scholars have debated the importance of sports in politics and society for decades, but even though Mexican historians have extensively analyzed revolutionary cultural programs, study on sports has been relegated to a footnote. This dissertation argued that sports were, in fact, considered a primary means of transforming the supposedly backwards masses into ideal citizens for officials in nearly all official departments.

Introduction

Mexico had been let down from this position twice before in the previous decade, but this time it was more optimistic in its effort to achieve a major international sporting coup. In October of 1963, its capital city faced formidable bids from Lyon, Detroit, and Buenos Aires, leading most outsiders to predict that it would end up a clear third or fourth place finisher in the vote for the 1968 Olympic Games. Sports experts and the public widely regarded France and the United States as heavy favorites as both had heavy representation in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and had hosted the games twice before. But when the ballots were tallied at Baden Baden, Germany, Mexico City won 30 of 58 votes, more than doubling the second-place from Detroit. The achievement meant Mexico would become the first developing and Latin American country to host the games. President Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964), once a dedicated *deportista* as a youth, proclaimed that the accomplishment reflected the IOC's confidence in national modernization that had helped bring stability during the economic boom of the "Mexican Miracle." He also celebrated the country's heavy investment in sporting culture in previous decades that positioned the country as a regional leader in sports.¹

Mexico City's victory was the culmination of a decades-long government investment in sports culture, physical education, and event infrastructure that has not been thoroughly examined in scholarship. Indeed, from the late nineteenth century through the middle of the 1940s the government supported scientifically-guided sports programs that they believed could help engineer ideal modern citizens capable of overcoming the country's supposed backwardness. For several revolutionary presidents and most sports promoters, success in sports represented the hope of the revolution and many believed its practice would help the government

¹ Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, "The Rank Outsider: Mexico City's Bid for the 1968 Olympic Games," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 6 (2009): 752–53.

win the war it waged against superstition, illness, and indiscipline since independence. Some of these programs had precedents in the Porfiriato (1876-1911), while others were altogether new. Revolutionary leaders agreed on the importance of the government investment in sports and exercise, but they differed in their methods and philosophies based on their differing visions of the revolution. *Exercising the Cosmic Race* details the development of national sporting culture and ideal citizens through the visions of the military officers, cultural leaders, women athletes, public health experts, and supporters of Olympism.

Literature Review: Sports and Mexican History

The field of sports studies has been slow to develop. One sociologist blamed slow progress on the prevalence of academic “chauvinism” and “Puritanism” as most scholars considered its practice a meaningless and innocuous leisure.² Researchers undertook some studies during the cultural turn in the late 1960s, but the popularity in sports studies boomed a decade later when dozens examined the ways in which governments used sport for “ideological freighting” in the Cold War.³ High profile sports encounters, like the unforgettable “Miracle on Ice” between the US and the Soviet Union in 1980, captivated the world as capitalist and communist countries waged symbolic warfare on the courts, fields, and ice. Many studies measured government strategies to use sport to promote ideology and levy social control on participants, but they inspired sports studies of all kinds.

Scholars that examined sporting systems in the 1970s and early 1980s often adopted capitalist or Marxist interpretations of sports practice. Some contended that sports in capitalist societies were inherently good because professionalism provided incentives for good

² John Hargreaves, “Sport, Culture, and Ideology,” in *Sport, Culture, and Ideology*, ed. Jennifer Hargreaves (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 30–32.

³ The Cold War International History Project, “The Global History of Sport in the Cold War,” September 23, 2014. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-global-history-sport-the-cold-war> (accessed July 2, 2017).

performance that more efficiently divided labor and established socioeconomic fluidity for participants. Athletes, they argued, found games fun, exciting, and free because even though athletes submitted to the rules of play, they were always left the choice to participate or not. Marxists argued that sports in capitalist societies only exacerbated class divisions and claimed that the only way to promote equality within them was to lessen competition and give the players control over the means of production. These analyses indicated wide interest in the use of sport as a means of social control as scholars took a “mirror of society” approach. In this they held that training regiments, treatment of athletes, and symbolism attached to events reflected the social and political reality of the country. When the end of the Cold War made such debates less useful, historians and sociologists looked at the ways in which sport operated as an opiate for the masses, distracting citizens from the everyday problems of society, or as a builder of nations and a tool for propaganda.⁴ Studies on Mexican sport, have adopted a variety of these perspectives.

Mexico is not often recognized for its rich sporting tradition, but the ubiquity of ball-courts found in the ruins of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican civilizations indicate that the people fixed sports-like performances at the center of their universe for over 2,000 years. Archaeologists contend that these events, which often constituted the “glue of the social fabric” of communities throughout the Americas, are believed to have held great political and religious significance throughout what is now Mexico. In fact, the performances perhaps may not be correctly labeled as sports at all because, more than just leisure events that typified “modern” European and North American sport, they held significance in the spiritual life of participants. The ball games of the ancient Toltec, Mayan, and Aztec, for example, were played as religious festivals that represented the struggle between life on earth and death in the underworld. The Maya and the

⁴ Brian M Petrie, “Sport and Politics,” in *Sport and Social Order: Contributions to the Sociology of Sport*, ed. Donald W Ball and John W Loy (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1975), 189–94; Patsy Neal, *Sport and Identity* (Philadelphia: Dorrance, 1972), 19–25, 33–38, 175; Martin Barry Vinokur, *More than a Game: Sports and Politics* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 1–4, 135–36.

Jicarilla Apache also played sports to increase the earth's fertility, while the Aztec used flower wars and other rituals to keep the world in balance. Competitions were also often used to settle disputes between rival communities.⁵

Pelota mixteca and *ulama*, played in Oaxaca and Sinaloa, respectively, are ball games that evolved out of these pre-colonial events that are still being played today. Indeed, archaeologists and historians have shown that sports in Mexico were extremely adaptable. For example, many of the rules of *pelota mixteca* mirrored that of contemporary tennis and other Southern European ballgames. This included the rare chase rule found only in Franco-Flemish games that were known to have been popular in the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century. Playing with rackets or the *mano desnuda* was interchangeable in ballgames in Oaxaca. European ballgames spread through the Spanish Americas during colonization, including Colombia and Ecuador, which had games using similar rules to those played in Mexico, but often modern adaptations of these sports blended the meaning behind participation. For example, many *pelota mixteca* players believed that they could communicate with their ancestors while playing.⁶ Physical educator Manuel Velázquez Andrade considered the pre-Columbian and colonial era of sports as part of national sport's "utilitarian epoch" in which participants played as part of religious ceremony or to prepare for war.⁷ The Spanish colonial government only

⁵ For more on Mesoamerican and pre-Columbian North American sports, see Vernon L Scarborough and David R Wilcox, eds., *The Mesoamerican Ballgame* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991); Barbara Fash and William Fash, "The Roles of Ballgames in Mesoamerican Ritual Economy," in *Mesoamerican Ritual Economy: Archaeological and Ethnological Perspectives*, ed. E. Christian Wells and Karla L. Davis-Salazar (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2007), 267; O. Penz, "Ballgames of the North American Indians and in Late Medieval Europe," *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 15, no. 1 (1991): 45–55; Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record the Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 143–45.

⁶ Heiner Gillmeister, *Tennis: A Cultural History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), 71–73; Varinia del Angel, Gabriela León, and Óscar Necochea, *El juego de pelota mixteca* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Castillo, 2005), 10–11; David J. Wysocki, "Ancient Games: Baseball, Modernization, and Identity in Oaxaca, Mexico," Master's thesis, San Diego State University (2011), 97.

⁷ Manuel Velázquez Andrade, "La Educación Física en las Escuelas de México," in *Fourth International Congress on School Hygiene*, ed. Thomas Andrew Storey, vol. 5 (Buffalo: Courier Company of Buffalo, 1914), 19–23.

supported sports in the military at this time, although games were likely played during religious festivals.

Little work has been done on sports in the nineteenth century because they were not widely practiced. Journalists discussed the potential of physical education in newspapers in colonial New Spain in 1805 as Europeans tested new pedagogical methods that incorporated exercises for the development of the mind and body.⁸ At this time, most Mexicans did not attend school and those that did rarely advanced beyond primary school and the Catholic Church administered education as the government was locked in perpetual bankruptcy. Between 1821 and 1868 the country was plagued with intermittent civil war and coups as liberals and conservatives and federalists and centralists competed for power. The country's presidency changed hands 52 times from Guadalupe Victoria (1824-1829) to Benito Juárez (1857-1872). This number does not count the eight illegitimate presidents and three regents under brief conservative rule in the Reform War (1857-1862). Caudillo General Antonio López de Santa Anna exemplified the precarious state of affairs in the executive branch as he seized the presidency eleven times in this period. The country also endured foreign interventions from France and the United States and lost nearly one-half of its territory in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and the Gadsden Purchase (1852). The expulsion of the French army and the dismantling of the short-lived Catholic empire ruled by Emperor Maximilian Hapsburg (1864-1867) ushered in a long period of liberal rule. Political and economic stability arrived a decade later when General Porfirio Díaz centralized power and began a 35-year authoritarian rule known as the Porfiriato (1876-1911).

⁸ JMW Barneq, "Concluye La Carta Sexta de JMW Barneq," *Diario de Mexico* 1, no. 79 (December 18, 1805): 343–45.

Díaz led an economic recovery by establishing the country's first credit and investment codes and he provided incentives to foreign companies to build new transportation and communications networks by offering free land. This helped him balance the national budget in 1894 and create economic surplus for the first time in the country's history.⁹ Nevertheless, the boom and bust nature of the economy in the first decade of the twentieth century exacerbated swelling discontent among the masses. Export economic strategies and *latifundia* contributed to widespread shortages of staple foods and the dispossession of land from the poorest parts of the society. Poor campesinos worked on large haciendas that trapped them in semi-feudal relationships under debts accumulated from the abusive *tienda de raya*. Many people in the upper and middle class were optimistic about Díaz's economic development model that built-up cities, mimicking a European aesthetic, to the neglect of the countryside.¹⁰

Rural peoples were often left to fend for themselves and state investment in education, while highest to date, hardly improved as most the country remained illiterate. The government recognized some of the struggles that the poorest people endured, but some officials blamed the condition on their supposed sick genetics. As an officer in the military, Díaz valued physical education and sports to teach lessons in discipline and improve health. Many military leaders, in fact, grew concerned that the country was left in a miserable state and that the modern conveniences in cities had softened the children. When the Díaz government became centralized it did not place a priority on funding for education. The only schools that it managed were in the capital and federal territories. But funding did increase over his presidency. For example, in

⁹ James Wallace Wilkie, "The Six Ideological Phases of Mexico's 'Permanent Revolution' since 1910," in *Society and Economy in Mexico* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 5; Thomas Passananti, "Dynamizing the Economy in a Façon Irrégulière: A New Look at Financial Politics in Porfirian Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 24, no. 1 (2008): 1–29.

¹⁰ William H Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

1878, education represented 10.52% of state expenditures and by 1910 that figure rose to 23%.¹¹ Physical education became mandatory in 1908.

The charreada and bullfights were popular spectator sports during the Porfiriato, but foreign and national elites increasingly participated in more sophisticated sports from North America and Northern Europe in the late nineteenth century. William H. Beezley showed that businessmen discussed baseball, cricket, golf, and tennis in elite social clubs in Díaz's remade urban centers. These practices were part of a "Porfirian Persuasion" that swept up the country's upper and middle classes. Díaz hoped that the adoption of sports would move people to mimic Western styles and attitudes as a means of civilizing national life. Railroad and mining work camps sponsored company sports to keep workers in shape, provide alternatives to the cantina, and distract them from homesickness and boredom. Baseball caught on in the border region and the capital and a formal league of three teams was established in 1887.¹² Gil Joseph's study on baseball in the Yucatán Peninsula showed that even though bosses promoted sport to better keep track of their laborers, Maya workers attached religious symbolism to these games and used matches to politically organize. Outside of contests of this character, or rural games played during festivals, the lack of sports fields and basic equipment available to the public ensured that Porfirian sports remained an exclusionary practice and a marker of sociability among elites who mostly disdained the rural and indigenous masses.¹³

¹¹ Mary K. Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982), 39.

¹² William H. Beezley, "The Rise of Baseball in Mexico and the First Valenzuela," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 4 (1985): 1-2.

¹³ Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club and Other Episodes of Porfirian Mexico*; G. M. Joseph, "Forging the Regional Pastime: Baseball and Class in Yucatan," in *Sport and Society in Latin America: Diffusion, Dependency, and the Rise of Mass Culture*, ed. Joseph Arbena (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); Young upper and middle class men also had opportunities to play sports in Mexico City's YMCA. See Glenn Avent, "A Popular and Wholesome Resort: Gender, Class, and the Young Men's Christian Association in Porfirian Mexico" (Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1996).

Revolution erupted in 1910 in opposition to the re-election of Díaz. After his abdication in 1911, the foreign press used the country's preferences in spectator sports to illustrate the backwardness of the people. The *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, for example, wrote in 1913 that the country's celebratory bullfights in the honor of Porfirio Díaz's son, Félix Díaz, who had overthrown President Francisco Madero, demonstrated the barbarity of the people. With a 7,000 seat-capacity, the "Plaza de Toros" bullring in Mexico City was the largest in the world and cost over \$700,000. The newspaper described the sport as "repulsive butchery" and argued that it thrived in the country for the same reason that the country was in a state of anarchy and that the streets were filled with the bodies of innocent citizens. In short, the country did not respect human life, so why would they care about the bulls?¹⁴ One journalist with the *Chicago Tribune* wrote in 1912 that military leaders of the conflict, like Emiliano Zapata and Félix Díaz, were engaged in the country's favorite sport of "uprising."¹⁵ Many in the US regarded killing as Mexico's most treasured sporting tradition, a notion that helped develop damaging stereotypes of the country as lawless, backwards, and violent for decades to come. The ambition of militant leaders and the purported impetuosity of the typical soldier, still largely more loyal to their *patrias chicas* than the country, concerned revolutionary leaders after most the violence had ceased in 1920.

In one of the first studies on the revolutionary sporting system, Joseph Arbena argued that officials only paid lip service to sports development. In his brief article, which covers 50 years of national sports history in just 15 pages, he incorrectly characterized it as the dream of a handful of officials that few took seriously. While the government did use sport heavily to increase nationalism, he downplayed the importance of physical education and believed that the

¹⁴ "Bull-Ring Civilization," *Journal of Zoöphily* 22 (April 1913): 59.

¹⁵ Sidney McNeill Sutherland, "When Banditry and Mechanics Conspired," *Popular Mechanics* 40, no. 4 (1923): 508–10.

government cared more about international spectacle.¹⁶ Multiple scholars have shown this sentiment to be false. Although the study of sport has remained just a footnote in education histories, scholars have demonstrated that sports were a vital element of revolutionary pedagogy as teachers rearticulated the revolutionary social subject around the healthiness of the body.¹⁷ Indeed, what differentiated rebellions, independence movements, and coups from social revolution was the fact that successful social revolution implied a combination of the rapid structural transformation of socio-economic and political institutions and mass social upheaval.¹⁸ Alan Knight added that there were two useful definitions for social revolution. First, social revolution should have a large voluntary political mobilization. Second, it should greatly force structural socio-political changes.¹⁹ The revolution did not immediately meet this criterion, but officials worked painstakingly to remake society by improving the spiritual and material conditions of everyday life of the disparate rural masses and incorporating them into national life. Sport was a primary means of accomplishing these goals.

An inclusive era of national sport began with the creation of the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) in 1921 by President Álvaro Obregón. New cultural programs in the revolution reflected, in part, the government's changing attitudes about children's welfare. Child labor was common during much of the Porfiriato and many families treated their children like servants. Doctors and cultural leaders by the 1920s considered children spiritually pure and deserving of free play. They reasoned that unhappy children that put off education would not develop

¹⁶ Joseph Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 3 (1991): 353–54; Kevin B Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World: Mexico and the 1968 Olympic Games* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 180.

Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 353–54; Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World*.¹⁸ Theda Skocpol, "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18, no. 2 (1976): 175.

¹⁹ Alan Knight, "Social Revolution: A Latin American Perspective," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 9, no. 2 (1990): 179–80.

properly physically or intellectually. This condition led, in their estimation, to a life of crime, sadness, and dishonesty that would break apart families. As families dissolved, so too would general order.²⁰

Officials also aimed to uplift and incorporate the country's indigenous masses into national life to solve the country ever-present "Indian Problem" through a process of *mestizaje*, or the cultural and genetic mixing between those of indigenous and European background. Some believed that this process imbued the best aspects of both peoples into a single ideal national racial and cultural type. *Mestizaje*, nevertheless, represented both a process of inclusion and exclusion. While indigenous peoples were awarded new opportunities in the revolution for participation in national life, they were expected to abandon some elements of their traditional way of life, including religion, diet, and ideas of work and family, if it conflicted with revolutionary ideals. In this way, ideal citizenship based on a mestizo aesthetic required the submission of many parts of indigeniety, but rarely contested the value of whiteness. In this way, *mestizaje* represented a form of whitening for revolutionaries. Keith Brewster introduced indigenista sport in his articles on ethnicity and nationalism and established that cultural leaders promoted sports in hopes to help indigenous people redeem the qualities of their ancient, pyramid-building ancestors who had supposedly degenerated into a miserable state. Miguel Lisbona Guillen revealed that sports programs in his case study on Chiapas explicitly aimed to improve the racial stock of participants through an elevation of culture.²¹

²⁰ Ann Shelby Blum, *Domestic Economies: Family, Work, and Welfare in Mexico City, 1884-1943* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), xviii–xxv.

²¹ See Chapter 2 for the ways in which *mestizaje* and indigenismo were used to incorporate the masses and see chapter 4 for a detailed analysis of the scientific whitening programs of *mestizaje*. Chapter 3 shows the ways in which whiteness was both an asset and a threat to the government in some ways. Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 90-96; Keith Brewster, "The Role of Sport in Post-Revolutionary Mexico," in *Sporting Cultures Hispanic Perspectives on Sport, Text and the Body.*, ed. David Wood and P. Louise Johnson (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 1–19; Keith Brewster, "Redeeming the 'Indian': Sport and Ethnicity in Post-Revolutionary Mexico," *Patterns of Prejudice* 38, no. 3 (September 2004): 213–31; Miguel Lisbona Guillén, "'Mejorar La Raza': Cuerpo Y Deporte En El Chiapas de La Revolución Mexicana (1910-1940)," *Relaciones. Estudios de Historia Y Sociedad* 27, no. 105 (2006): 60–106.

Teachers and public health experts joined cultural missions to aid in the country's fight against endemic disease, malnutrition, and racial degeneration. Claudia Agostoni and Elsa Muñiz demonstrated that leaders from the late Porfiriato to the revolution became obsessed with the belief that bio-medicine deliver a solution for the country's health crises.²² The government founded the Escuela de Salubridad in Mexico City in 1922 to train bacteriologists, nurses, and inspectors and in 1926 President Plutarco Calles decreed the country's first Sanitary Code that gave the government greater authority to enforce health laws.²³ Alexandra Minna Stern, Nancy Stepan, and Laura Suárez y López showed that officials, overtaken by "mestizofilia," looked to eugenics and other race theories to eliminate backwardness.²⁴ Even though the Mexican Eugenic Society (SEM) published a journal on hygiene and sports in the 1930s, nobody detailed how officials imagined that eugenics, public health, and sports would work together.

The near complete lack of research on the roles of women and the military in sports, both of whom played essential roles, also represents a major hole in the historiography.²⁵ Indeed, women were half of the population and served in the most difficult physical education jobs. The absence of the military is almost equally important because military officers led most

²² Claudia Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876-1910* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2003); Claudia Agostoni, "Entre La Persuasión, La Compulsión Y El Temor: La Vacuna Contra La Viruela En México, 1920-1940," in *Los Miedos En La Historia*, ed. Elisa Speckman Guerra, Claudia Agostoni, and Pilar Gonzalbo (México, D.F: Colegio de México : Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009); Elsa Muñiz, *Cuerpo, Representación Y Poder: México En Los Albores de La Reconstrucción Nacional, 1920-1934* (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2002).

²³ Claudia Agostoni, "Public Health in Mexico, 1870-1943," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, 2016.

²⁴ A. M. Stern, "'The Hour of Eugenics' in Veracruz, Mexico: Radical Politics, Public Health, and Latin America's Only Sterilization Law," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91, no. 3 (July 19, 2011): 431-43; Alexandra Minna Stern, "Responsible Mothers and Normal Children: Eugenics, Nationalism, and Welfare in Post-Revolutionary Mexico, 1920-1940," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (December 1999): 369-97; Alexandra Stern, "Mestizofilia, Biotipología y Eugenesia en el México Posrevolucionario: Hacia una Historia de la Ciencia y el Estado, 1920-1960," *Relaciones XXI*, no. 81 (Winter 2000): 57-91; Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Laura Suarez y Lopez Guazo, *Eugenesia y Racismo en Mexico* (México, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2005).

²⁵ This article by Monica Chávez González showed how sports leaders tried to balance the promotion of exercise with the preservation of ideal femininity for young women athletes from the 1910s to 1930. Mónica Lizbeth Chávez González, "Construcción de La Nación Y El Género Desde El Cuerpo: La Educación Física En El México Posrevolucionario," *Desacatos* 30 (2009): 43-58.

revolutionary physical education programs. Historians have taken interest in the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games,²⁶ but it is curious that studies on government sports in the 1940s and the 1950s primed the country to win the games are absent. *Exercising the Cosmic Race* showed how government departments imagined their own version of the ideal revolutionary citizen and articulated how sports programs would help realize it.²⁷

Research Methods and Archives

Poet Octavio Paz once wrote, “Americans have not looked for Mexico in Mexico; they have looked for their obsessions, enthusiasms, phobias, hopes, interests—and these are what they have found.” The goal of this project was to tell a Mexican story about sporting culture and citizen-building through five different visions of the revolution. Most sources were collected at archives in Mexico City and Oaxaca City over a year and a half. The project relied heavily upon presidential papers from the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) that provided a woodcut on sporting activities around the republic. Citizen petitions to state officials and departments, as well as inspector’s reports in the Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (AHSEP), now housed at the AGN, greatly detailed the challenges faced in communities that developed sports programs.

²⁶ For studies on the 1968 Olympic Games, see: Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World*; Eric Zolov, “Showcasing the ‘Land of Tomorrow’: Mexico and the 1968 Olympics,” *The Americas* 61, no. 2 (2004): 159–88; Eric Zolov, “The Harmonizing Nation: Mexico and the 1968 Olympic Games,” in *In the Game: Race, Identity, and Sports in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Amy Bass (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Antonio Lavín, *México En Los Juegos Olímpicos* (México: Asociación Nacional de Periodistas, 1968); Brewster and Brewster, “The Rank Outsider”; Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World*.

²⁷ Studies on individual and spectator sports are increasing in frequency. For details on boxing, gender, and identity, see Stephen Allen, “Boxing in Mexico: Masculinity, Modernity, and Nationalism, 1946-1982” (PhD Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2012). Jorge Pasquel formed a rival professional baseball league that aimed to cut into the dominance from Major League Baseball. He recruited Major League stars and Negro League players to improve the quality of play in the Mexican League. See Michael M Oleksak and Mary Adams Oleksak, *Béisbol: Latin Americans and the Grand Old Game* (Indianapolis, IN: Masters Press, 1996); Mark Winegardner, *The Veracruz Blues* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997); John Virtue, *South of the Color Barrier: How Jorge Pasquel and the Mexican League Pushed Baseball toward Racial Integration* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2008); G. Richard McKelvey, *Mexican Raiders in the Major Leagues: The Pasquel Brothers vs. Organized Baseball, 1946* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2006).

Working in AHSEP collections during the archive's reorganization proved to be a great challenge, but the effort was fruitful. The school curricula, test results, budgets, memoranda, department minutes, radio program transcripts, department studies, correspondences, and reading lists proved invaluable. Documents from the Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Salud "Rómulo Velasco Ceballos," which housed detailed information on temperance campaigns and sports, sporting parades, and fitness exams, also proved worthwhile.

Understanding the philosophies of officials from varying departments also required significant reading of literary sources. Other important sources included trade journals from education sectors like *El Maestro Rural* and *Educación Física*, but also the Mexican Eugenics Society (SEM) bulletins, SEP memories, and medical and military journals from the late nineteenth through the middle of the twentieth century. Periodicals, consulted at the Hemeroteca Nacional and the Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca Nestor Sánchez Hernández, were also examined for organizing details, ephemera, and advertising.

The papers and employees at the Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca (FAPECFT) proved especially helpful for documenting military sports and their vision for Mexico. Documents including construction blueprints, teacher salary data, and general business with local schools in the capital were in abundance at the Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal (AHDF). The Avery Brundage Collection at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana provided personal papers and organizing minutes used to tell the story of the country's Olympic movement.

Chapter 1

Hardening Bricks and Training Dragons: Militarized Physical Education, 1884-1946

Reflecting upon the languid state of their beloved Mexico in 1900, Captain Fortino M. Dávila and other outspoken officers lamented the tragic condition of their listless, emaciated, and unruly countrymen who navigated life without a sense of self nor a guiding philosophy. Dávila contended that ancient metaphysical apothegms such as “mens sana in corpore sano,” or healthy mind in a healthy body, once served as the “golden key of the Roman’s glory and of Spartan hegemony among the Helenics.” The teachings, he believed, remained pertinent and capable of imprinting itself in the conscience of the people, conditioning everyday life and lubricating the production of mindful and healthy citizens. These officers estimated that as the countries of Europe and North America strengthened and modernized, Mexico’s sedentary state left it vulnerable to stagnation and foreign invasion, thus the country must move hastily to train a new generation of “dragons,” hardened and balanced warriors in mind, body, and spirit. The dragon represented the physical, mental, and spiritual fusion of a noble, athletic, and intelligent cavalryman to his disciplined steed that together thought and acted as a single creature of good. Training and maturing dragons also developed hardened and capable men, a result that many officers only believed achievable through prolonged and rational physical education, the “latent strength of the army and the very base of its entire organization,” scientifically guided and developed to meet practical ends.¹

Military officers and intellectuals like Dávila and Felipe Angeles worked hard to militarize society and make champion basilisks of a socially and racially diverse population from the presidencies of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) to Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946). These

¹ Fortino M. Dávila, “El Ejercicio Físico,” *Mexico Militar*, September 15, 1900, 173–74; Felipe Angeles, “La Educación Física Del Dragon,” *El Boletín Militar* 1, no. 7 (May 18, 1899): 1–2.

efforts marked the beginning of wider endeavors of a civic-minded officer corps to remake the country in their image through the militarization of education with physical education as a principal component. They intended to carry out the task not just for the salvation of the army but for the cultivation of upright and strengthened citizens capable of defending the country in war and increasing labor production in peace. In the revolution, these programs were guided by men from humbler classes who had risen to positions of prominence and hoped to relay their own soldiering experiences to a largely armed population still widely considered uneducated, backward, and unruly. Indeed, officers from the late nineteenth century to 1946 lobbied for the militarization of schools and remained steadfast in their promotion of physical education that they believed “forceful and indispensable” for the masses. As Dávila reasoned, “War is the supreme sport of the people and the soldier is the athlete *par excellence*,” a comment on how sports and military training formed a symbiotic pair.²

In the wake of the destructive ten-year guerrilla war that destroyed the economy and claimed the lives of between 1.5 and 3 million people, displaced thousands more, and subjected many of the rest to rape, theft, and forced conscription, officials found that the sensitive public deeply distrusted militarization. This opposition led to the development of programs guided by military leaders who came to understand sport as a practical surrogate to soldiering. While language proves to be a particularly powerful agent of political socialization, sport and physical education is most effective in instilling nationalistic and militaristic ideas in the procurement of a physical culture that prefers regimented and hierarchical games to overt military training. Expectations of sportsmen and soldiers within their practices are relatively similar and require with them an unquestioning disposition of the participant.³ These links between soldiering,

² Dávila, “El Ejercicio Físico.”

³ Angeles, “La Educacion Fisica Del Dragon”; E.A. Wright, “Education, Sport and Militarism: Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany” (PhD Dissertation, University of Leicester, 1980), iii; Robert McCaa, “Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 19, no. 2 (2003): 367–400.

sports, and citizenship rarely evaded Mexican presidents. After all, from Díaz until Ávila Camacho, every president was a military man, and all were *deportistas*.

Porfirian Military Education

After the devastation and embarrassments of the US invasion in 1846 and French Occupation in the 1860s, many Mexicans considered the country's situation as materially and spiritually miserable when Díaz took the presidency in 1876. Even with the economic boom of the Porfiriato (1876-1911) and the subsequent Europeanization of upper-class life, concerns over the morally, physically, and spiritually decadent youth intensified and many became increasingly aware of the poor condition of children who were often said to have few positive recreations and an impractical education that shut them indoors.⁴ From a military standpoint, technological advancement in the age brought great benefits with new material for the battlefield, but only compounded the problem of the ever-softening of children's bodies as society placed depreciating value on fitness in favor of intellectualism.⁵ Many leaders simply attributed these problems to "insufficient manliness," related to the perception that youth rarely engaged in vigorous leisure that taught important life lessons and developed the body. As Alberto Leduc announced, "We need men, not effeminate poets like Walt Whitman."⁶

Military men had become powerful symbols of national stability, a reputation these "men on horseback" enjoyed well into the revolution. They adopted masculine codes of honor through their supposed sacrifice of personal ambition in the service of the people and believed themselves most capable of solving the nation's problems. With Díaz's *científico* cabinet, they

⁴ Víctor M. Macías-González, "The Bathhouse and Male Homosexuality in Porfirian Mexico," in *Masculinity and Sexuality in Modern Mexico*, ed. Víctor M. Macías-González and Anne Rubenstein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), 42; "Casa de La Cuna," *El Monitor Republicano*, November 25, 1851, Hemeroteca Nacional Digital.

⁵ Dávila, "El Ejercicio Físico"; Angeles, "La Educación Física Del Dragon."

⁶ Macías-González, "The Bathhouse and Male Homosexuality in Porfirian Mexico," 42.

imagined transforming the country's boys into strong, heterosexual, and honorable men largely through military programs and sports.⁷ By 1881, Article 3 of the constitutional Ley Organica included stipulations for physical education for good health and to develop harmony of the body and the spirit.⁸ Trade journals and periodicals like *El Minero Mexicano* provided translated French editorials arguing for the recognition of sports and the development of the body as an equally important form of art as any. They also provided justification in the Roman and Greek cults of corporeal beauty that promoted programs that produced well-rounded and principled citizens.⁹

Influential positivist physical education professor Manuel Velázquez Andrade conceived of sports development in evolutionary terms at the Fourth International Congress of Hygiene in Buffalo, New York in August of 1913. He believed that sports culture in the country had since significantly deteriorated since achieving independence in 1821. In its utilitarian epoch, for example, physical culture thrived as native and colonial peoples exercised and played sports to prepare for prolonged war and to increase strength for better work production. It had only begun to pull itself out of a rut during the presidency of Díaz who helped launch the country's empirical or experimental stage in sporting culture, where disciples of European military officers and educators introduced new forms of military gymnastics into the country.¹⁰

Disciples of Spanish-born Col. Francisco Amorós y Ondeano (1770-1848) from France and Frederick Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) from Prussia proved the most influential for nascent Porfirian programs. Johann Cristoph Friedrich GutsMuths (1759-1839) coined the term "gymnastics" in the early nineteenth century to describe most exercises that were practiced at the time in Europe in his effort to revive Greek and Roman body culture. But the "fiery romantic

⁷ Ibid.; Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (Akron, Ohio: Werner, 1860), 40–42.

⁸ "La Ley Organica Del Articulo 3," *El Minero Mexicano*, January 13, 1881.

⁹ "Educación Física," *El Minero Mexicano*, January 1, 1884, Hemeroteca Nacional Digital.

¹⁰ Velázquez Andrade, "La Educación Física En Las Escuelas de México," 19–23.

teacher” Jahn took Gutsmuths’ physical education programs further to develop the liberal German *turnen*. The urgency was high to overthrow feudal society, unify divided German states, and expel Napoleonic occupation of Prussia. “Turnvater” Jahn returned from Prussian army service and organized games to direct the energies of Berlin youth into positive practices that he believed could provide significant help in defeating the French. The exercises varied, comprising jumps, climbing, running, throwing, wrestling, and war games. General Gerhard von Scharnhorst assumed responsibility for rebuilding the Prussian army after the defeat at Jena in 1806 and adopted Jahn’s programs to provide physical training for all citizens to raise fitness levels in case they were conscripted. The Turnvereine gymnastics movement that followed marked a modern revival of the Greek ideal of building manhood through the harmonious development of the body, mind and character. The consequent successes of his units in engagements cemented Jahn’s model program, later known as the German gymnastic method. The *turnen* revolutionized military training and physical education curricula, although its more liberal principles were later erased by the end of the nineteenth century. While the method still promoted holistic open-air and free exercises for the benefit of mind, body, and spirit without apparatuses, later programs incorporated mass synchronized exercises commanded by a respected person of authority to instill unquestioning discipline and order in participants.¹¹

The popularity of Amorós, also known as the *Marquis of Sotelo*, grew rapidly out of French nationalism after an embarrassing series of defeats in the Franco-Prussian War as his method offered an alternative to the popular German *turnen* gymnastics by emphasizing more application and discipline. He opened and directed the Gymnase Normal Militaire in 1820 to train gymnastic instructors for the Army and individual infantry units. After authoring manuals,

¹¹ Gertrud Pfister, “German Gymnastics,” in *Encyclopedia of International Sports Studies*, ed. Roger Bartlett, Chris Gratton, and Christer Rolf (New York: Routledge, 2010), 603–4; Allen Guttmann, *Sports: The First Five Millennia* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 273–74.

such as the *Manuel d'Education Physique, Gymnastique et Moral* (1830), Amorós opened gymnasiums in Paris for military and public use in 1820 and became the principal influence of the world-renowned military gymnastics school L'Ecole de Joinville, which opened in 1852.¹² His method also often incorporated reformer machines to target gains. Both the *turnen* and Amorós, or Joinville, methods held significant influence among the Porfirian military leadership even though its adherents often found each other at great odds.

Velázquez held that Mexico's third, and presumably positive, stage started with changes in the Joinville School in 1894 based on the revitalization of the more rational teachings of the Swedish Pehr Henrik Ling (1766-1839) who bound physical education to hygiene and correction. This new eclectic stage, named so because of the variety of exercises practiced, came about slowly in Mexico due to the apparent stubbornness of "idolatrous" disciples that long held influence in public opinion and in military colleges, favoring the emphasis on muscle-building in the German program but refusing to acknowledge the health and educative benefits the Swedish method provided. Many old guard instructors, in fact, continued to teach the German model well after the Swedish model was officially adapted by the Ministerio de Justicia e Instrucción Pública in the 1890s. Nevertheless, the founding of the Sub-Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes in 1902, a body that largely considered reformation of physical education as one of its most important tasks, made physical education a core subject in primary and secondary schools. It also modeled its philosophies on the scientific and more innovative programs in France, based largely on the Swedish gymnastic system.¹³

¹² Velazquez Andrade, "La Educación Física en las Escuelas de México"; Whitfield B. East, *A Historical Review and Analysis of Army Physical Readiness Training and Assessment* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 19–23; Hortense G. Du Fay and Francisco Amorós y Ondeano, *Coup D'œil Sur Le Mouvement Européen de 1790 À 1814* (n/a, 1855); Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1870* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1998), 63.

¹³ Velázquez Andrade, "La Educación Física en las Escuelas de México," 19–23.

Díaz stood as the perfect role model for such reformation campaigns and whole-heartedly believed in the virtues extolled through physical exercise. The general was once described by a foreign journalist as a “superhuman” of physical perfection, a vigorous man of fortified constitution, and a blend of “Indian savagery” and “Castilian nobility” who had steeled his muscles in battle on his rise to power.¹⁴ As a young man, the “Mexican Caesar” had also administered physical education as an officer stationed in Ixtlan, Oaxaca, where he was said to have molded the “peons” of the pueblo like clay with physical military training, transforming the “half-naked Indians” into a triumphant military squadron known as “The Impossibles.” He also had his own home gym, a rarity in the era, and was even said to have dazzled tourists by scaling a climbing rope at the Military College at age seventy.¹⁵ His military organized under European models that employed physical education to develop the muscles in balance with the mind and deferred to the experts on how to best apply such methods to the unique physiological realities of Mexico.

Even after dismissing the German *turnen* in favor of the Swedish, Joinville method, Díaz continued to dispatch military officers abroad to find unique teachings to best take advantage of the specific temperaments and faculties of the country’s races. For example, in 1900, Captain R. Taboureau reported on the Italian army who used a diversified and obligatory physical education constantly for the preparation of the infantry. These routines reportedly included a variety of calisthenics and obstacle courses, but also sports like swimming, gymnastics, cycling, fencing, and even dancing, focusing its lessons on those activities that developed functional strength and speed, all while sticking good military posture and rarely repeating movements. Mexican leaders

¹⁴ Edward J. Wheeler, ed., “A Diabolistic Interpretation of the Master of Mexico,” *Current Literature* XLVI, no. 6 (June 1909): 617–20.

¹⁵ Charles F. Lummis, “The Man of Mexico,” *The Outlook* 69, no. 9 (November 2, 1901): 536–45; Porfirio Díaz, *Memorias* (Barcelona: Linkgua Digital, 2012), 22; Alec-Tweedle (Ethel), *Porfirio Díaz: Seven Times President of Mexico* (London: Hurst and Blackett, Limited, 1906), 324.

admired the program because it strongly emphasized discipline, an element they believed relatively missing in other gymnastic programs.¹⁶ As countries promoted technical military sports programs for cadets and the general population, such as steeple chases and fencing in France, the horsemanship of the Russian Cossacks, and jumping and gymnastics exercises of the Italians, Mexican officers grew increasingly concerned over the relative lack of action in their country. They hoped to change this reality especially as their ever-present rivals to the north noticeably developed an impressive “muscular culture” displayed through their domination of “crude” sports like baseball, football, and boxing.¹⁷

Secondary schools like the Colegio Militar featured programs that leaders hoped to translate to the general population. The Porfirian military was greatly professionalized, guided by French and German experts who taught general education, hygiene, and physical fitness at Mexican colleges to restore confidence in the military profession and to regiment and orient the soldiers and civilians to support the military dictatorship.¹⁸ The quality of teaching was poor overall, but instructors offered an array of subjects with the belief that a wider cultural understanding of the world created more well-rounded soldiers. Furthermore, leaders hoped that a more cultured soldiery could help change the military’s poor reputation and put a stop to a nearly 40 to 50 percent turnover rate. In fact, most Mexicans thought of the military in this era as a collection of repressive and untrustworthy conscripts, former thieves, vagabonds, bandits, and rapists.¹⁹ In addition to world history and other cultural and technical subjects, physical education and strategic war games took up the rest of their time.²⁰

¹⁶ R Taboureau, “La Gimnastica En El Ejecito Italiano,” *Mexico Militar*, June 1, 1900.

¹⁷ Dávila, “El Ejercicio Físico”; Angeles, “La Educación Física Del Dragon.”

¹⁸ Paul J. Vanderwood, *The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998), 242–46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 242.

²⁰ James R. Kelley, “The Education and Training of Porfirian Officers: Success or Failure?,” in *The Training and Socializing of Military Personnel*, ed. Peter Karsten (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 38–43.

On advice from Dávila, Díaz and Justo Sierra awarded a teaching and advisory position to French world fencing champion Luciano Merignac in 1907 for an astonishing annual salary of \$12,000 pesos to help solve its urgent problems in physical culture. After meetings between Merignac, the Colegio Militar, and military and public education bureaus, the Escuela Magistral de Esgrima y Gimnasia opened in 1908 based on military physical education principles of Amorós, Ling, and George Herbert, offering classes in fencing, Swedish gymnastics, anatomy, massage therapy, and sports, including boxing, wrestling, and track and field. Enrollment rules dictated that applicants must have been between the age ranges of 17 and 21 years old, in good physical health, and in strong academic standing. Those accepted expected to graduate within three years at minimum. The school stayed open until 1914 when revolution forced its closure.²¹

By 1910, the Colegio Militar employed two professors of physical education, along with two regular assistants, in addition to experts in specific sports, such as eight teachers for fencing (four *de sable* and four *de florete*), two of jiu-jitsu, and one for horseback riding. For military aspirants, physical education, military hygiene, and specializations were requirements at least through one's fourth of five years, but afterwards attention shifted to intellectual and artistic pursuits, although war games were still practiced for students able to achieve specialized training in engineering or artillery.²² Graduates included the eclectic military philosopher Angeles, who hated conformist labels and later served as an advisor to Pancho Villa. He entered the college in 1883 and became a professor of mathematics there later before carrying out number of foreign missions to Europe to inspect military schools and manufacturing for war materials, especially in

²¹ Pedro R. Zavala, "La Esgrima En El Ejército," *Revista Del Ejército Y Marina: Órgano de Divulgación Militar*, 3 (1907): 437–49; Abraham Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX* (Mexico: Comité Olímpico Mexicano, 2006), 77–82; Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 353.

²² "Reglamento del Colegio Militar, expedido el 5 de Diciembre de 1910," *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 16, no. 1–3 (1911): 426–31, 473–76.

France. Between 1904 and 1911 he had studied at four French military institutions and President Francisco Madero (1910-1912) named Ángeles as director of the Colegio Militar in 1911.²³

Military educators also worked with hygienists, basic health experts not limited to keeping a sanitary environment, who formulated physical programs for corrective health under the Swedish method. Hygienists considered themselves at the forefront of modernizing reforms, yet they struggled to control ever-present problems such as venereal diseases like syphilis and gonorrhea. Military leaders often blamed such problems on officers' inability to keep women away from the barracks.²⁴ Porfirio Parra noted the "deplorable" culture of hygiene in the military, referring to barracks as centers of infection, while soldiers remained generally malnourished and ignorant to basic hygienic principles.²⁵ Some military leaders worried that the so-called impure (non-white) races that made up the majority of the military's ranks were more vulnerable to such debilitating illness. Some hoped that scientific muscle-development could in part offset these losses.

Militarized education and hygiene programs were tested in various technical schools as well. The Escuela Industrial de Huérfanos in the historical Tecpan de Santiago, a reform school for orphans, for example, represented one success story for militarized education in the Federal District. Aiming to help students develop practical skills that would keep them from entering a life of crime, in just a decade the institution reversed its slovenly reputation that it had earned in a series of high-profile student crimes in 1878, to that of an ordered and successful program and potential model for other technical schools across the nation. In addition to courses in mechanical arts, such as carpentry, printing, tailoring, shoemaking, and even blacksmithing, in

²³ Ronald E. Craig, "Felipe Angeles: Military Intellectual of the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1915" (MA thesis, University of Montana, 1988), 1-3, 170.

²⁴ Stephen Neufeld, "Servants of the Nation: The Military in the Making of Modern Mexico, 1876-1911" (PhD Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2009), 128.

²⁵ Porfirio Parra, "La Salud Del Soldado," *Mexico Militar*, June 1, 1900, 19-20.

1883 Díaz personally hired Agapito Hidalgo as a full time military instructor at the school for \$25 pesos a month, teaching hygiene, arms training, and physical education. By 1897, an official at the school even took a proposal for a national military education plan to Díaz for all federal campuses. The plan received positive feedback, especially elements containing hygiene and exercise recommendations, but it was ultimately rejected due to financing problems and growing concerns within the government over its militarized aspects, especially student training with guns stored at the facility. Officials reassured the public that the artillery was safe under the mindful watch of Capitan Don Luis Berg Becerril. In 1905, under the direction of Enrique Servín, the school numbered 420 students but by 1914 confusion in new educational organization during revolution led to disruption in all school programs.²⁶

Militarization in the Violence of Revolution

In response to uprisings from the north and the south, Díaz abdicated to Paris in 1911 and Francisco Madero was elected president. To bring stability to the country's highest offices, Madero scaled back militarization, a move that left the army resentful and distrusting of the new president. The changes led to separate failed anti-*maderista* rebellions from Gen. Bernardo Reyes, Gen. Pascual Orozco, and Gen. Félix Díaz before Gen. Victoriana Huerta, head of the armed forces, finally succeeded in overthrowing Madero after the siege of La Ciudadela known as "la decena tragica." Shortly after, Huerta took the presidency for himself and established a military dictatorship. He faced armed resistance from Carranza, Villa, Álvaro Obregón, and Zapata but constructed what was nearly the "most militarist state in the world" to maintain his

²⁶ Antonio Padilla Arroyo, "Escuelas Especiales a Finales Del Siglo Xix: Una Mirada a Algunos Casos En México," *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa* 3, no. 5 (1998): 127; "Presidential Decree in the Seccion de Beneficencia," January 10, 1883, Fondo: BP, Sec. EE, Serie: EI, lg. 10, exp. 7, AHSSP; Letter from Lic. J. Morales, 2nd Section of the Sec. de Estado y del Despacho de Justicia e Inspeccion Pública, to José Noriega, June 2, 1897, Fondo: BP, Sec. EE, Serie: EI, lg. 18, exp. 11, AHSSP; Letter from the Director de la Esc. Industrial de Huerfanos to Director General de La Beneficencia Pública, May 26, 1914, Fondo: BP, Sec. EE, Serie EI, lg. 25, exp. 11, AHSSP.

hold on power.²⁷ In an emotional address to the nation on April 1, 1913, Huerta swore on his life that he would restore peace, “cost what it may.”²⁸

With each loss in the north loosening his grip on power, Huerta attempted to militarize every part of daily life possible and the country “gradually converted into one huge military base.” Hoping to increase the federal army from 45,000 to roughly 250,000 troops, Huerta elevated pay by 50 percent to a peso and a half per day, reorganized the armed forces, and increased officer training programs in addition to other symbolic incentives to make soldiering more attractive. He further ordered compulsory military education for workers on Sundays, seized and stored foodstuffs for potential rationing, confiscated communications for military use, and converted schools including the National Preparatory School into military academies that practiced revitalized physical cultural programs, while ostentatious military parades passed through the capital at a near weekly rate. His programs largely failed to elicit enthusiasm and his troops earned poor reputations in the countryside as thieving and wasteful, forcing Huerta to order the *leva*, or involuntary conscription, sometimes forcefully enlisting 1,000 of the most vulnerable and unassuming men per day, often targeting illiterate and indigenous citizens or those exiting bullfights and cantinas. By 1914, Huerta had increased the military cut of the national budget to an astronomical projected 30.9 percent, a number that remained higher or stable through the 1920s.²⁹ Nevertheless, his rag-tag and undertrained army suffered numerous defeats and ushered in US intervention at the Port of Veracruz as Huerta had focused too much of his militarization policies on “combatting a symptom rather than the disease.”³⁰ Opposition regiments forced the resignation and exile of Huerta in July of 1914.

²⁷ Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 62.

²⁸ Michael C. Meyer, “The Militarization of Mexico, 1913-1914,” *The Americas* 27, no. 3 (January 1971): 294–95.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 294–305; James Wallace Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change since 1910*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 102–3.

³⁰ Meyer, “The Militarization of Mexico, 1913-1914,” 306.

Huerta's coup and continued violence throughout the republic hurt the reputation of the armed forces, but many still echoed the need for unity and militarized education. Manuel Barranco posited that the country's democratic prosperity depended upon a strong tradition of education, but he argued that in order for the nation to act as a single political body, a democratic society must first unify into a homogeneous and empathetic group that superseded one's social class, race, or local traditions.³¹ He championed subjects such as history, geography, and language, seeing the unified speaking of Spanish as imperative, but believed unification and complete civic education came most immediately and forcefully through military training and argued that military drills should become mandatory for all public schools. Patriotic education in the classroom was undoubtedly essential in incorporation efforts, but Barranco argued that its teachings would only penetrate skin deep. Lessons of discipline, order, and sacrifice would only internalize if they were embodied through repetitive and consistent physical exercises, leaving the pupil with a series of habits that unshakably contributed to a wider sense of solidarity and a commitment to duty and of comradeship, all essential in a healthy democratic society.³² He cautioned that a complete military educational system would threaten democracy by restricting individuality and free thinking and actions. The best course of action, in his estimation, would be the creation of special courses on military education and training in schools, especially for the masses who needed the training the most in the spirit of solidarity.³³

Arguably no voice was more consistently powerful in support of military education than Velázquez Andrade. Through the 1910s and 1920s, Velázquez authored numerous manuals on physical education, specific for national defense, *campesinos*, and workers. In 1916, *El Pueblo* celebrated Velázquez's study on military education in schools as indispensable for the salvation

³¹ Manuel Barranco, *Mexico: Its Educational Problems*, vol. 73 (New York: Columbia University, 1915), 34.

³² *Ibid.*, 41.

³³ *Ibid.*

of nationhood with the ever-present concern of US invasion and considering recent Huerista deceptions, in which the author charges Huerta played on the sentimentality of the nation's youth. The author celebrated the heroism of the untrained nationalistic fighters of the country's previous decades but lamented the impossibility for the country to maintain an army large enough to thwart another "conquering storm of the Yankees." For Velázquez Andrade, education was the most effective base for national defense. Since teachers at the Escuela Normal Primaria para Maestros were given only cursory military training in 1912, Velázquez, at the time the Jefe de Inspectores de Educación Física in the Escuelas Primarias del DF, lobbied for mandatory military education for all revolutionary citizens and the "training of Patriots in the painful, but just, art of killing enemies with skill to save nationality."³⁴

Velázquez ultimately determined that the country suffered from too much diversity that upset social order, a "national sickness" born from a population of racially, culturally, and politically backwards and undisciplined masses. He characterized Mexico's strained relationship with the United States as natural in a struggle over integrity, sovereignty, nationality, and supremacy between two racial groups, reasoning these conflicts as part of the natural order of things, in which all are subjected. This included the desire for one race of humans to dominate and conquer another race.³⁵ Manuel María de Zamacona expanded on such sentiments and argued that foreigners' ideas of the country as lazy and "full of heartbreak and comedy" provided evidence that Mexicans were, in fact, inherently irresponsible with no concept of discipline or order, both from which the entire nation would benefit. Physical education and the resulting invigoration of the body and self-reliability should form the core of a new school of action that could prepare the nation to fulfill its the obligations to the country it considered most sacred in

³⁴ Velázquez Andrade, "La Educación Física En Las Escuelas de México," 6–7, 12–13.

³⁵ Manuel Velazquez Andrade, *La Educación Militar Considera como Base Eficiente de la Defensa Nacional* (Mexico: Dirección General de las Bellas Artes, 1916), 6–7, 12–13.

service of national defense. This would help reverse the country's fatal course by laying waste to the old social order with the formation of useful and patriotic citizens.³⁶

Following victory in 1916, the Constitutionalist consulted with scholars, scientists, and military experts in crafting mandatory military education programs in all public schools that served children, regardless of background, religion, or politics, believing national defense and stability the country's most urgent need. The result of such efforts were Articles 5 and 31 of the 1917 Constitution that designated military training, weapons instruction, and military service as obligatory at both the federal and municipal levels to maintain national sovereignty and domestic tranquility. The articles met significant opposition at the movement's impetus as much of the public feared repercussions of an institutionally militarized generation after a decade of violence. Military education proponents, such as Velázquez, belittled critics as romantic and quixotic pacifists that lacked patriotism and who were trapped in illusions about true human nature. For Velázquez, science had confirmed that innately people needed military organization.³⁷

The 1917 Constitution gave the revolutionary army legal means for social reform as society upended itself and from Obregón to Cárdenas the army remained the "prime catalyst" for social change.³⁸ In anticipation of the writing of the constitution, the Secretaría de Guerra created the Departamento de Militarización de la Escuela as a humanitarian mission for the feelings of loyalty, fidelity, love, respect and obedience.³⁹ As measures went into place, Velázquez assured the public that military education would not aim to eliminate individualism, art, or culture, but would strive to teach responsibility and punctuality while expanding one's innate and latent virtues in childhood nature.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., 14–15, 18, 20–28, 32.

³⁷ Ibid., 25–28.

³⁸ Edwin Lieuwen, "Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolutionary Army, 1915-1940," in *The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment*, ed. David Ronfeldt (San Diego: University of California, 1984), 51.

³⁹ Velázquez Andrade, *La Educación Militar Considera Como Base Eficiente de La Defensa Nacional*, 22.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 35.

Eager physical educators under the advisement of the Department of Militarization gave their time to Federal District schools as early as 1917, yet a lack of central leadership, funding difficulties, and unpaid wages left only the most resourceful and enthusiastic working in this difficult period.⁴¹ Cooperation with the military enrollment also varied around the war-torn republic. While many lower-class and mixed-race Mexicans had no problem joining the military, whites, especially in the aristocratic and middle classes, escaped military service at all costs, believing it a dishonorable career. Notoriously difficult to organize, indigenous communities sent few men to service voluntarily, while many adolescent recruits often considered military training a punitive practice. Revolutionary military leaders believed these social groups had developed disloyal and untrustworthy traditions, but shifted blame to a vice-ridden culture devoid of any moral fabric, one that still considered correctable, at least in the short-term, through a well-rounded education that combined physical and moral training starting at a young age.⁴²

Physical education advocate Rodolfo Álvarez wrote in 1920 that between just 10 and 15 percent of the population exercised, leaving gyms tragically vacant and the population emaciated, indifferent, and generally lacking balance in their life, a condition that promoted irascibility and general malfeasance. He argued that men and women should strive to strengthen their bodies, but also must resemble the stoic and responsive disposition of a military man when called to duty to serve the nation. But Álvarez knew that few people believed that soldiers in the country resembled such an ideal, and likewise demanded that soldiers take responsibility and abandon their immoral pastimes and serve as model citizens. For him, this could especially be done through displays of exemplary will power and consistent physical training that could immediately benefit the health of all the nation's citizens. Intensive military and physical training

⁴¹ Letter from Rafael Davis to General Gregorio Osuna, Presidente del Ayuntamiento de la Capital, December 14, 1917, Instrucción Pública: Nombramientos, Profesores, vol. 2669, exp 25, 1918, AHDF.

⁴² Velázquez Andrade, *La Educación Militar Considera Como Base Eficiente de La Defensa Nacional*, 14.

not only served a utilitarian purpose, but the prevention of the population's decadence depended on its immediate implementation.⁴³

Reforming the Revolutionary Military

In the face of critics that decried him as a naïve and wide-eyed pacifist, José Vasconcelos, head of the newly formed Ministry of Public Education (SEP) in 1921, echoed widely held sentiments in harshly criticizing efforts to militarize society and considered it to be one of the country's gravest threats.⁴⁴ One article in *Educación Física*, a trade journal subsidized by President Álvaro Obregón (1920-1924), urged teachers to ease criticism of militarization as a necessarily immoral, violent, and cruel practice, arguing that, in reality, one cannot consider war itself as wholly good or bad. He defended battle, admitting that one cannot deny the destructive potential of war, but affirming its ability to carve out invaluable ethical lessons in the participant. Citing the importance of William James *The Moral Equivalent of War* (1910), the author argued that experience in battle increased the morality of its participants, strengthened wills, and allowed them to achieve in the face of danger. And, as the ancient Greeks had shown, war culture does not portend a people cannot hold artistic and non-violent values as well. The writer, in the end, digresses as did many practical military officials, arguing that in lieu of warfare, achievement in sports had proven a capable replacement, where athletes received trophies of metal instead of blood and achieved optimal invigoration by negotiating challenges within the competition.⁴⁵

Obregón, a former garbanzo bean farmer in Huatabampo, Sonora with a reputation as a courageous military leader and as a practical peacemaker, made the first serious efforts to moralize the military in the revolution. During this period the most ambitious men entered

⁴³ Rodolfo Álvarez, "Cultura Física: Tanto El Civil Como El Militar, Siempre Deberan Ser Fuertes," *Arte Y Sport*, May 15, 1920, 3.

⁴⁴ "El Señor Vasconcelos y el Ejército," *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 3 (1922): 741-42.

⁴⁵ "El Equivalente Moral de La Guerra," *Educación Física* 1, no. 4 (1923): 4-5.

military service, and, indeed, Obregón, the former Minister of War under Carranza once blamed the country's frequent rural uprisings and political instability on "the unbridled ambitions of an odious militarism" and had tried to reorganize and de-politicize the military completely since 1915. In 1920, "*El Manco de Celaya*" (The One-Armed Man from Celaya), as he was known, made the reduction of the military's share of the national budget a chief goal of his administration and realized resounding success in removing military figures from politics. Under Carranza, the military received roughly 72.2 percent of the national budget in special circumstances, but Obregón dropped that figure to 36 percent and directed the savings into other social and economic programs including rural education, proclaiming the improvement of education to uplift the moral and physical capacity of the people as paramount for quality of life and as a way to bring long term stability.⁴⁶ As Obregón stated in 1915: "The three great enemies of the Mexican people are clericalism, capitalism, and militarism. We (the military) can get rid of clericalism and capitalism, but, afterwards, who will get rid of us?"⁴⁷

Joaquín Amaro, a soldier of indigenous background, commander under Obregón, and a devotee to the president's moralizing mission, became Minister of War from 1924 to 1931 under President Plutarco Elías Calles and subsequent interim administrations. He also headed military education until 1935 after successfully reforming motley military units in the north.⁴⁸ Amaro, always addressed as "mi general" even by family members and close friends, developed a strong reputation as an energetic "sphinxlike" figure, soft-spoken yet a harsh and uncompromising disciplinarian. He was described as a man who publicly struck insolent officers and politicians

⁴⁶ Shawn Louis England, "The Curse of Huitzilopochtli: The Origins, Process, and Legacy of Mexico's Military Reforms, 1920-1946" (PhD Dissertation, Arizona State University, 2008), 119; Linda B. Hall, *Álvaro Obregón: Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), 250-52, 255; Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism; the Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army, 1910-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968); Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution*, 102.

⁴⁷ Robert Carriedo, "The Man Who Tamed Mexico's Tiger: General Joaquín Amaro and the Professionalization of Mexico's Revolutionary Army" (University of New Mexico, 2005), xii.

⁴⁸ England, "The Curse of Huitzilopochtli: The Origins, Process, and Legacy of Mexico's Military Reforms, 1920-1946," 131-34.

with his riding crop and was rumored to have killed a man for failing to lead a horse into his stables in the way he instructed.⁴⁹ He also became fiercely loyal to Calles after Obregón's assassination in 1928 and could be counted on to carry out "dirty work" on behalf of high ranking officials.⁵⁰ In May of 1925, Amaro expressed concern of the "morally bankrupt" state of the army, still a conglomerate of independent armies under the command of ambitious caudillos.⁵¹ His hard-work and no-nonsense approach helped him make quick work of reforming the outdated and disorganized military education institutions.

Reforming the sordid Colegio Militar became one of Amaro's first projects in military education. In the years preceding, desperate administrators took to creative ideas to improve the quality of officer candidates and even considered proposals to provide girls and cars to cadet students to entice more recruits from the upper classes, proposing the school almost double as a social club that hosted dances and sporting competitions. In fact, after years of poor facilities and outdated instruction its students tended to leave without any sense of loyalty or identification with the military as an institution.⁵² Amaro aimed to rectify this when he closed the Colegio Militar in Popotla in 1925 as one of his first actions, citing its poor material condition and bad hygienic environment, and rebuilt it the following year with new dormitories, showers, recreation rooms, a swimming pool, gymnasium, and sporting fields. He also altered teaching philosophies by replacing encyclopedic memorization curricula with practical learning platforms, including a reformed physical education meant to cultivate a complete person. The entire staff, in fact, was replaced by mostly US and European-trained teachers. Amaro placed significant

⁴⁹ Ibid., 134–35; Colin M. MacLachlan and William H. Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico* (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall, 2004), 298.

⁵⁰ Martha Beatriz Loyo Camacho, *Joaquín Amaro y el Proceso de Institucionalización del Ejército Mexicano, 1917-1931* (México, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003), 40.

⁵¹ England, "The Curse of Huitzilopochtli: The Origins, Process, and Legacy of Mexico's Military Reforms, 1920-1946," 183; Agustín, *Tragicomedia mexicana. 1, 1, 7*.

⁵² Carriedo, "The Man Who Tamed Mexico's Tiger: General Joaquín Amaro and the Professionalization of Mexico's Revolutionary Army," 131–37; Salvador González de Cossio, "Iniciativa para la Creacion de la Escuela de Educación Militar de Educación Física," May 29, 1933, Calles, Archivo Amaro, exp. 119, inv. 1190, FAPECFE.

emphasis on the promotion of sports, especially baseball, basketball, fencing, gymnastics, and polo, Amaro's favorite sport, believing exercise could greatly diminish endemic illness among the troops.⁵³ On December 5, 1929, Rafael Ramírez Castañeda, Director of Rural Education in the 1930s, announced further plans to teach soldiers how to read and generally enculturate them.⁵⁴

Amaro's lobbying also resulted in the Organic Law in 1926 concerning the organization of all military activities in the country and he outlined the military's new orientation as defending "the integrity and independence of the fatherland, to maintain the rule of the Constitution and its laws, and to conserve internal order."⁵⁵ The new law amended the 1911 "Ordenanza General del Ejército" of Madero, dividing the military into five branches and re-organizing its hierarchy. Most importantly, it officially re-oriented military to look for enemies within Mexico's own borders and to give priority to domestic projects. The law was little doubt partly a response to rural uprisings that rocked the country's Bajío as conservative opposition forces formed the National League for the Defense of Religion (LNDR) to oppose government-sponsored anti-clerical activities and Article 130 of the constitution that separated church and state. The situation intensified with the inking of the 1926 punitive "Calles Law" and the resulting three-year rural Catholic rebellion known as the Cristiada.⁵⁶ Federal troops eventually quelled insurrection in 1929.⁵⁷

⁵³ Loyo Camacho, *Joaquín Amaro y el Proceso de Institucionalización del Ejército Mexicano, 1917-1931*, 100, 144; Roderic A Camp, *Generals in the Palacio: The Military in Modern Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 141; Thomas G Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 37.

⁵⁴ "Alfabetización," *Excelsior*, December 5, 1929, Archivo Economico, Ejército, Educación, L12387, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁵⁵ Secretaría de Gobernación, "Ley Organica Del Ejército Nacional," in *Diario Oficial de La Federación*, 1926, 11.

⁵⁶ England, "The Curse of Huitzilopochtli: The Origins, Process, and Legacy of Mexico's Military Reforms, 1920-1946," 184-86; Jean-André Meyer, *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People between Church and State, 1926-1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 34-48.

⁵⁷ David C. Bailey, *¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church-State Conflict in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974).

The Organic Law was followed with the Law of Discipline, a guide for conduct and general behavior for military personnel. This new moral code outlined honorable behavior of soldiers to preserve the military's dignity. It banned the frequenting of brothels, public drunkenness, and other depraved activities at risk of court martial. Nevertheless, Amaro's reform laws, including the discipline law, proved virtually unenforceable, moving the general to co-opt fellow "divisionarios" through bribes to see through plans. This failure drove Amaro harder to reform education in military schools.⁵⁸

By May of 1926, Amaro worked with General Aego Meneses and professors Franklin O. Westrup and Leóncio Ochoa and successfully lobbied revolutionary General and Commander Gabriel Gavira Castro to consider new projects to organize and found a military physical education normal school to promote physical culture and help solve the country's persistent lack of experts.⁵⁹ On May 24, 1929, the Secretaría de Guerra y Marina (SGM) additionally announced the creation of the National Physical Education and Shooting Directorate (Dirección de Educación Física y Tiro Nacional) under its dependency by presidential decree from Emilio Portes Gil. The program blended technical military training with sporting competitions and placed generals or colonels in charge of virtually all aspects of the organization. It also called for state governors to aid in the formation of Civil Shooting Societies, of which university students, all federal employees, industrial workers, and all other men over 15 would join. The societies would be ideally led by elected school and military leaders who would answer to an officer in the SGM. The mandate even permitted the voluntary enrollment of women with expressed written consent from a husband or father.⁶⁰ On July 1, 1929, González de Cossio formally asked Portes

⁵⁸ Jürgen Buchenau, *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 121.

⁵⁹ Letter from Joaquín Amaro, Sec. de Guerra Y Marina, to Gral. Gabriel Gavira, May 28, 1926, Calles, GAVIRA, Gabriel, Archivo Amaro, Exp. 46, Inv. 164, Leg. 4/6, FAPECFT.

⁶⁰ Juan Jiménez Méndez, Circular on the Creation of the Dirección de Educación Física y Tiro Nacional, under the Dependency of the Sec. de Guerra Y Marina, May 24, 1929, Calles, JIMENEZ MENDEZ, Juan (Gral.), Archivo

Gil, on behalf of his dependency, to act in accordance with Article 31 of the constitution to make military instruction obligatory for minors of at least 15 years old in both public and private schools in a collaborative manner with the SEP to harmonize interests in the country.⁶¹

Like his Porfirian predecessors, Amaro dispatched officers to Europe to study military gymnastics and service programs that could be incorporated into new physical education to bring order and discipline to the country. Amaro sent his top cadets and lieutenants to study military programs at academies and embassies in France, Spain, Italy, and the US and used recommendations to launch an independent professionalization program reflecting an intense nationalism present throughout the twentieth century.⁶² Lt. Col. Samuel Urbina, writing from Rome, provided a favorable report on military gymnastics programs in Benito Mussolini's Fascist Kingdom of Italy. Many Mexican military leaders believed that the Italian programs were highly applicable to Mexican realities in that they first and foremost considered its primary goal to be the production of soldiers ready for battle but also emphasized the need to elevate the masses through education and develop harmony between the individual student and collective society. Italian officials considered physical education most critical, for if cadets assumed a passion for exercise and sports, they believed soldiers would carry these passions into their civilian lives when their service ended. Officials believed that physical education doubled as a training in morality, not just maximizing the cultivation of the body, but subordinating the participant to the will of the instructor, providing invaluable lessons that equated sacrifice, order, and submission to societal health, prosperity, and patriotism.⁶³ Ultimately, the training hoped to

Amaro, Exp. 56, Inv. 174, Leg. 2/2, FAPECFT; F. Canales, "Reglamento Organico de La Dirección de Educación Física Y Tiro Nacional," *Diario Oficial de La Federación*, July 11, 1929; Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, xxxiii.

⁶¹ Salvador González de Cossio, "Correspondencia Con El Presidente Emilio Portes Gil," July 1, 1929, Calles, GONZÁLEZ de COSIO, Salvador, (gral.), Archivo Amaro, Serie: 0307, legajo 2, FAPECFT.

⁶² Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 56.

⁶³ Samuel Urbina, "Instrucción Para La Gimnasia Militar, Primera Parte, Enviado por Nuestro Agregad Militar en Italia to General Joaquín Amaro," 1928, Calles, URBINA, Samuel. Fondo AMARO, Serie: 0304, Exp. 50, Inv. 280, Leg. 1/5, FAPECFT.

professionalize and depoliticize the service in addition to producing dignified soldiers with a greater sense of civic responsibility and obedience to civilian rule.⁶⁴

The Italian model held that children should progress rapidly through a carefully coordinated military education, at each level developing increased agility and assuming characteristics of courage and fearlessness through sports like swimming, rowing, and cycling that tested the mental, psychological, and physical aptitude of students. Understanding the relative differences in individual child development, it also argued for flexible and specialized curricula adapted to the “robustness” of individual students, hoping to avoid demoralizing or even injuring weaker participants. Within the first couple of years, the students were expected to reach a generally similar level, acquiring skills and endurance through versatile corrective strategies. These included developing balance and speed, mild resistance work, breathing meditations, marches for flexibility, and methodical gymnastics that improved muscle mass and prepared one for combat. Officials widely encouraged sports that promoted self-control and teamwork, believing they best mimicked conditions in warfare. While the programs aimed to cultivate a “combative spirit” in each cadet, they prioritized the effort to stamp out individualism, for the modern military, functional only as a harmonious collective unit, had no room for rogue individual “champions.”⁶⁵

In October of 1928, General Tirso Hernández, then Director of Physical Education in the Federal District, sent a glowing report on the L' École Militaire de Joinville, that he considered a model physical education school that prepared the masses to defend the nation. Especially since World War I the institution had especially acquired a global reputation for its innovation and French missions to Latin America in the first decade of the twentieth century had implanted or

⁶⁴ Lieuwen, “Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolutionary Army, 1915-1940,” 55.

⁶⁵ Urbina, *Instrucción para La Gimnasia Militar*

reified the Joinville method. This method still largely favored Swedish philosophies combined with military instruction. In 1907, Brazilian officials had even erected a “Hall of Arms” based on this program in the Public Force of the state of São Paulo. The school, directed by French officers Belancié and Lemtrie, later became the São Paulo School of Physical Education.⁶⁶ In October of 1930, General Salvador González de Cossio wrote to Tomás Sánchez Hernández, Jefe of the Mision Militar, with glowing reviews also of France’s 39th Infantry Regiment after a stay with them, where leaders embraced military and pre-military coursework, ordered daily physical education classes, and sent officers to physical education schools once a year to study the latest developments in the science of the craft. Further, citizens served one year of obligatory military service and most of their education focused on physical training to grow a more rigorous citizenry.⁶⁷

Considering the enormity of the ambitions of military reformers it is hardly surprising that leaders relied upon volunteerism to see many of its projects through. For example, unpaid *ejidatarios*, guided by local military zone commanders, made up a significant portion of the military’s rural militias after 1929 and helped carry the military’s mission to outlying regions.⁶⁸ These militiamen, motivated solely by revolutionary zeal and a feeling of civic responsibility, further promoted and carried out physical education and military training.

Others volunteered their expertise to find solutions to large national problems. One was J. Ignacio Moreno Encalada, a former *maderista* cadet, student at the Colegio Militar, and the man instrumental in the formation of Boy Scout troops in Yucatán, who authored a proposal to restructure obligatory military service laws for men between the ages of 21 and 45, carried out in

⁶⁶ Gertrud Pfister, *Gymnastics, a Transatlantic Movement from Europe to America*. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 101–2.

⁶⁷ Letter from Salvador González de Cosio to Tomás Sanche Hernández, Jefe de La Mision Militar, October 16, 1930, Calles, GONZÁLEZ de COSIO, Salvador, (gral.), Archivo Amaro, exp. 23, inv. 253, FAPECFT.

⁶⁸ Stephen Wager, “Basic Characteristics of the Modern Mexican Military,” in *The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment*, ed. David Ronfeldt (San Diego: University of California, 1984), 93.

a way deemed adjusted specifically to the needs of Mexico and not just a cheap copy of European methods. He had also helped convert Boy Scouts Troops there into the “Noveno Batallón de Exploradores Mexicanos de la Militarización de la Juventud” when the Departamento de Militarización absorbed scouting groups in 1917.⁶⁹ Even so the military’s dream to initiate obligatory military service never materialized in the way they intended.

Considering the rising popularity of sports, their lack of direction nationally, and the military’s experience in the matter elements in the SGM renewed their push to issue and control mandatory military physical education. On May 29, 1933, González de Cossio delivered a plan commissioned by the SGM to reform the Escuela de Educación Militar de Educación Física as part of a larger plan for the military to seize jurisdiction over physical education curricula and instruction throughout the country.⁷⁰ He based the two-part design on visits to educational institutions in Germany, France, Sweden, and Italy. First, he proposed to create a new physical education campus and train a cohort of army specialists, all under 30 years old and passing a fitness exam, in diverse sporting philosophies and exercises in what would likely amount to a full year of coursework. Secondly, he hoped to launch a campaign to help convince a hesitant public to accept militarization.

He hoped that teachers and politicians would cooperate and act as militarized physical education was an urgent necessity for the elevation of health, democratic justice, and all aspects of social, economic, and moral life. The programs, he contended, could uniquely transform the social landscape by amalgamating disparate elements of society in sports as few other things could. Citing examples in Europe, González de Cossio forcefully argued that the military was

⁶⁹ J. Ignacio Moreno Encalada, “Proyecto de Servicio Militar Obligatorio,” n/d, Calles, MORENO ENCALADA, J. Ignacio, Fondo: PEC, Exp. 65, Inv. 3847, Gav. 54, Leg. 1, FAPECFT; Juan Francisco Peón Ancona, “Historia Del Escultismo En Yucatán,” *Diario de Yucatán*, July 1975, <https://sites.google.com/site/grupo1merida/Home/historia> (accessed June 12, 2016).

⁷⁰ González de Cossio, “Iniciativa para La Creacion de La Escuela de Educación Militar de Educación Física”

best prepared to carry out physical education because with it they could teach norms of obedience and discipline, abnegation and sacrifice, a spirit of cooperation, and promote a healthy-moralizing active life. He reasoned that the school could help dissolve the country's general disorganization, bring teachers and officers together to formulate cutting-edge programs to fit the country's educational direction, and pull the masses together with the military to help get things done more efficiently.⁷¹ The proposals failed to create the sweeping changes leaders had so long desired.

Figure 1.1: Proposed Curricula for the Escuela Militar de Educación Física (1933)⁷²

Professional Studies	Gymnastics Swimming Wrestling Boxing Fencing Track Recreational games Shooting Equestrianism Rules of gym and sports
General Education	Anatomy Physiology Applied hygiene First Aid Biology Pedagogy Educational science Sociology Ethics History of physical education French English

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

By most accounts, reforms under Amaro resulted in success as professionalization efforts had reportedly produced a new sense of nationalism and loyalty to the armed forces among junior officers in the late 1920s.⁷³ He also reduced the number of officers overall from 50,000 in 1916 to 10,000 and dropped the number of troops from 200,000 to 55,000 in the same period using a Promotions and Retirement law that forced early retirements of revolutionary veterans and made advancement intensely competitive.⁷⁴ In 1925, 200 officers graduated from the Colegio Militar, a figure that bounced up and down over the next twenty years, yet, in 1930, 483 of the Colegio's 575 students had matriculated as civilians. In 1929, civilians represented just 48 of the college's 126 instructors.⁷⁵

The Interim Presidencies, 1928-1934

The soldiers in revolutionary armed forces shared both a civilian and often poor origin and a revolutionary experience. Armies such as these are more likely to incorporate many "elements of a nation," in this case including scientists, artists, and other intellectuals, even if they appear antithetical to traditional soldiering. At the same time, revolutionary governments were entrusted with promoting a widespread ideal of military subordination even when it delegitimized violence and military solutions to domestic problems to establish long-term civic stability. The experience of mass loss of life, displacement, and the disruption of virtually every aspect of life meant revolutionaries had to find means to achieve peace without violence.⁷⁶

Military sports parades celebrating national heroes and holidays fit the bill.

Nationalistic military parades rose globally the 1920s and the 1930s, the most iconic in the Soviet Union and fascist Italy and Germany. Governments used the events to forge

⁷³ Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 20.

⁷⁴ Lieuwen, "Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolutionary Army, 1915-1940," 55.

⁷⁵ Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 141, 143.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

unmistakable links between patriotism, honor, and military service and marched armed and dressed soldiers to national hymns through city streets recounting or foretelling their military might. The military march popularized in Mexico during the US Invasion in 1846, but became commonplace at nearly every public festival by 1900 and very much resembled European versions.⁷⁷ Díaz believed sports and parades represented strong ways to promote nationalism and celebrate the gains of the dictatorship and the YMCA participated in a sporting exhibition with gymnastics and track and field demonstrations during the centennial celebrations in Mexico City in 1910 to promote national sports.⁷⁸ In Oaxaca, as early as 1914, the Banda de Música del Estado and other military bands marched on Independence Day in nationalistic celebrations for two days that featured a 4pm sporting exhibition with participants playing baseball, boxing, soccer, and jiu-jitsu in addition to games such as capture the flag, in addition to fireworks displays, poetry readings, and regional dances.⁷⁹ Military and police bands played a variety of music with great frequency in parks and *zócalos* free to general public in the 1920s and beyond.⁸⁰

Parades were “living monuments” and “an apparatus in the art of memory,” an amalgamation of stories that people collectively tell about themselves. Mexican parades carried out on the 20th of November Día de la Revolución celebrations were far less militaristic than the ostentatious displays of the Red Army and may have, in part, organized to achieve international prestige. Nevertheless, they were far from anti-militaristic at their inception and the games themselves were more inwardly focused than messages to the international community.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Claes Geijerstam, *Popular Music in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 80; Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth & History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

⁷⁸ Avent, “A Popular and Wholesome Resort,” 27.

⁷⁹ Charles Victor Heath III, “The Inevitable Bandstand: The State Band of Oaxaca and the Politics of Sound” (PhD Dissertation, Tulane University, 2007), 154–55.

⁸⁰ Dan Malmström, *Introduction to Twentieth Century Mexican Music* (Uppsala: Akad. avh. Uppsala univ., 1974), 34.

⁸¹ Benjamin, *La Revolución*; Arbena, “Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970.”

Through the practice of sports, often seen as an innocuous and fun pastime, and by featuring the nation's youth, Portes Gil ordered explicit symbolic links between innocence, futurity and hope, and militaristic patriotism to lubricate the general population for the coming militarization and scientific indoctrination. Such, he believed, could lead the country into an ordered and progressive future. Moreover, he bound the military to such events to restore honor to the institution and help regain legitimacy and trust from the public after decades of corruption, betrayal, and violence from the late Porfiriato to the Cristiada. Indeed, Professor Graciano Sánchez believed that symbols of life, joy, and achievement felt and acted out in the festivities provided an attractive contrast with the violence associated with memories of the revolution.⁸²

Mexico's parades were impressive, each year trying to outdo the previous with as many as 50,000 young athletes participating in processions and demonstrations that lasted for up to six hours.⁸³ But Portes Gil initially considered the parade itself an afterthought, just part of the more important Primeros Juegos Deportivos de la Revolución, a massive sporting tournament featuring young athletes from around the country competing in track, basketball, baseball, boxing, cycling, soccer, hiking, fencing, jai-alai, swimming, polo, tennis, volleyball and gymnastic competitions against military personnel. He placed Hernández in charge of organizing the event and appointed a team of the country's great sporting promoters from the military and professorship, including Alonso Rojo de la Vega (Mexican Olympic Committee), Prof. Enrique C. Aguirre (Technical Director of the YMCA-Mexico), Prof. Franklin O. Westrup (SEP Director of Physical Education), Prof. Juan Medrano (Director of Physical Education in Factories and Military Provisions), Antonio Estopier (Director of Physical Education at the Universidad

⁸² Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 356.

⁸³ Benjamin, *La Revolución*.

Nacional), and Jesús Prían (Escuela de la Beneficencia Pública).⁸⁴ Officials offered prizes to help recruit young people of all talent levels and the events even included popular regional pastimes such as *pelota mixteca* and folkloric dances and children's games like *canicas* (marbles) and *huesos*.⁸⁵ The parades featured children and young men and women, representing schools, sports, and political issues endorsed by the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR). They marched with military bands in synchronized rows donning all-white athletic uniforms and shoes, paid for by the federal government, though historic Mexico City to the zócalo, where thousands cheerfully took in what were often poor gymnastic displays.

Public opposition to militarism remained palpable but militarization appeared to have renewed steam. The public remained fearful that increased military culture would increase violence, expose children to the unsavory elements seen in barracks life, and strip away their individuality and innocence. Military budgets under Calles, Portes Gil, and Ortiz Rubio remained high, between 28.8 and 37.3 percent of the national budget, restricting government funds for other pressing cultural and social programs, while some even feared children's immediate safety, carrying and discharging guns in schools. While Narcisso Bassols of the Ministry of Public Education (SEP) told worried citizens that such concerns were premature, he did not promise that arms training would not occur inside schools soon.⁸⁶ In June of 1930, Velázquez Andrade wrote a piece in periodical *El Nacional*, pleading with the general population to accept mandatory military education, something he argued equally valuable in peacetime and in war,

⁸⁴ Emilio Portes Gil, "Project for the Primeros Juegos Deportivos de la Revolución for General Joaquín Amaro," October 3, 1930, Calles, GONZÁLEZ de COSIO, Salvador, (gral.), Archivo Amaro, Serie: 0307, legajo 2, FAPECFT.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ "Enseñanza Militar En Escuelas Oficiales," *Excelsior*, December 10, 1931, Archivo Economico, Ejército, Educación, L12387, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution*, 102.

helping the country economically through promoting stability and good habits, promoting patriotic sentiments and discipline, and physically preparing the country for national defense.⁸⁷

President Pascual Ortiz Rubio took a softer public stance in a political sleight of hand in October of 1930 when he told *La Prensa* that he did not wish to militarize the nation's children but simply wanted to meet constitutional mandates to include the military in the primary education of all citizens for improvement in physical health and moral values.⁸⁸ On December 11, 1930, citing Article 31 of the constitution, Ortiz Rubio officially mandated military education in every state of the union, assuring the public that there was little cause for alarm. A June, 1931 decree made it official, placing the SGM in charge of military education that blended into instruction of physical education. The project meant the reorganization of the primary school curricula inclusive of military drills, sports, endurance, and strength building exercises, and even strategy and arms training, but also mandated the creation of adult education centers to promote patriotism under the direction of Velázquez Andrade, director of Actividades Culturales Populares.⁸⁹ The same year, the SGM announced Amaro as head of military education.⁹⁰

This culminated in Ortiz Rubio's inherited project for the creation of the Departamento de Educación Física y Preparación Militar y Tiro begun under Portes Gil under the jurisdiction of the SGM. Ortiz Rubio outlined the importance of the department to defend the integrity and sovereignty of the country, supported in Article 32 of the constitution, as every citizen's first obligation. He reasoned that he should therefore establish a program that combined efforts to

⁸⁷ Manuel Velázquez Andrade, "Educación Militar Y Prevision Nacional," *El Nacional*, June 28, 1930, Archivo Economico, Ejército, Educación, L12387, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁸⁸ *La Prensa*, October 6, 1930, Archivo Economico, Ejército, Educación, L12387, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁸⁹ "Educación Militar," *La Prensa*, December 11, 1930, Archivo Economico, Ejército, Educación, L12387, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "Organizacion de La Ensenanza Primaria," *El Universal*, June 26, 1931, Archivo Economico, Ejército, Educación, L12387, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "Proyecto de Adiestramiento Patriotico-Militar a todos los Jovenes en Nuestro Pais," *Excelsior*, September 24, 1931, Archivo Economico, Ejército, Educación, L12387, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁹⁰ "Funcionara la Dirección de Educación Militar," *El Nacional*, December 25, 1931, Archivo Economico, Ejército, Educación, L12387, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

grow physically vigorous and resistant warriors and civically responsibility generations to follow, while awarding participants personal dignity and a sense of honor. He noted that this pre-military education would, indeed, be carried out in collaboration with the Secretaría de Hacienda, the SEP, and other federal entities in addition to national sporting organizers in the national Olympic committee, and the Comité de los Juegos Deportivos Nacionales, one of the precursors of the Confederación Deportiva Mexicana (CDM).

The plan also promised to upend everyday Mexican cultural practices deemed backwards and unhealthy in favor of scientific hygiene and exercise principles. Federal physical education inspectors and local sporting societies took over policing of the mandates at their most basic level. They also functioned as a liaison and public relations team for the SGM to urban and rural communities and organized local events with military and patriotic themes, especially sporting and shooting and archery competitions. Ortiz Rubio especially asked teachers to strictly adhere to prescribed lesson plans and help organize local scouting troops sports clubs in any way possible.⁹¹ But just a year later, Ortiz Rubio's interim presidency terminated and as did his ambitious plans. Abelardo Rodríguez spent much of his time re-organizing the military but refocused his attention on decreasing political ambition among the military's ranks to ensure government stability.⁹²

Rodríguez earned respect among his peers and developed a reputation as an honorable man working for the interests of all social classes, but he was a sportsman through and through. He grew up working on the railroads as a brakeman before a short career in professional baseball and was integral in the formation of the Confederación Deportiva Mexicana (CDM) based on

⁹¹ Pascual Ortiz Rubio, "Proyecto y Reglamento para la Creacion del Depto Fed. de Ed. Física, Preparación Militar y Tiro," June 30, 1930, Depto Federal de Ed. Física, Preparación Militar y Tiro, Archivo Amaro, Serie: 0312, exp. 22, inv. 667, FAPECFE.

⁹² Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*, 23.

proposals from Ortiz Rubio.⁹³ In 1930, as governor of Baja California, he commissioned San Diego-based architect Frank W. Stevenson to draw plans for his new mansion in Ensenada that could have doubled as a sports complex. The ostentatious residence was adorned in marble and featured large stone columns, arches, and tiled roofs but also housed a gaudy 27 by 47 foot gymnasium and squash court, an Olympic pool, and large tennis courts. The complex also had a billiards room, an open-air patio, and a Turkish bath with a massage table and a steam room.⁹⁴

In 1933, infamous Italian swordsmen and graduate of the Magisterial Military Fencing School in Rome, Rómulo Timperi, wrote President Rodríguez on results of a recent fencing tournament staged by the SEP in concert with the SGM, where military, police, and firefighter teams competed for the Copa de Plata. Timperi, who had come to Mexico to assist in arms training under Porfirio Díaz in 1900, used the moment to urge Rodríguez to re-stimulate fencing activities in the country which he believed had fallen into chaos, unable to help the population to escape from the “vegetative” state in which it lived. Rodríguez wrote of his interest to promote fencing among sportsmen and in military colleges in the country to the level it had once been and Amaro and Hernández both worked to establish several salas de armas in which to practice the sport. Like many activities, moral support only carried the project so far in the face of the budgetary and political realities of the country.⁹⁵

Considering the great effort to publicly promote sport for common people, it is curious that so many military leaders and revolutionary officials from the presidency of Plutarco Elías

⁹³ James Wallace Wilkie and Edna Monzón de Wilkie, *Frente a La Revolución Mexicana: 17 Protagonistas de La Etapa Constructiva: Entrevistas de Historia Oral* (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1995), 347.

⁹⁴ Frank W. Stevenson, “Proposed Ensenada Residence Pres. Abelardo Rodríguez in Ensenada,” February 13, 1930, AD 1049-106 F4-D15, San Diego History Center Library.

⁹⁵ Rómulo Timperi, “Letter to Abelardo Rodríguez,” September 26, 1933, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/323, AGN; Andrés Llorente Izquierdo, *La esgrima* (México: Dirección General de Actividades Deportivas y Recreativas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1985), 25–26; SICCED, “Historia de la Esgrima en Mexico,” in *Manual para el Entrenador de Esgrima*, vol. 2, n.d., http://ened.conade.gob.mx/documentos/ened/sicced/esgrima_Nivel_2/Manualpractica/Capitulo_1.pdf (accessed June 11, 2016).

Calles (1924-1928) through the Maximato (1928-1934) promoted the sport of golf, an upper-class gentlemen's game. Officers that frequented the clubs rubbed elbows with international business elites and soldiers were often used to help with maintenance and construction under the justification that such centers were part of the revolution's effort to provide sports spaces to the masses.

The country's largest revolutionary golf club birthed out of the merger of two existing golf clubs in 1906 when the San Pedro Golf Club and the Mexico Golf Club formed the Mexico City Country Club.⁹⁶ Charles R. Pullen, vice-president of the Parque de San Andrés and the Mexico Country Club, had submitted a proposal to the public works and public health departments for the creation of the club in Churubusco on the site of the old Hacienda de la Natividad, including plans for piping water from Xochimilco and roads connecting to nearby Coyoacán. The Porfirian government agreed to help support the construction if the club's engineers carried out much of the work. Shovels hit the dirt in 1907.⁹⁷

The Mexico City Country Club formed on a 300-acre site about six miles outside of the zócalo and it recruited Scottish golf pro Willie Smith, the 1899 US Open champion, to serve as the club's resident pro. By early 1914, the revolution had stopped construction and in 1915 Emiliano Zapata's army took over the grounds and ransacked much of the facility as a symbol of aristocracy and corruption. The army used or re-appropriated that which was left, turning the clubhouse into barracks, stabling horses in dining rooms and dance halls, and using leather for sacks and clothing and buildings' wood to stoke fires. Smith refused to abandon the premises during the Zapatista occupation in 1914 to 1915, taking refuge in the building's cellar, but shelling in a federal attack on the Zapatistas left Smith wounded after he was struck by a large

⁹⁶ Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 18.

⁹⁷ Documents related to the Mexico Golf Club Project (1906-1914), n.d., Consejo Superior de Gobierno del Distrito: Colonias, vol. 591, exp. 10, AHDF.

falling beam. He died soon after with complications from pneumonia. Despite the destruction and tragedy, in July of 1921, Club President Harry Wright, former owner of Consolidated Rolling Mills in Virginia, with two other US citizens, purchased the club and rehabilitated it, where it soon rose to prominence, hosting ornate galas and touring professionals. Foreign Relations Secretary Alberto Pani, President Obregón, Calles, and Rodríguez all frequented the club.⁹⁸ In 1934, Wilson-Western Sporting Goods representative David Levinson, Harry Wright of the Mexico City Golf Club, and pro Joe Kirkwood played a round with Rodríguez and Calles. Levinson saw Mexico as a country primed for golf and sold Rodríguez a set of new clubs before returning home.⁹⁹ US and Mexican elites believed social and athletic clubs imperative for establishing new political and business relationships and, for sporting goods moguls such as DS Spaulding and Levinson, a way to help promote sports in new markets and promote goodwill.¹⁰⁰ Rodríguez played with several golf pros in Mexico City, including matches with Mexican-American Al Espinosa. Espinosa assured Rodríguez that the president would soon master the “mashie niblick,” a now obsolete seven-iron golf club.¹⁰¹

On March 23, 1934, Calles inaugurated the Club de Golf Cuernavaca in Morelos, a country-club described as a uniquely Mexican sports center open to the public to promote golf, yet most its costs were paid with club memberships. Calles had received approval for the construction of the nine-hole, 17-hectare course in February of 1933 at an estimated cost of \$200,000, receiving congratulations and \$50,000 down payments from Atlantic City, Mexico

⁹⁸ Vaughan Mount, “Mexico City Country Club,” *Golf Illustrated* 16, no. 3 (December 1921): 14–15; Percy Clifford, “The Development of Mexican Golf,” *USGA Journal and Turf Management*, November 1953, 17–19; Documents Related to the Mexico Golf Club Project (1906-1914)

⁹⁹ “On to Mexico: Levinson, Wilson Official, Sees Big Market in Southern Republic,” *Golfdom* 8, no. 4 (April 1934): 68–70.

¹⁰⁰ Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 21; “On to Mexico.”

¹⁰¹ Letter from Al Espinoza to Abelardo Rodríguez,” February 14, 1934, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/316, AGN.

City, and Beverly Hills investors.¹⁰² The SGM sent soldiers to build the course under direction of engineers Gustavo Durón González and Ángel García Lascurain. The *callista* consortium in attendance included Calles, Rodríguez, Amaro, Vicente Estrada Cajigal, governor of Morelos, as well as Dr. Manuel F. Madrazo of the Secretaría de Salud Pública and local sports administrators. Juan N. Icaza, Walter L. Douglas, and Harry Wright also played at the inauguration in pairs.¹⁰³ Soon after its opening, the rich and famous swelled its ranks, such as soap and cotton magnate Juan (John) F. Brittingham, a US immigrant and entrepreneur whose family won riches with the famed Terrazas family in Chihuahua during the Porfiriato.¹⁰⁴

Shortly after its opening, the club found itself inundated with debts and struggled to pay its monthly rent even after “Pancho” Francisco Elías and Rodríguez gave rebates to help drop it to \$2,116 pesos. Missing payments left the Banco de Mexico impatient and vendors complained of their inability to collect from the club for event services.¹⁰⁵ Late at night on May 7, 1935 at a club party honoring new administrator General Juan de Dios Bojórquez, a Sonoran *callista* then working in the Departamento de Trabajo, General Juan Celis censured members for mismanagement and theft of club funds, while Bojórquez suggested embezzlement by Calles himself. Duron González, serving as a General Director of the club, characterized the accusations as “wild and unjust” in letters to Calles, yet was disturbed enough to urge the *jefe maximo* to

¹⁰² Letter from John T Sanderson, General Manager of the Hotel Ritz Carlton in Atlantic City, Dr. John J Reilly, Health Commissioner in Atlantic City, Joseph Murray to Plutarco Calles (February 25, 1933), Calles, Club de Golf de Cuernavaca, Morelos, SA, FAPECFT.

¹⁰³ Club de Golf Cuernavaca, “1934 Inauguración Club de Golf de Cuernavaca,” *YouTube*, October 7, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzKSZyHLgic>; “Historia Del Club de Golf de Cuernavaca,” *Club de Golf de Cuernavaca*, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://golfcuernavaca.com/historia.php> (accessed December 4, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Gustavo Duron González to Sra. Soledad González de Ayala González (May 26, 1934), Calles, Club de Golf de Cuernavaca, Morelos, SA, FAPECFT; Robert Baumgradner, “U.S. Americans in Mexico: Constructing Identities in Monterrey,” *Studies in the Linguistic Sciences* 31, no. 1 (2001): 137–61; W.A. Graham Clark, *Cotton Goods in Latin America*, vol. 1 (Washington: Department of Commerce and Labor, 1909), 28.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Ignacio de la Borbolla to Plutarco Calles (June 1, 1935), Calles, Club de Golf de Cuernavaca, Morelos, SA, FAPECFT; Letter from Ignacio de la Borbolla to Plutarco Calles (December 26, 1935), Calles, Club de Golf de Cuernavaca, Morelos, SA, FAPECFT.

launch an investigation into the matter.¹⁰⁶ Four days later, Duron González was replaced by club tennis pro Ignacio de la Borbolla, who within two weeks informed Calles that the club's finances had "straightened up."¹⁰⁷ Less than a year later, the politically isolated Calles was exiled by President Lázaro Cárdenas after a supposed treasonous plan to blow up a railroad was unearthed.

Sports and Militarization under Lázaro Cárdenas, 1934-1940

The presidency of Cárdenas helped break from the creeping return to elite sports culture and he vowed that sport would be implanted for the benefit of campesinos and workers.

Cárdenas also largely completed Amaro's project to reform the military as War Minister from 1932 to 1934 and as president from 1934-1940, opening a new Superior War College for gifted officers and establishing new training programs aimed at improving technical skills of soldiers.¹⁰⁸ Cárdenas considered professionalization of the military essential in terms of developing a non-caste and non-political identity. In 1935, for example, he delivered a commencement speech at the Colegio Militar declaring that soldiers should not consider themselves professional soldiers, but as "armed auxiliaries organized from the humble classes," declaring it the duty of young officers to promote comradeship to incorporate the masses into revolutionary national life.¹⁰⁹

Cárdenas also changed the nature of demilitarization of the army. Instead of casting the military aside as an apolitical mass, he took advantage of the largely lower class roots and "proletarian" nature of his soldiery and incorporated them into the official party structure as participants in a larger class struggle. Presidents in the 1930s launched educational programs

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Gustavo Duron González to Plutarco Calles (May 7, 1935), Calles, Club de Golf de Cuernavaca, Morelos, SA, FAPECFE; Wilkie and Monzón de Wilkie, *Frente a La Revolución Mexicana*.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from de la Borbolla to Plutarco Calles, June 1, 1935.

¹⁰⁸ Lieuwen, "Depoliticization of the Mexican Revolutionary Army, 1915-1940," 55.

¹⁰⁹ Gordon Schloming, "Civil-Military Relations in Mexico, 1910-1940: A Case Study" (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1974), 297-98; Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 20.

aimed at promoting class consciousness and employed national celebrations and military parades to emphasize the fact that most military men shared everyday concerns and problems with commoners. Yet Cárdenas celebrated soldiers for their roles as protectors of the revolution and lauded them as its main agents of change in a long proletarian struggle. According to Col. Juan Carrasco Cuéllar, Cárdenas wanted the army to represent a new socialized military organization made up of workers and campesinos.¹¹⁰

The military carries out several tasks, but activities remain focused internally. Some of these duties included quelling strikes or small uprisings, chasing bandits, and overseeing elections, yet they also have engaged in projects to aid communities, such as promoting health education, dispersing medicines, reforestation programs, and engineering including construction for schools and roads.¹¹¹ Cárdenas, for example, deployed military engineers and cadets into communities to construct sports fields and aid human development projects for the state, keeping otherwise idle provincial soldiers busy. The marriage makes sense, as the military had ampler access to heavy machinery and possessed the know-how. With little concerns of foreign invasion, the military looked inward and served the nation in any way the government determined they would be of use.¹¹²

Communities often expressed excitement for new military sports training because they aided social and material development. For example, in the summer of 1936, Tomás Ruiz Araújo petitioned Cárdenas for a military instructor on behalf of 75 workers and campesinos in Mendez, Veracruz that had formed a sports club named Club Deportivo Militar “Mexico.” According to Araújo, Cárdenas’ dedication to physical education to uplift the country’s rural masses inspired

¹¹⁰ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*, 33–35.

¹¹¹ David Ronfeldt, “The Mexican Army and Political Order Since 1940,” in *The Modern Mexican Military: A Reassessment*, ed. David Ronfeldt (San Diego: University of California, 1984), 64.

¹¹² “Juegos de Basket-Ball Para Hoy Domingo,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 25, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez”; Wager, “Basic Characteristics of the Modern Mexican Military,” 89; Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*, 43.

the group and they had until now worked largely on their own to copycat programs in their region. Despite their civilian status, the group voluntarily carried out projects laid out in his Plan Sexenal and subsequent public addresses and believed that military education would stimulate the population and round out their children's education. The group argued that lessons taught by sports and military training, especially that of discipline, could together prepare the youth for war and mold a physically and mentally gifted generation of high character. The club made its most gains in terms of promoting sports, building multi-use sports fields for baseball and soccer and multiple boxing rings in addition to a library and cultural center, but they had also received arms training and military exercises from Lt. Col. Gabriel G. González and Col. José Piza Martínez. Then even renamed one of their sports fields "Damian Carmona" after the Guachichil infantryman who fought under Benito Juárez during the French Intervention, claiming that their members strove to emulate the moral qualities of the fallen soldier often celebrated in local Día del Soldado festivities.¹¹³ Another petition from Soledad ETLA, Oaxaca asked the president for a military instructor for target shooting.¹¹⁴

Hoping to provide adequate education for soldiers' families, on September 10, 1935 gymnasts performed to national music from the instruments of military bands as Cárdenas inaugurated the first Escuela Hijos del Ejército at San Borja, a military reform schools that taught sports and industrial work skills for the next generation of laborers and soldiers. The schools opened as new model institutions for the children of soldiers, but parents and teachers worried that curricula that favored military and physical education would overly-militarize up to 60,000 youth in the country. This time the SEP stepped in to assuage concerns about links between class struggle and violence through trade journals, one teacher re-stating the school's goals as the

¹¹³ Petition from Tomás Ruiz Araújo to Lázaro Cárdenas, July 7, 1936, Presidentes; LCR 151.3/176, AGN.

¹¹⁴ Urbano Amaya, "Petition to Lázaro Cárdenas," June 28, 1940, Presidentes; LCR 532/100, AGN.

creation of “armies of labor” and disciplined youth with socialistic tendencies, not the formation of a generation of soldiers.¹¹⁵ The new military-industrial schools, numbering 17 by the middle of 1941, in fact, provided disciplinarian models for regular schools to mimic over time and they were taught almost exclusively by military officers. The enthusiastic Cárdenas, buttressed by popular support for this reformation program, opened 1937 by dedicating \$1 million pesos to the schools. Reports in 1939 detailed the schools’ quick success in regional and national sports tournaments, especially in rowing.¹¹⁶

Yet the schools faced significant criticism. In March of 1939 *Excelsior* published a declaration from state unionists that demanded the firing of campus administrators, claiming that the media and government had deceived the public of the reality of the schools that functioned in blatant sadness and completely failing to meet the expectations of the president. For example, the authors argued the leaders of the institution, notably the “inept” Lamberto Moreno, described as “ignorance personified,” failed to understand the basic needs of their children used antiquated Porfirian-era teaching methods. Moreover, they admonished that they forced children to live inside a “stupid dictatorship” marked by pointless disciplinarianism and harsh physical punishments deemed dangerous for a largely malnourished student body. Some of the pointless rules cited by critics were that the school teachers subjected students to peculiar eating and sleeping schedules and that institutions lacked proper sanitation facilities that fostered abhorrent hygiene practices. In fact, many of the schools lacked enough usable water to even support necessary facilities.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ “Fue Inaugurada ya la Escuela para los Hijos de los Soldados,” *Excelsior*, September 11, 1935, Archivo Economico, Escuelas- Hijos del Ejército, Mexico, M10530, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*, 43–46.

¹¹⁶ Petition from Jesús Mugica Martínez, to Lázaro Cárdenas, November 13, 1939, Presidentes; LCR 532/96, AGN; “Un Millon de Pesos En 1937, Para Las Escuelas de Hijos Del Ejército,” *El Nacional*, December 31, 1936, Archivo Economico, Escuelas- Hijos del Ejército, Mexico, M10530, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹¹⁷ “Nos Llenan las Funciones para las que fueron Creadas, Las Escuelas Hijos del Ejército,” *Excelsior*, March 12, 1939, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

At other schools, reporters detailed terrible material conditions and in some cases pure negligence on behalf of the military and medical administrators. For example, one story described outbreaks of tuberculosis among students who would go days without check-ups or treatment. Rumors also spread at school number 17 in the city of Puebla that not enough beds existed for students, forcing many to sleep outside. Stories of this nature gave plausible cause for dissent and drove one critic to claim that the schools were a complete waste of money, infiltrated by lazy communists who spent money frivolously, such as the purchase of \$11,000 pesos worth of printing equipment at one school. In 1942, Professor Delfín Palma even proclaimed the schools a failure by using military instructors as primary educators, performing a job for which they were ill-prepared. In fact, for Palma, the schools' director did not even have sufficient military training, coming to a position of prominence through opportunism of the revolution.¹¹⁸ By 1943, the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (SDN) announced a complete overhaul of the school system, adding aesthetic and civic education and turning them into co-ed institutions. Officials opened the school to women in part to make them more useful to society, but still found military education for girls inappropriate, opting instead to collaborate with the Cruz Roja Infantil to teach home economics and nursing skills. Girls did participate in physical education, although their program differed from the boys and exercises included only those that contributed to the formation of an "adequately feminine" woman.¹¹⁹

Newspapers in the middle of the 1930s like *El Nacional* increasingly shifted physical education and sports reports and advertisements into the military sections, foreshadowing a

¹¹⁸ "En las Escuelas Hijos del Ejército estaba el 'Paraiso de Los Holgazanes,'" *La Prensa*, March 3, 1941, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "Cargos Injustificados contra las Escuelas 'Hijos Del Ejército,'" *El Universal*, March 7, 1941, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "La Anomala Situacion de las Escuelas Industriales "Hijos del Ejército," *Excelsior*, January 24, 1942, Archivo Economico, Escuelas- Hijos del Ejército, Mexico, M10530, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹¹⁹ A couple of the schools were co-ed already, but debates over the issue existed for years. "En las Escuelas Hijos del Ejército Habra Reformas," *El Universal*, March 24, 1943, Archivo Economico, Escuelas- Hijos del Ejército, Mexico, M10530, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

change in the guard for sports in the country. At the same time, the military ran ads of its own promoting service and features of officers such as Colonel Ignacio M. Beteta, then working with the Departamento de Educación Física (DEF). Beteta, born in Hermosillo in 1898, studied architecture under Dr. Atl at the Academia de San Carlos and taught at the Colegio Militar, yet he found his vocations in art and military sports, where he especially excelled in equestrian events and fencing, even winning national championships in obstacle jumping in 1928. In March of 1939, sporting centers “Venustiano Carranza” and “Plan Sexenal” celebrated President Cárdenas’ decision to tab Beteta as head of the Dirección General de Educación Física of the DF, pledging to modernize sporting practices in the city.¹²⁰ He also served a short one-year term as an interim Minister of Public Education in the SEP. Other military figures made similar waves in sports development including Col. Rafael Ávila Camacho, who helped organize a sports club in Puebla in 1939 for local government workers based on military principles where matches were mixed in with marches and military exercises to promote discipline.¹²¹

¹²⁰ “Control en el Deporte Ciudadano,” *El Nacional*, March 3, 1939.

¹²¹ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*, 108–9.



Illustration 1.1: Poster honoring military service (*El Nacional*, 1938). Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.¹²²

On September 16, 1938, a full page illustrated ad in *El Nacional* commemorated military service in the country and outlined its potential future. At the top-left of the image, a short and muscular campesino man stands with a long hoe in front of a large snow-capped volcano. On the right stands a tall, robust, and undoubtedly whiter factory worker holding a hammer. Both men, presumably from two different worlds, represented Mexico's clear racial and class divide yet are

¹²² "CXXVIII Aniversario de La Independencia," *El Nacional*, September 16, 1938, sec. Sección Militar; Letizia Argenterì, *Tina Modotti: Between Art and Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 48.

brought together by a collected mestizo military man, who represents the military ideal of unification and their shared interests in the service of *la patria*. The man, therefore, was a representation of the ideal mixed-race revolutionary ideal citizen. The military figure also acts in the cartoon as a teacher, preparing citizens for the great changes to come in revolution through science and technology. Indeed, in the upper-left hand corner, an airplane cuts across the image of an impressive conical, glacial mountain, signifying the military's conquering of nature and entrance into modernity, while other photos feature mobile artillery, a tank, and groups of athletes performing equestrian acrobatics and open-air gymnastics presumably guided by rational sciences. The placement of athletes at the bottom of the image is not coincidental, for the scientifically crafted and disciplined body represented the building block of the military and society.¹²³

In 1936, Senator David Ayala bemoaned that while Mexico possessed men of naturally good character, the country still failed to develop athlete-citizens as the sports and military programs had done for much of Europe. Soviet revolutionaries, whom Mexicans once shared many of the same social and economic problems, for example, were in the midst of social and economic transformation in his estimation as their so-called unruly rural population had transformed into disciplined, hardened, and mindful citizens that had become enormously successful in international tournaments.¹²⁴ Ayala, a civilian, assured the public that regimented military discipline stood in glaring contrast to the to the naturally anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, and pro-democratic tendencies of the Mexican people, yet he argued it necessary to instill a watered down version of those strict programs, slightly less rigidly organized, by emphasizing and building up the sports programs. Indeed, any program needed to promote the free exchange

¹²³ "CXXVIII Aniversario de La Independencia," *El Nacional*, September 16, 1938, sec. Seccion Militar; Letizia Argentero, *Tina Modotti: Between Art and Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 48.

¹²⁴ "Los Deportes Deben ser Estimulados en Beneficio Popular," *El Nacional*, January 3, 1936, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Mexico G08230-G08236, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

of ideas instead of the blind promotion of hierarchy and order, for the country's class struggle required it. Ultimately this vision won out even though the military never left sporting administration.

Wartime Physical Education

As Cárdenas helped promote militarization of sports programs, the 1940 presidential election revealed the momentum of “civilianization” in national politics in which many military figures had come see their role in government primarily shift into that of spokesmen, prepared to use force only in defense of the nation.¹²⁵ Political moderate and Secretary of War Manuel Ávila Camacho won a heavily contested election and removed military personnel and *caciques* from the official party immediately after taking the presidency.¹²⁶ Ávila Camacho's military distanced itself from the most radical revolutionary rhetoric, instead praising the importance of order, stability, and obedience and restating its belief in military discipline as the key to resolving societal disorder.¹²⁷ Cárdenas, Ávila Camacho's Minister of War, renamed the SGM to the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (SDN) to embrace the military's growing reputation as a useful and “constructive force” within its own borders.¹²⁸ After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Mexico entered World War II on the side of the Allies. Everyday life transformed for many as the country welcomed in warm relations with the US expressed with new trade deals to aid the war effort, the dispatch of an Air Force unit to action, and doubling down on industry with foreign loans.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Schloming, “Civil-Military Relations in Mexico, 1910-1940: A Case Study,” 60; Aaron W Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 93.

¹²⁶ Agustín, *Tragicomedia mexicana. 1, 1*, 7–12.

¹²⁷ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*, 108.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹²⁹ Agustín, *Tragicomedia mexicana. 1, 1*, 33.

In December of 1942, Manuel Ávila Camacho began a mass conscription campaign, in great part to help promote patriotism and unity among the masses whom some military conservatives believed had been agitated by socialist education programs under Cárdenas. But the law was fiercely resisted by the people and commonly violated by authorities who used it to extort citizens. The same year, the government passed a law establishing municipal defense committees to distribute propaganda and provide voluntary military training to all men between 18 and 45, all guided by local politicians and military personnel. Often conscription and voluntary training were conflated, pressuring mandatory training of entire communities.¹³⁰ Some feminists advocated for full military training for women in the name of equality, but they typically were given training only in first aid and household duties believed to contribute to the greater war effort. Other women, nevertheless, vehemently protested conscriptions by threatening violence against local military leaders, often responding to wild rumors of overseas deployment.¹³¹

One poster published in *El Nacional* by the Secretaría de Gobernación in March of 1942 called on citizens to aid in the war effort by being productive workers and uniting fiercely,¹³² but women's contributions were to be carried out in other ways. One example can be found in a mailer published by the YWCA and the DEF titled “¡SALUD para la victoria!” featuring girls sitting with peace signs on its cover. The educational booklet gave general recommendations for achieving good health, most of all prescriptions for exercises to increase strength and to fix “bodily defects,” but also basic nutrition and recommendations to get outdoors. The booklet further promoted ideal sports for girls including swimming, dance, and gymnastics, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a slim figure, releasing excess nervousness that contributed to

¹³⁰ Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*, 54, 63.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 67–68.

¹³² Secretaría de Gobernación, “Ciudadanos de La República: He Aquí La Orden Del Día...!,” *El Nacional*, March 12, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

hysteria, and remembering to keep a smile on their faces at all times. While “health for victory” may be directly speaking to the importance of girls keeping fit to help Mexico’s victory in World War II after entering on the side of Allies, victory in the context of the brochure carried a double-meaning connected to the country’s entrance into modernity marked by the consumerism government leaders hoped all citizens would soon enjoy. Fit and feminine girls represented those successful not just in war, but in life, and the booklet also offered information on cooking classes for US dishes and language instruction in English and French.¹³³

Mexico officially entered the war in the spring of 1942 and Gen. Salvador S. Sánchez announced an emergency order by presidential decree for obligatory military education for all of the republic’s students from kindergarten through secondary schools. The order forced an awkward partnership between the SEP and SDN in the creation of the Servicio de Educación Pública Militar, its goal to prepare all Mexicans for war through arms training, inculcate a love of country, and physical and moral development carried out primarily in physical and civic pre-military programs. Physical educators served as a logical bridge between the SEP and SDN, having some experience in military methods, and took on whatever jobs necessary to carry out government prescriptions.¹³⁴

A year later, Col. Candelario S. Alvarado made clear the skillset expected of military instructors. They not only required just, tough, and idealistic teachers who would be considered better than average teachers in a time of peace, but also needed to be “drivers of men” that also excelled as warriors and leaders in times of war.¹³⁵ The SEP officially categorized most military training marked for the 1943-1944 school year as physical education and a group of inspectors laid out a general pedagogical platform based on consultations from experts, teachers, inspectors,

¹³³ Asociación Cristiana Femenina and Departamento de Educación Física, “¡SALUD Para La Victoria!,” Jan. 10, Presidentes; MAC 532/65, AGN.

¹³⁴ “La Educación Pre-Militar,” *El Nacional*, March 25, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹³⁵ “Normas para el Instructor Militar,” *El Nacional*, February 2, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

parents organizations, journalists and students, determining that physical education programs laid out in this time should cover:

- 1) Military instruction
- 2) *Media vuelta* exercises
- 3) Military defense
- 4) Physical education methods
- 5) Teachers and military service
- 6) Significance of scholarly physical education
- 7) Calisthenics training
- 8) Importance of physical and military education
- 9) Suitable children's games
- 10) Sports and related games
- 11) Physical education in Mexico
- 12) Specializations¹³⁶

To lessen concerns over the militarization of youth, Sánchez falsely assured the public that pre-military education would do arms training only with wooden guns and that new programs would only represent more intensified versions of physical education already in practice with more focus of military-geographical skills and patriotic rituals.¹³⁷

Plans specifically called for young children from kindergarten through third grade to prepare mostly through recreational games with military themes in addition to nationalistic exercises like flag ceremonies. Directed physical exercises followed the next few years of education, sometimes incorporating wooden arms training before intensive training in weapons assembly, marching, first aid, strategy, and rigorous physical training in high school. Orders

¹³⁶ Secretaría de Educación Pública, "Servicio de Informacion Pedagogia," *Memoria de la Secretaría de Educación Pública 2* (1943-1944): 198–99.

¹³⁷ "Como se Impartira a Jovenes y Ninos la Educación Pre-Militar," *El Nacional*, January 16, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

mandated that all physical education be carried out with strict military application, meaning more leaders favored combative and team-building sports that promoted comradeship, although arguments were made to justify the utility of most games, especially those that helped increase the strength, agility, coordination, and speed of a participant. Ultimately, officials valued sports that fostered discipline and a warrior spirit and believed that a moral-civic education should promote a “Spirit of the Body.” At the same time, the military highly encouraged workers and campesinos not enrolled in schools to take voluntary training courses at the nearest army facility.¹³⁸ Roughly 50,000 students in DF and Puebla received pre-military education in their public schools first in February of 1942, and other places like Tampico, Quintana Roo, and San Luis Potosí announced their own plans just weeks later to use sports and the pentathlon heavily as part of their efforts.¹³⁹

In 1942 Ávila Camacho also stripped the SEP of supervision over physical education programs in favor of the SDN in the name of global emergency in wartime, creating the Dirección Nacional de Educación Física y Enseñanza Pre-Militar headed by Beteta. In March of 1942, Beteta named Capt. Antonio Haro Oliva as jefe of the Escuela Nacional de Educación Física (ENEF) in a move described by *El Nacional* as “emotionally patriotic.” Haro, an international fencing champion and military officer, fit the criteria well as the military hoped to prepare the country for war by preparing teachers through daily exercises in “severe discipline,” teaching a wide variety of sports and giving lessons on applied scientific military gymnastics and calisthenics.

Escuadrón Aéreo de Pelea 201, an Air Force Expeditionary unit also known as the *Aguilas Aztecas*, flew missions in the Pacific in 1945, yet much of the public denounced military

¹³⁸ “Quedo Planeada la Educación Militar,” *El Nacional*, March 21, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “La Educación Pre-Militar.”

¹³⁹ “En Febrero se Iniciara la Instrucción Pre-Militar,” *El Nacional*, January 11, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “Desarrollo del Programa de la Educación Pre-Militar,” *El Nacional*, February 23, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

school programs as unnecessary, believing the war far away and relatively unimportant for the country. Military functionaries responded by denouncing anyone opposed to militarization of schools as lazy and ignorant of the ever-present danger in which the country remained, a position that threatened global security by not fighting for democracy, liberty, sovereignty, and an antiracist society. Yet, in his announcement speech, Beteta proclaimed that whether the war directly impacted the everyday lives of the people or not, the teaching of militarized physical education, daily instruction in perseverance and tenacious physical strength, would bear fruit for generations by indelibly imprinting the obligations of every citizen in every youth. Beteta, quoted Ling: “The nation defends itself with all people united and strong, physically exercised by methodical means.”¹⁴⁰

Haro followed Beteta’s preamble with a promise that under his command the normal school students would stand as national examples of patriotic citizenship with “strong souls, clear spirits, robust bodies and hearts full of ardent faith.” Haro argued that physical educators’ work as the most noble in the country, through sports teaching invaluable lessons of the difficulties of life to the next generation of youth, and combating the urges of youth to travel a “path of melancholy,” or a lazy and listless life, by redirecting them with exercises and lessons that promote an enthusiastic, energetic, and healthy life. For Haro, physical educators faced a daunting task in their quest to end indolence, hostility, and backwards customs, making them “*caballeros de la más bella cruzada*.”¹⁴¹

Primary school teachers in the DF received crash courses on military instruction in April that the government expected to be incorporated in lesson plans moving forward. Around the same time, Octavio Vejar Vázquez, Secretario de Educación Pública, Beteta, and other military

¹⁴⁰ “El Capitan Antonio Haro Tomo Posesión de la Escuela de E. Física,” *El Nacional*, March 4, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴¹ “El Capitan Antonio Haro Tomo Posesión de la Escuela de E. Física.”

officers came away satisfied after inspections of DF sports centers Parque Venustiano Carranza, Plan Sexenal, and 18 de Marzo to gauge progress in new military-oriented programs and the work needed to move forward. Educators from the Dirección General de Educación Física in DF oversaw these early efforts at military education in the capital, and other physical education promoters did the same in their respective locales.¹⁴² By summer of 1944, journalists wrote on impressive results of some military camps such as Campo Militar “Cuernavaca” which allegedly transformed droves of malnourished and illiterate boys into happy, energetic, rigorous, and industrious young men that lend optimism for the future of the nation.¹⁴³ New educational philosophies sent the SEP scrambling for experts to help fill the voids as teachers struggled to deliver adequate pre-military training to the military’s standards. Military specialists supplemented teachers in some cases, and the Departamento de Servicios Medicos e Higienicos sent doctors and nurses to all schools possible to give regular physical exams to students to ensure a basic level of physical health of students before they entered rigorous physical training regiments on campuses.¹⁴⁴ Sports fused with military exercises so closely in militarized programs that some land-use petitioners, in fact, could only find negligible philosophical differences among them.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² “La Enseñanza Premilitar a Los Maestros,” *El Nacional*, April 2, 1942, sec. 1, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “Inspección a los Campos de Instrucción Militar,” *El Nacional*, April 8, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “Fue Iniciada ya la Instrucción Pre-Militar de Los Maestros,” *El Nacional*, April 15, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴³ “Vigorosa Generación de Jóvenes Soldados,” *El Nacional*, June 29, 1944, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴⁴ “Servicio Médico en Campos Destinados a Instrucción Militar,” *El Nacional*, February 24, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “En Forma Técnica será Dirigida la Educación Militar,” *El Nacional*, January 23, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴⁵ Antonio S. Ramírez, “Letter to Manuel Ávila Camacho,” July 30, 1942, Presidentes; MAC 532.2/21, AGN.



Illustration 1.2: Voluntary pre-military exercises (*El Nacional*, 1944). Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.¹⁴⁶

The government also took out *avisos* in dailies promising material help to any group of workers, campesinos, or professionals that desired to organize military education collectives and train on their own and offered all public schools and sporting facilities as training grounds.¹⁴⁷ Campesino groups, especially those affiliated with rural militias, took advantage, but so did workers. For example, in December of 1941, two months before the announcements, the Confederación de Tabajadores Mexicanos (CTM) union asked for instructors to carry out military training to help promote discipline and increase the health and productivity of its worker-members. The CTM carried out its plan in early February by requiring one-hour of military education daily for all workers between ages 18 and 35. Just two months after initially requesting military education, Miguel Alemán helped inaugurate a military and sports academy for union workers, as well.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ “Instrucción Física Pre-Militar,” *El Nacional*, June 26, 1944, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴⁷ “Maxima Facilidad para Adoptar La Educación Militar,” *El Nacional*, February 26, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴⁸ “Instrucción Militar en Todas las Agrupaciones de La CTM,” *El Nacional*, February 9, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “Inauguración de la Academia Militar y Deportiva de la CTM,” *El Nacional*, February 28, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

Rural militias, armed and trained by local military outposts, took heavy criticism in public opinion in 1941 and 1942, as many called for stricter gun control laws and feared they would become armed gangs drawn to violence and anti-revolutionary factions. The popularity of the Sinarquistas, a pro-fascist militant Catholic group in areas once ravaged by the Cristiada, spread quickly among the thousands of conservative peasants disillusioned with the results of the 1940 election and their attitudes worsened with Ávila Camacho's appointment of the anti-clerical Cárdenas as Minister of War, especially after the order for conscription.¹⁴⁹

The Mexican Scouts

Scouting, considered one of the best sports for pre-military training, garnered significant attention from military leaders, as did related pastimes such as hiking and mountaineering. Adolph Hitler argued in 1920 that “The state must see to the raising of the standard of health in the nation by ... increasing bodily efficiency by obligatory gymnastics and sports, and by extensive support of clubs engaged in the physical development of the young,” sentiments shared by many global educators of the day. His Hitler Youth and related groups in Europe became fascist archetypes for pre-military youth education. But in Germany and other places, education was meant to develop “powerful bodies” and “narrow minds for the work of the State” and promote a warrior culture.¹⁵⁰ Mexican military officials wanted to carry out a different version of militarization, not to narrow minds like the Nazi German effort, but to expand them and instill in them a basic moral education they believed they've been deprived after centuries of fanaticism and mistreatment at the hands of colonial, dictatorial, and church authority. Scouting movements

¹⁴⁹ “Energica Actitud Militar contra Abusos de Agraristas,” *El Universal*, March 18, 1941, Archivo Economico, Defensas Rurales, Mexico, L10326, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “Las Defensas Rurales y el Sinarquismo,” *El Popular*, May 24, 1942, Archivo Economico, Defensas Rurales, Mexico, L10326, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; Soledad Loaeza, “Modernización Autoritaria a la Sombra de la Superpotencia, 1944-1968,” in *Nueva historia general de México*, ed. Erik Velásquez García (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, 2010), 660; John W. Sherman, *The Mexican Right: The End of Revolutionary Reform, 1929-1940* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1997), 122–29.

¹⁵⁰ Wright, “Education, Sport and Militarism: Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany,” 344–45.

in Great Britain and the US provided useful examples of what Mexico wanted to achieve, but translated in a specifically Mexican way.

Sir Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, intended the group to be military protectors of the British Empire. While it has been argued that much of the militarization has been left out in the case of the Boys Scouts in Mexico,¹⁵¹ the point may be overstated. Scouting appeared first in Mexico in 1913 under the direction of German professors Federico Clarck and Zum Brock as part of militarization efforts and they even practiced “Kriegsspiel” war games near Chapultepec Park regularly. Velázquez Andrade, in fact, oversaw scouting in federal elementary schools during Huerta’s short-lived presidency with the specific purpose of easing the nation’s youth into military life.¹⁵² By 1916, *carrancista* Governor of Yucatán General Salvador Alvarado, a hardline supporter of temperance and women’s and worker’s rights, created the Boys Scouts of the Yucatán in Merida as part of his educative reforms to uplift a Yucatecan society left in virtual serfdom in the henequen plantation system.¹⁵³ Alvarado aimed to promote sports and scouting to harden the state’s population, degenerated after years of abuse, through a new “religion of duty”, to increase general happiness but also to protect Mexican sovereignty against potential invading armies.¹⁵⁴ *Educación Física* further published activities of scouting troops regularly in Mexico in 1923, including recreational swimming and other sports practiced by troops.¹⁵⁵

Baden-Powell articulated the benefits of scouting well: “Being a fellow among many others, you are like one brick among many others in the wall of a house. If you are discontented

¹⁵¹ Elena Jackson Albarrán, “Boy Scouts Under the Aztec Sun: Mexican Youth and the Transnational Construction of Identity, 1917-1940,” in *Transnational Histories of Youth in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard Ivan Jobs and David M Pomfret (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 48.

¹⁵² Ponce S et al., *La flor de Lis: entre vientos y tormentas: historia de los scouts en México, 1913-1941* (México: Enrique Zenil Verduzco, 2004).

¹⁵³ Ibid.; Jürgen Buchenau and William H. Beezley, eds., *State Governors in the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1952: Portraits in Conflict, Courage, and Corruption* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 43–58.

¹⁵⁴ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 26–27.

¹⁵⁵ “Actividades de Las Tribus Indígenas Mexicanas,” *Educación Física* 1 (February 1923).

with your place or your neighbor's or if you are a rotten brick, you are no good to the wall. You are rather a danger. If the bricks get quarrelling among themselves the wall is liable to split and the whole house to fall."¹⁵⁶ The connections between teamwork, sacrifice, discipline, and physical fitness all fit well with military ideals of the perfect soldier, and in their estimation, the perfect citizen. Like soldiers, scouts were to serve under masculine archetypal code of honor, under which male warrior-martyrs would willingly sacrifice everything for others knowing he will never receive appropriate recognition. Connections to war rarely eluded scouting activities where even camping and survival-training served as positive substitutes for basic military activities.

The formation of the Boy Scouts in the US heavily relied upon a positive memory of war, and especially the Civil War and frontier battle of Indians and settlers. As the country drew closer to future conflicts, boys were encouraged to emulate the soldier, considered a model citizen with a reputation for self-sacrifice and courageousness. Early scouting programs featured mock war games, where young scouts embraced their imaginative roles as "savage Indians" equally as much as settlers.¹⁵⁷ Scouting popularized in the 1880s among hobbyists who believed membership could help solve the problem of decreasing morality, where groups used them to criticize fast paced and over-materialistic lifestyles of the cities that had eroded traditional values. Scouting leaders believed that by taking boys back into the woods, the mountains, and the deserts, one could re-connect with an Indian soul believed buried in the souls of all Americans, part of the way non-indigenous Americans re-imagined themselves and of a noble

¹⁵⁶ Christopher Hitchens, "Young Men in Shorts," *The Atlantic*, June 2004, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/06/young-men-in-shorts/302962/> (accessed March 7, 2016).

¹⁵⁷ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 2001), 36; Jenny Thompson, *War Games inside the World of Twentieth-Century War Reenactors* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2010); Robert Macdonald, *Sons of the Empire* (University of Toronto, 2011).

but dead Indian past.¹⁵⁸ “Playing Indian” helped one foster in an unmistakable American identity, and was grounded in the land, in nature, and worked as a successful way to connect one with a uniquely American collective and individual conception of the self.¹⁵⁹ Similar projects ran in Mexico, especially after the launch of indigenismo campaigns that likewise valorized a romantic, but dead, Indian past that it sought to recapture.

While the military looked to foreign examples to help model its programs, revolutionary versions were fervently nationalist. One essayist at *Educación Física* wrote that while many intellectuals around the globe considered fascist and Bolshevik solutions to national problems, especially with children, the author wrote that a truly Mexican solution could be found among the many “Tribus Indígenas Mexicanos,” scouting groups similar to the Boy Scouts in the US, the Canadian TUXIS, and the “muchachos aguilas” in Italy, but supposedly based on the “racial tendencies” and collective psychology of Mexican youth.¹⁶⁰ The national version remained similar to the US Boy Scouts in that both sought to send boys into the wilderness to teach children how conquered nature and survive off the land, to enliven one’s spirit and inculcate a national masculinity through the development of the self. In this way, it represented a “simple program to aid the normal development of children’s personalities” and largely rooted its teachings in widely-held understandings of traditional gender roles that underlie basic morality.¹⁶¹

One supporter expanded that the intent of the Tribus was to bring boys out of the cities and into the countryside to engage in a program that merged social, intellectual, and physical

¹⁵⁸ Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁶⁰ “Labor de Porvenir,” *Educación Física* 1 (1923). TUXIS were a scouting organization in Canada in the early twentieth century. The name is an acronym standing for “Training Under Christ In Service”

¹⁶¹ Elena Jackson Albarrán, “Los Exploradores, La Cruz Roja de La Juventud Y La Expresión Infantil de Nacionalismo,” in *Nuevas Miradas a La Historia de La Infancia En América Latina: Entre Prácticas Y Representaciones*, ed. Susana Sosenski and Elena Jackson Albarrán (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2010), 243; “Labor de Porvenir.”

activities, but one that also remained “genuinely national,” steeped in the legends and epics of pre-Columbian Mexico, everything substantive of the “*raza bronce*.” Benefactors believed that these young “braves” could represent the best of future generations, with mental and physical strength, practical skills, discipline, altruism, and a morality that made scouts incapable of lies, against all injustice, and loving of nature. Tribes would take names based on places and peoples in Aztec legend, great topographical features, and animals such as the “Anahuac,” “Buitres,” “Ajusco,” and the organization of each group, ideally made up of twenty-five braves, five warriors, and led by a “cacique,” adopted the national lexicon in step with nascent *indigenismo* campaigns that extracted “symbolic power and aesthetic tokens” in support of a romanticized image of the noble savage based on pre-Columbian Aztec Mexico.¹⁶² Indeed, through the scouts, youth could also imagine themselves as part of larger international pan-youth movement, but they also relished their roles as carriers of specifically Mexican modernity.¹⁶³

In 1926, Moisés Saenz, José Escobar, national director of the Tribus de Exploradores Mexicanos, and physical educator Vicente de Gamboa, awarded twenty-one explorers from troops Tomochic, Tlacopam, and Texcucana encampment land at the Convento de Tepetzotlán to celebrate their dedication to modern discipline and to help them pass spring break. They chose the site because of its rural location but also due to its easy accessibility, its proximity to swimmable water and other supplies, including loose materials possible for the construction of crude shelters. Yet the SEP found most interest in the merit system in which the young boys participated. Boys received awards for steadfast maintenance of discipline, honoring traditions of the troops and reciting the scout’s honor code, and excelling in physical, moral, and intellectual education activities at the camp. SEP leaders emphasized the role of physical education most

¹⁶² “Labor de Porvenir”; Albarrán, “Boy Scouts under the Aztec Sun,” 47, 50.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

among the three and boys faced regular physical tests such as walking a kilometer in eight minutes of less, running 100 meters in thirteen seconds, jumping two meters with “drive,” learning three knockout wrestling moves, and completing a twenty-kilometer hike. Scouts followed a strict pre-determined schedule from 7 am to 10 pm, which included three meals, an hour of exercise and mid-day bathing, and another hour for organized games, not including two afternoon hours for one to practice and pass their merit tests. Boys also prepared their own meals following the prescribed menu, which featured typical Mexican foods. Troops in Mexico City also petitioned officials in 1933 to set aside additional land in the national park Desierto de los Leones in the Sierra de las Cruces outside of Mexico City to establish a scout camp near a seventeenth century Carmelite monastery and convent.¹⁶⁴

Figure 1.2: Tepotzotlán Tribus de Exploradores Camp daily food schedule¹⁶⁵

Breakfast	Fruit, eggs, coffee with milk, and bread.
Comida	Soup, meat, salad, beans, sweets, bread, and citrus leaf tea (<i>hojas de naranjo</i>)
Dinner	Milk or chocolate, stewed plums, bread, eggs

Even though previous versions had existed, in February of 1929, the Boys Scouts formed in Mexico City and became a tangible force to win over the minds of youth and work as a propaganda machine for the revolutionary government. Even so, the group struggled to survive throughout the 1930s, and were repeatedly denied subsidies despite their work on behalf of the government, even threatening to dissolve in 1933. A 1930 manual listed Portes Gil as its club president and Dr. Manuel Puig Casauranc as an officer, while the first lady Carmen G. Portes

¹⁶⁴ Various, “Various Documents on Scouting in Mexico,” 1933, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/187, AGN.

¹⁶⁵ José Escobar, “Informe sobre el Primer Campamento de Meritos. Efectuado en Tepotzotlan, Por las Tribus de Exploradores Mexicanos,” *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 7, no. 5 (1928): 48–53.

Gil, “de alabada belleza,” a public advocate and patron of sports, temperance, and public health initiatives, was honorary president of the Cruz Roja and celebrated as the Scouts’ “*madrina*.”¹⁶⁶ Portes Gil, the only president to date who was not a former officer, nevertheless worked in military bureaucracy in the SGM in 1914 and in the Department of Military Justice the following year. He met Plutarco Calles, who activated his political career, when he worked as a superior court judge in Sonora.¹⁶⁷

But the scouts were largely a middle and upper class pastime with small membership and struggled with finances in Mexico City for years after several rejections to obtain public subsidies, despite the fact the scouts acted as virtual agents of the state. According to one appeal from José A. Ramírez to President Rodríguez the Asociación de Exploradores Mexicanos had formed on February 16, 1929 with a \$3,300 peso budget for three troops, but since that time had worked with the Dirección de Acción Cívica in the organization of sporting parades and events, the Comité de la Campaña Anti-Alcoholica in production of propaganda, the Tribunal para Menores to help reform delinquent minors, the Departamento de Trafico in its pedestrian safety campaign, the Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento in the extinguishing of forest fires and reforestation, the SEP programs to promote awareness of fragile local ecosystems, the Escuela Prevocacional de Aeronautica y Mecanica Automotriz to promote condom use, and the Departamento de Salubridad and Asociación de Protección de la Infancia to promote other hygiene programs, and all as part of its normal social-civic and cultural activities.¹⁶⁸ In 1934, a troop in Mexicali petitioned Rodríguez for program assistance, arguing that the group worked on behalf of Rodríguez’s great effort to promote physical culture. Nevertheless, the group actually asked for radio equipment, hoping to establish Baja California’s first experimental radio

¹⁶⁶ Various Documents on Scouting in Mexico; Sara Sefchovich, *La Suerte de La Consorte: Las Esposas de Los Gobernantes de México* (México, D.F: Editorial Oceano, 2013).

¹⁶⁷ Camp, *Generals in the Palacio*, 147.

¹⁶⁸ Various Documents on Scouting in Mexico.

school.¹⁶⁹ In March of 1937, Dolores Galaviz y Rojas, leader of the Club de Exploradoras “Legion de Aguilas” in Chihuahua even petitioned President Cárdenas for financing to take girls into the countryside to learn lessons about everyday campesino life, but also to help enculturate the rural masses, volunteering to work as an arm of the SEP’s cultural missions to ease the government’s burden of elevating the “Bronze Race.”¹⁷⁰

Through the 1930s, this new organization maintained close contact with liaisons in the US who sent moral support, information on the latest organizational developments, and invitations to international meetings.¹⁷¹ In 1937, scouts from Monterrey trekked to Washington DC on foot to attend the first National Scout Jamboree.¹⁷² International connections made some in the country suspicious, nonetheless. For example, in 1938 Jesús Dominguez and Luis Felipe Rodríguez wrote to President Cárdenas on the urgency of reforming or shutting down the Boy Scouts, a group they claim to be allied with fascists and Catholics. The duo proposed the formation a “socialist” scouts in service of the state and guided directly by the armed forces in their place.¹⁷³

In February of 1939, the Oficina de Acción Social (OAS) worked with Jefes de Zonas Militares in a mass scouting conversion campaign to teach disciplinary exercises. In this program, military officers worked with local political organizers and teachers to establish scouting troops and networks around the country affiliated with rural schools. While officials noted that efforts in rural San Luis Potosí had proven relatively fruitful, scouting recruitment proved difficult in most rural communities where it was almost completely unknown. A SEP

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Miguel Angel Casillas to Abelardo Rodríguez, October 4, 1934, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/385, AGN.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Dolores Galaviz y Rojas to President Lázaro Cárdenas, March 11, 1937, Presidentes; LCR 532.2/14, AGN.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Pierre C. Mellichamp to President Abelardo Rodríguez, June 14, 1934, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/24-1, AGN.

¹⁷² Alfonso Guerrero, “Sus Informes de Labores,” 1936, Caja 35572, DPeH, exp. 53, AHSEP.

¹⁷³ Letter from Jesús Dominguez and Luis Felipe Rodríguez to Lázaro Cárdenas, March 22, 1938, Presidentes; LCR 532/64, AGN.

report in June noted that OAS and military units had established a number of “explorador” patrols to aid the discipline campaign, while the SDN widely distributed copies of military trade journal *El Soldado* to aid proper development of scouting organization in military terms. Within months SEP inspectors noted early successes in Sonora and Coahuila, but papers could only assure the public of the enthusiasm of rural participants elsewhere.¹⁷⁴ In Chiapas, reports came in on a collection of troops that carried out a series of multi-day camping trips so scouts could learn to respect nature and develop survival skills by building primitive fires and shelters, identify medicinal plants and food, and locate drinking water. But they would also learn to appreciate more simple lifestyles and perhaps give back to nearby rural communities in need.¹⁷⁵ The scouts aimed to harden the bodies of young men yet soften their spirit to keep them cognizant of their greater value in service to their people.

The link between scouting and military service welded with the country’s entrance into World War II as the SDN, under Cárdenas, placed physical education under military control. Periodicals provided examples on patriotic volunteerism led by scouts in other countries to serve as models for national youth. For example, in 1937, *El Universal* reported that Boy Scouts in Nicaragua had offered their services in war if tensions over conflicts in neighboring Honduras with the Pan-American Fruit Company boiled over.¹⁷⁶ In 1942, another daily in Mexico detailed the admirable Girl Scouts of the US that pledged their dedication to the war effort as nurses, babysitters, and other jobs and hoped for girls in Mexico to eventually do the same.¹⁷⁷ Indeed,

¹⁷⁴ “Organizacion de La Ninez Y La Juventud,” *El Universal*, February 16, 1939, Archivo Economico, Boy Scouts, Mexico, G09248, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “Progreso de Exploradores,” *El Nacional*, June 6, 1939, Archivo Economico, Boy Scouts, Mexico, G09248, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁷⁵ “Magnificos Resultados de Los Exploradores de Las Escuelas,” *El Nacional*, July 26, 1939, Archivo Economico, Boy Scouts, Mexico, G09248, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁷⁶ “Los Boy Scouts Han Ofrecido Su Servicio,” *El Universal*, November 19, 1937, Archivo Economico, Boy Scouts, Mexico, G09248, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁷⁷ “Las Girls Scouts En El Servicio Militar,” *Novedades*, January 31, 1942, Archivo Economico, Boy Scouts, Mexico, G09248, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

scout magazines *Tihui* and *El Scout* dedicated pages to national heroes and places, and national Publications featured scouting rules and tips in other Publications.

Romantic poet and philosopher Gen. Ruben García, writing and editing for *La Nación* and *El Soldado*, and also served as one of Amaro's influential *agregados* sent abroad to study military and physical education projects mostly in Europe and the Americas from 1925 to 1931. García gave many recommendations in 1941 based on his findings in distant schools, but he believed the country should guard against any perfunctory adaptation of foreign models. The general, who doubled as president of the Club Excursionista "Everest," regarded Mexico as uniquely positioned to develop educational programs based on its deep pre-Columbian history and stunning and dramatically varied natural landscapes. García spiritedly pitched the idea for the creation of mass hiking and pre-military cultural programs that would enhance one's physical and mental aptitude but also instill a sense of pure *mexicanidad* and a "bucolic sensibility." Indeed, the plan called for a promotion of sport through rigorous mountaineering expeditions, educational trips to archaeological sites, and geological education colored by imaginative legends such as the lost riches of Las Cuevas de Pedro "El Negro" that would rivet sporting aspirants with the "emotive treasures" of the Valley of Mexico, synthesizing culture, the natural world, and physical challenges in an nationalist immersion campaign he envisioned would promote a sense of rootedness to the land and people capable of producing mindful, respectful, and robust citizens. Additionally, training in reading compasses and maps, stratigraphy, and survival skills lend invaluable skills necessary for successful soldiery, training already received in countries like England and Germany, who he argued had proven to develop physically and mentally gifted young men.¹⁷⁸ In 1941 the Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas even created an

¹⁷⁸ Ruben García, Proposal for Manuel Ávila Camacho, March 28, 1941, Presidentes; MAC 532/20, AGN; England, "The Curse of Huitzilopochtli, 190–93.

organization and rules for scouting troops of primarily indigenous boys so that troops would carry their knowledge and spirit into distant pueblos to uplift the culture of the people and help communities develop better physical health and presumably recapture native skills, such as locating natural resources, but adapted to modern conditions, to help use the resources to stimulate local economies with the creation of small industries.¹⁷⁹

At the same time, periodicals like *Grafico* included weekly sections called “Scouting Science” that featured reports and accompanying illustrations and demonstrations on a variety of topics including astronomy and navigation, Morse code, basic first aid and anatomy, and practical “Indian” sign language to bridge language gaps. The paper also featured articles in which writer Leopoldo de la Rosa outlined the requirements for scouting membership. In sum, a scout must possess or dedicate oneself to society’s code of honor, embodied by the samurai for the Japanese or the Crusaders for Europeans. Scouts must dedicate their lives for the achievement of international brotherhood but must be disciplined, take initiative, be clean and strong in body and mind, and ready themselves at all time to help society in way in which they may be deemed useful. Moreover, they must protect the Mexican flag, and the Aztec eagle that adorns it, and respect its code of honor.¹⁸⁰

De la Rosa even challenged citizens to question the differences between hiking and scouting. While scouts did hike, as a principal method of improving physical strength and health, they did so consciously in the honorable service to their nation as “true citizens,” prepared both as soldiers of war and peace, exploring and combining exercises with social volunteerism and intellectual activities to realize a united and strong nation.¹⁸¹ In 1943, *Novedades* further noted

¹⁷⁹ “Las Tribus de Exploradores,” *El Nacional*, February 12, 1941, Archivo Economico, Boy Scouts, Mexico, G09248, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁸⁰ Leopoldo de la Rosa, “Ciencia Del Explorador,” *Grafico*, 1941, Archivo Economico, Boy Scouts, Mexico, G09248, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

the progress among scouting troops in universities and the formation of Girl Guides as part of the international progress of scouting, and reminded readers of Baden Powell's essential laws of scouting including loyalty to God and nation, obedience, perseverance, and offering friendship to all, but always prepared for the unexpected.¹⁸² In this way, scouts were prepared for military service later in life, but did so under more socially acceptable and peaceable terms.

Pentathlon Deportivo

For military men, the modern pentathlon stood above other sporting events and received significant attention from the middle of the 1930s through the Cold War. Founded by the Baron Pierre de Coubertin for the Summer Olympic Games, it was strictly a men's group and individual contest consisting of five separate events, including fencing, a 200-meter freestyle swim, equestrian show jumping, a 3-kilometer run, and pistol shooting. Mexico has sent athletes to compete in the event in every Olympics since the 1932 Los Angeles games with the exception of 1976, although it has never won a medal. By the middle of the 1930s, military leaders began to see potential in a sport with capabilities of promoting nationalism and military habits. The sport increased in popularity through the 1930s thanks to its promotion by Rodríguez, an advocate for education who worked on multiple plans for military instruction, and the country became a national ambassador for the sport. For example, Lamberto Álvarez Gayou organized the finals of the 1934 Pan-Pacific Junior Pentathlon in Mexico City, where the winning competitors of the US competed against their Mexican counterparts in the National Stadium in August of 1934. The events received praise from Los Angeles mayor Frank Shaw who embraced Mexico's shared

¹⁸² "Prospera en Mexico la Asociacion de 'guias,'" *Novedades*, May 19, 1943, Archivo Economico, Boy Scouts, Mexico, G09248, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

interest in developing healthy future generations through the sport and in the spirit of regional friendship. Rodríguez even donated a trophy bearing his name for the Pan-Pacific meeting.¹⁸³

A permanent move away from an orientation towards Olympic pentathlon came in 1938 when a conservative group from the faculty of medicine at the Universidad Nacional, directed by medical doctor and Zapatista Brig. Gen. Gustavo Baz Prada, organized the first Pentatlón Deportivo Militarizado Universitario. While some recorded this initial organization as a secret Catholic society that swore to defend universities from potential unrest from radical students, and included an initiation ceremony that purportedly involved hoods, skeletons, crucifixes, and the like, the sport received federal support by 1939 inside the rhetorically radical Cárdenas presidency. The group broke into two sections in 1941 and 1943 to help train potential military reserves in wartime while also inculcating notions of discipline, obedience, patriotism, and sacrifice in the student body they believed generally unruly. Indeed, organizers believed participation to instill self-discipline of military character, one oriented towards aggressiveness that would serve useful in war and encourage initiative in one's life. Moreover, generals headed the pentathlon's strict military-style hierarchy, including recruits, cadets, and officers, and participants, ranging mostly between ages 16 and 25, participated in army boots and fatigues. These athletes also participated in military basic training and national flag ceremonies and many participants maintained links to organizations like the Cruz Roja.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Abelardo Rodríguez, "Instrucción Militar," n.d., RODRÍGUEZ, Abelardo. Exp: 189, Leg, 3/11. Inv. 5010, FAPECFE; Documents Related to the Pentathlon Juvenil, July 1934, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/187-1, AGN.

¹⁸⁴ Historian Eduardo Emiliano Zapata González, in fact, believed that the pentathlon's benefactors additionally found that the goals of the sport worked in concert with the moral and nationalist codes of the emerging Asociación de Jóvenes Esperanza de la Fraternidad (AJEF), an appendant masonic organization attended by several military figures. Jorge Jiménez Cantu, for example, one of the sport's promoters, belonged to AJEF Lodge "Fernando Suárez Nuñez" in Mexico City. Eduardo Emiliano Zapata González, *Historia Del Pentatlón Deportivo Militarizado Universitario (1938-1988)* (México, D.F: Zapata González, Eduardo Emiliano, 2014), 18–19, 26–28, 45–51; Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960*, 59–60; Brewster, "The Role of Sport in Post-Revolutionary Mexico," 14.

In 1941, swirling rumors in the capital checked the pentathlon's sterling reputation as people relayed stories that members of a worker's union had launched an attack on uniformed pentathlon students, believing them to be the vanguard of a brigade of advancing armed shock troops. Officials and newspapers quickly worked to diffuse the stories, noting the high character of the pentathlon students, their popularity in the community, and reiterating that their students would not have been armed. Nevertheless, the event sheds light on some of the lasting anxieties of youth militarization among a population still traumatized by revolutionary violence and the fear of global fascism.¹⁸⁵

Col. Beteta officially placed the Pentathlon under supervision of the DEFEP in April of 1942 with a military sports parade, music, and sporting competitions and exhibitions guided by Jesús Prían in the Estadio Nacional, noting the pentathlon's importance as a core activity for national physical education and to help prepare the defenses of the nation. In a speech to mark the occasion, Beteta urged to the young male participants to finish their military education with integrity and to honor the orders of their instructors to help end the European "new order" that promoted pain and suffering and threatened to end humanity as they knew it. The event finished with fly-overs by Air Force planes recently purchased from the United States.¹⁸⁶ On the sport's seven-year anniversary in 1944, organizers staged a large event and banquet attended by Baz, Amaro, and Gen. Maximino Ávila Camacho, of many, to celebrate the sport's triumphant development. Baz emotionally proclaimed that from it arose a great hope that the youth of the country would carry Mexico to great heights. His words ignited the exuberant audience and inspired a standing ovation.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ "Contra el Pentathlon Universitario," *Grafico*, July 25, 1939, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Mexico G08230-G08236, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁸⁶ "La Juventud Militarizada," *El Nacional*, April 18, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁸⁷ "Septimo Aniversario del Pentatlon Universitario," *Novedades*, September 5, 1944, Archivo Economico, Penathlon Deportivo Militar Universitario, G08343, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

Conclusion

Miguel Alemán wasted little time in changing the nature of physical education in the country and from 1946 to 1948 oversight of physical education transferred back to the SEP to the delight and relief of teachers in the country who resented the change in the first place.¹⁸⁸ In military trade journal *Defensa*, Ávila Camacho and other frustrated contributors celebrated the gains made in sports field and school construction for all age groups, yet regretted the enormous work left to finish, citing poor attitudes and ignorance and pleading with citizens to complete military education in good faith.¹⁸⁹ The degree to which Mexican physical education and sports was militarized can be highly debated, yet Mexican administrators, while at times de-emphasizing some militarized aspects of sporting education, consistently placed sports in the hands of military men at its highest levels since the middle of the 1920s. By the 1940s, physical education was required and strictly militarized. The Mexican government used it to develop character over intellect, especially with the nation's youth, but ultimately failed to realize lofty goals.¹⁹⁰

The early revolution, led by military men, sought organization and order, first and foremost, as it promoted enfranchisement.¹⁹¹ The military since the time of Porfirio Díaz believed themselves best positioned to transform the country into a modern, disciplined, and productive nation and aimed to do so through rigid military discipline and physical exercise where sports served as a surrogate to the soldiering experience that revolutionaries held so valuable. Most militaristic sports programs, in fact, have not been so militaristic at all around the

¹⁸⁸ Letter from Ignacio Rodríguez Vallarta to Miguel Alemán, December 24, 1946, Presidentes; MAV 532.2/3, AGN.

¹⁸⁹ "Construcción de Centros Escolares," *Defensa* 4, no. 32 (May 1944): 42; José Siurob R., "Temas de Educación Nacional," *Defensa* 4, no. 32 (May 1944): 88–91; Efrén Nuñez Mata, "La Guerra y la Educación," *Defensa* 4, no. 32 (May 1944): 104–5.

¹⁹⁰ Wright, "Education, Sport and Militarism: Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany," 144.

¹⁹¹ Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 20.

world, perhaps more so in communist countries, in Mexico military officials hoped to definitively militarize the nation's youth in a way incorporative of its national realities. For some program architects, they had just failed to persuade a nation traumatized by over a decade of intense violence, hunger, and displacement, not to mention severe political instability.¹⁹² The negotiated path in the end was an ideal to develop a hardened and man, conscientious of his role in greater society and stubborn in his mission to work in defense of the greater good, no matter what task the government required him to carry out.

¹⁹² Guttman, *From Ritual to Record the Nature of Modern Sports*, 73.

Chapter 2

A “New Religion of all of the Pueblos of Tomorrow”¹: Physical Education, Incorporation, and the National Sports Funnel

In a 1936 essay in teacher’s journal *Maestro Rural*, poet Pablo Aragon Leiva related his dreams of a utopian society ordered like that of a hive of honey-bees; a beautiful yet rapaciously hard-working and powerful organism comprised of individuals that lived a disciplined and self-less life for the benefit of the hive. The oft-referenced founder of the Boy Scouts Sir Robert Baden-Powell characterized beehives as model-communities that respected the authority of their queen and eliminated those workers that neglected their duties. The hive represented the strong and invigorated modern workforce that the country needed to thrive after centuries of exploitation and over a decade of armed upheaval. Revolutionaries looked to sports and exercise to help mold ideal citizens, strong in mind, body, and morality with a collective conscience and a sense of patriotic loyalty.² In the end, after all, those hives made of the strongest and most capable workers swarmed together and produced the “sweetest honey.”³

Most revolutionaries saw the countryside, especially indigenous communities, living in a state of decadence, one physically starved and spiritually devoid of hope, vitality, and dignity. After centuries of colonial and Church subjugation and three decades of exclusion and authoritarianism under Porfirio Díaz, these idealistic men and women launched a crusade in the name of justice, freedom, and love to rid the people of their physical, moral, and intellectual starvations, elevate the conditions of everyday life, and help imbue a collective consciousness in a new nation inclusive of all its inhabitants. Teachers often headed these efforts to upend superstition and instill humanistic values that illuminated a path in which the proletariat, the

¹ Fernando Magro, “Todo Un Exito Constituyo El Festival Deportivo de Ayer,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 28, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

² Pablo Aragon Leiva, “Las Abejas,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 9, no. 1 (July 1, 1936); Hitchens, “Young Men in Shorts.”

³ Leiva, “Las Abejas.”

campesino, and all *gente humilde* saw themselves as brothers and sisters inside an “environment of fraternity” and a “cult of truth.”⁴

Revolutionaries invested heavily in sports and used the allure of the exciting pastimes to gain access to rural communities. They used these events to inject a rebranded nationalism bound to physical development, healthiness, and a universal democratic spirit in which many believed participation imparted.⁵ *Deportistas* guided by science believed that sports represented the greatest weapon for the extermination of the fanaticism still prevalent among the poor and indigenous elements of the country, with some convinced that enthusiasm was so great that sports culture could represent a new scientific religion capable of suffocating the superstition that poisoned the minds of the masses. Incorporation efforts from the late Porfiriato until the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) included the creation of several sporting bureaus that organized into a vertical structure as part of wider efforts to convert, organize, and control *deportistas* into agents of the revolutionary state that could additionally identify championship athletes that could show off the revolution’s gains to the rest of the world.

Porfirian Sports and Physical Education, 1876-1911

For most people, sports under Díaz remained an exclusionary practice. Soldiers and rail and mine workers may have played baseball or soccer to help pass the time, but elite social clubs and religious organizations like the Young Men’s Christian Organization (YMCA) controlled organized sports participation in Díaz’s revitalized urban centers.⁶ The Porfirian cabinet did, in

⁴ José Vite Vega, “La Escuela Nueva,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 8, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

⁵ “Los Obreros, el Deporte, y el Espiritu Democratico y Universal de La Actividad Física,” *El Nacional*, June 3, 1931.

⁶ Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 47–59; Joseph, “Forging the Regional Pastime: Baseball and Class in Yucatan”; Wheeler, “A Diabolistic Interpretation of the Master of Mexico.”

fact, hope to formulate a national physical education plan, but the government ultimately lacked the money, will, and experts to coordinate an effort of such incredible scale.

Díaz relied upon private organizations like the YMCA, foreign clubs, and tutors to carry out the rare physical training available to the general civilian public as federal budgets prioritized infrastructure, communications, and general aesthetic improvements of large cities. A YMCA-sponsored organization first formed in Mexico City in the 1880s as a refuge for English-speaking Protestant expatriates and by 1893 this branch also supported the most advanced gymnasium in the capital. It soon folded in 1900 after coming under pressure from officials unhappy with its restrictive membership policies that barred most Mexicans and more generally due to inactivity. George I. Babcock renewed the organization in 1902 as a missionary organization working to develop the mind, muscles, and spirits of resident railroad workers. By 1907, the Mexico City YMCA doubled in size after opening membership to Catholics and most middle-class Mexicans.⁷

Babcock's YMCA offered masculine "Boys Work" activities to help young men develop physically, intellectually, and morally in a course loosely guided by Christian principles. The country's elite celebrated the YMCA as a "young man's house of worship," an embodied form of modern and rational adoration that included the development of divine muscularity and strong character.⁸ This so-called cult of "Christian Muscularity" had established precedent in English public schools and was heavily influenced by Charles Kingsley, professor, friend of Charles Darwin, and priest in the Church of England. Kingsley pronounced in 1879 that games not only promoted good health and invigorated and tested one's spirit, but procured moral health as participants acquired virtues unobtainable from books, such as daring, endurance, self-restraint,

⁷ Avent, "A Popular and Wholesome Resort," 3–5, 12–14, 19.

⁸ Ibid.

notions of fairness, honor, and humility in losing. This idea coalesced into a Victorian movement that sought the ideal of a masculine man “that fears God, who can walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours, . . . who breathes God’s free air on God’s rich earth, and at the same time can also hit a woodcock, doctor a horse, and twist a poker around his fingers.”⁹ The ideas proved attractive to many Porfirian education leaders, military men, and sportsmen who believed the country had become physically weak and morally deprived because of the degenerative influences of modern technology, poor environmental health conditions, and bad genetics.

The underfunded public education programs under Díaz were heavily influenced by Comtean positivism and remained virtually unchanged since Gabino Barreda’s (1818-1881) *Ley General de Instrucción Pública*, ratified in 1867 by President Benito Juárez. Barreda later directed the *Escuela Nacional Preparatoria* and believed by some to have sharply turned the school’s ideological orientation away from the reformist liberal ideas of Juarista intellectuals in favor of a program that articulated societies in evolutionary terms and emphasized the need for order to achieve societal progress. Many of these ideas fused with the personified authoritarianism of Díaz, making separation of the ideology and the politics rather difficult to discern. For example, Barreda, who had attended seminars with sociologist August Comte and fellow Porfirian *científicos*, such as historian Francisco Bulnes and lawyer and author Justo Sierra, believed in progress through directed and applied scientific physical programs. Yet bringing together sometimes contradictory fragments of Darwinian and Spencerian theories of the evolution of species and societies led to the common formulation of racist theories that justified delayed democracy and authoritarian rule. These intellectuals believed that they honored the spirit of their liberal constitution, but also held that the population was too racially and

⁹ Charles Kingsley, “Nausicaa in London; Or, The Lower Education of Woman,” in *Health and Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1874), 84–87; Donald E. Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 7; Patrick J McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra: Juárez, Díaz, and the People of Ixtlan, Oaxaca, 1855-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

culturally immature to support a healthy and stable democracy. In this sense, even the more classical liberals like Sierra considered Díaz's dictatorship a necessary step to achieve stability in the country's political evolution.¹⁰

Education leaders in the Consejo Superior de Educación believed that developing a project of mass national education was impossible due to corruption, a lack of finances, and the difficult details involved in its policing, but Díaz continued to push the plan forward. Heated debates ensued over program specifics in the Consejo through 1908. Leopoldo Kiel García, who had been dispatched three years earlier to study education programs in Paris, Berlin, and Milan, supported physical education fiercely and argued that it represented the most practical pedagogical platform. Indeed, sports were easily understood even by those students not so quick to pick up the intellectual portions, a point that should prove attractive as the country struggled with mass illiteracy. Others contended that education needed to be embodied, acted out, and experienced as a matter of pragmatism and proposed the establishment of kindergartens that encouraged children to engage in free-play outdoors, considered by some in the group as the most natural form of physical and spiritual exercise. In a session on May 22, Luis Cabrera argued that physical culture stood as the most important aspect of education as it was a moral program that promoted the development of harmonious and complete citizens while helping fix the most immediate problems of unhealthiness among the population. On August 15, 1908, following weeks of deliberation among the country's best minds, Díaz signed the Ley de Educación Primaria para el Distrito y los Territorios Federales into law to take effect in 1909, making

¹⁰ Natalia Priego, "Porfirio Díaz, Positivism and 'The Scientists': A Reconsideration of the Myth," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 18, no. 2 (2012): 135–46; Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); Leopoldo Zea, *Positivism in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015); Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 13.

education, including physical culture through hygiene training and physical exercise, free and obligatory for the public for the first time.¹¹

The philosophy of new physical culture programs blended positivist sociology with Swedish Ling gymnastic method popular at the Joinville School in France. Barreda, for example, lobbied for the teaching of the Ling method in schools because he believed it scientifically cultivated altruistic men of higher character.¹² Herbert Spencer's landmark book *Education: Intellectual, Moral, Physical* (1860) also became a core text for teachers in the classroom and on the sports field as it outlined the problems that contributed to the fragile and sickly condition of modern children and provided practical solutions. Spencer blamed the sad state of youth partly on changes in modern life that kept people away from rigorous daily activities and suppressed man's most basic instincts for survival, but he also argued that school administrators had wrongly pushed children into intellectual and artistic pursuits to the detriment of the development of the body. Without proper balance, Spencer contended, the mind and body sickened. In concert with widespread ignorance of the most basic laws of heredity, Spencer believed that the base of all societal health was eroding.¹³ In a state already at war with virulent disease and fighting a desperate battle to improve hygienic conditions of the country, *científicos* found Spencer's philosophy pertinent and held hope that national education could help the country take a massive step towards the larger goal of unification. Its leaders knew that enforcement

¹¹ Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., "Proyecto de Ley de Educación Primaria Presentado por la Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, para su Estudio, al Consejo Superior de Educación Pública," *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 10, no. 1-2 (1908): 1-6; Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., "Sesión Del 22 de Mayo de 1908," *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 10, no. 3-4 (1908): 304-23; Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., "Acta de La Sesión Del 8 de Mayo de 1908," *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 10, no. 3-4 (1908): 244-49; Lisbona Guillén, "'Mejorar La Raza': Cuerpo y Deporte en el Chiapas de la Revolución Mexicana (1910-1940)," 66.

¹² Lisbona Guillén, "'Mejorar la Raza': Cuerpo y Deporte en el Chiapas de la Revolución Mexicana (1910-1940)," 69-70.

¹³ Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*.

of obligatory education could only realistically work in the capital, but they hoped success there would inspire copy-cat programs in states around the republic.

The program solidified physical education as a core subject in all schools in accordance with the laws of physiological and psychological growth of the human organism. These included principles of a strong health-based pedagogy necessary in social and practical life. The new school of physical educational thought was proclaimed to be based on eclectic principles and promoted three main core exercises:

I: Corrective gymnastics (modified Swedish system)

II: Games and Athletics

III: Applied Gymnastics (swimming, wrestling, jumping, boxing, rhythmic exercises, camping and more)¹⁴

Physical educators under this new plan often lacked a definitive role and frequently wore multiple hats as promoters, teachers, and inspectors at multiple schools across the metropolitan area, but officials drowned them with work and teachers often complained about irregular paychecks. The few physical educators that did exist still faced ever-present difficulties locating appropriate and safe sporting spaces and regular funding. Teachers also frequently complained about working with populations that most considered disorganized, unreceptive, and too unhealthy to implement the rigorous and impactful programs.

Revolutionary Sport, 1921 to 1931

The violence and tumult that followed Díaz's abdication in 1911 left physical education and sports programs on hold outside of emergency military programs, the extent of which rarely reached beyond Mexico City aside from random shows of loyalty in distant pueblos.¹⁵ By 1920,

¹⁴ Velázquez Andrade, "La Educación Física en las Escuelas de México."

¹⁵ See Chapter 2.

relative peace brought a renewed boom in sports, first, among old social club elites that had survived and, second, among federal education leaders who since 1916 had dreamed of reviving plans for an educational program that would incorporate the masses left out of Díaz's programs.

José Vasconcelos, former rector of the Universidad Nacional and minister of the new Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), aimed to dismantle the legitimacy of positivism in national cultural and political life. Young revolutionaries like Vasconcelos, Antonio Caso, and other members of the generation of the "Athenaeum of Youth" that led intellectual culture of the early revolution, found the positivist philosophy dense, obstinately pessimistic, and desperately out of touch with realities of the cultural life of the people. They were *caudillos culturales* dedicated to incorporating the millions of people in disparate communities and frontier states into a singular nation under a mestizo aesthetic. The culture war they waged was carried out primarily through a multi-faceted and state-directed education program that likened participation to spiritual crusades that aimed to work for, and rescue, the people from their own backwardness.¹⁶ Ezequiel Chávez evidenced the conservative opposition to such programs, once considering the Escuelas Rudimentarias as "incubators of Zapatismo," but such voices were drowned largely drowned out in a generation of optimism. Sports assumed an essential role for teaching teamwork and sacrifice in this new direction as Vasconcelos believed they could help spiritually uplift the mass by increasing one's appreciation of art and beauty. He also greatly admired the masculine prescriptions of Christian muscularity promoted by the YMCA.¹⁷

Sports culture embodied everything important and most immediate about the revolution and would lead to its fastest change among all revolutionary reform efforts, according to physical

¹⁶ Zea, *Positivism in Mexico*, 15; Antonio Caso, Juan Hernández Luna, and Fernando Curiel Defossé, *Conferencias del ateneo de la juventud* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2000), 170; Enrique Krauze, *Caudillos culturales en la revolución mexicana*, 6. ed, Historia (México, DF: Siglo Veintiuno Ed, 1990), 71; Argenterì, *Tina Modotti*, 48–50.

¹⁷ Ezequiel Chávez, "On Escuelas Rudimentarias," ed. Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 21, no. 3–4 (1913); Arbená, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 353.

education experts such as Manuel Carpio. In a series of articles in *Educación Física*, a trade journal patronized by President Álvaro Obregón (1920-1924), Carpio noted that religion and “*tuteles patronales*” had destroyed all hope for the elevation of the human spirit among indigenous campesinos since colonialism, leaving them as exploited beasts that lived as slaves steeped in sadness and ignorance. Such realities pressed normally well-intentioned Indians into poor hygiene, apathy, and alcoholism, all of which led to a spiritual inertia and repugnant civilization. Promoters also argued that sports would also animate the spirits of participants, promoting love of family and the home and giving hope for a better life among the country’s youth. Indeed, the revolution arrived to open minds and hearts, and needed citizens full of energy, strength, and confidence to overcome the country’s many obstacles. Carpio added that with the development of muscles, the filling and strengthening of the lungs, and promotion of all the general health benefits that come with it, sports would hypothetically eliminate indolence and melancholy from the campesino family.¹⁸

Vasconcelos expressed urgency in molding revolutionary men and women completely in mind, body, and spirit and the SEP’s pedagogy heavily blended concepts from the pragmatic US Taylorism with Soviet experiments from Anatoly Lunacharsky and Maxim Gorky, who Mexicans believed faced relatable problems in their own revolution.¹⁹ In 1923, Vasconcelos borrowed heavily from Lunacharsky when he created the Dirección de Educación Física under the Departamento de Bellas Artes (DBA) in the SEP. This move was part of a wider effort to improve physical culture of the masses with innovative disciplinary teaching techniques, the creation of new sporting spaces, and a rejuvenated national aesthetic. The creation of the directory preceded the planned inauguration of Obregón’s Estadio Nacional to the south of

¹⁸ Manuel Carpio, “Los Campesinos y La Revolución,” *Educación Física* 1 (February 1923); Manuel Carpio, “La Tristeza del Indio,” *Educación Física*, no. 5 (February 1923): 6–7.

¹⁹ Argenter, *Tina Modotti*, 48.

Colonia Roma in 1924. While admiring their progress in its first years, Vasconcelos had nevertheless grown concerned over the lasting influence of North American and European sports in the country, once referring to them as "...palliatives for the absurd life-system created by big business and the deplorable climate of England." The program needed to be fervently nationalistic, suited for the country's racial psychology. He wished to build new fields and develop training so good that the country could completely break from US and European influence in the sports sphere, including from the local YMCA. For Vasconcelos, the SEP's physical culture programs developed the most artistic qualities of sports to help procure optimal health and spirit among participants, but doing so practically. Sports under this new orientation needed enthusiastic specialists and fresh viewpoints.²⁰

The SEP intended new primary institutions to function as schools of the future, utopian cultural centers purged of its exotic elements. Vasconcelos also established children's centers that promoted sports to procure a discipline based in ethics of hard work, but guided by love.²¹ Elaborated in more detail later by Eulalia Guzmán, the "new school" would be based on deeds more than words and emphasized efforts that combined harmony with collective work, or beauty and manual labor, of which physical education and sports functioned in an area of high importance along with singing and music. Such components made up a school of action that produced a capable man prepared for the struggles of modern life. Corporeal edification, through physical education, dance, and sports, invigorated and hardened participants.²² To meet such ends, students practiced mostly rhythmic gymnastics and dance to music, most often performed

²⁰ Ma. de la Luz Torres Hernandez, "Educacion Fisica en el Proyecto de Cultural Nacional Posrevolucionaria: Vasconcelismo y Cardenismo," *Reencuentro* 31 (2001): 41–52; Claude Fell, *José Vasconcelos: los años del águila, 1920-1925: educación, cultura e iberoamericanismo en el México postrevolucionario* (México, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1989), 175–77; William H. Beezley, "Creating a Revolutionary Culture: Vasconcelos, Indians, Photographers, and Calendar Girls" (Joint seminar Arizona-New Mexico, Santa Fe, N.M., 2012); José Vasconcelos, *A Mexican Ulysses: An Autobiography* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1963).

²¹ Fell, *José Vasconcelos*, 175–77.

²² *Ibid.*, 182–83.

by a pianist or singer. Vasconcelos acknowledged some benefits of “*yanqui*” sports and allowed teachers some discretion in their employment of them, citing the moral benefits fostered by participants including team-building and sacrifice. He, nevertheless, held strong reservations against promotions of individualism and any emphasis on the need to achieve records that were becoming deeply embedded into global sports culture.²³

The SEP launched the Escuela Elemental de Educación Física (EEF) in 1923 to train physical education teachers at the urging of Obregón who worried about the country’s lack of specialists as it was soon to be hosting the 1926 Central American Games. The EEF opened in the SEP administration building and was staffed with many former professors from the Escuela Magistral de Esgrima y Gimnasia that had closed in 1914. Organizers crafted its framework based on studies carried out by professors José F. Peralta and Ramón C. Denegri on similar schools in the US. Project leaders Obregón, Vasconcelos, Caso, labor organizer Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Jaime Torres Bodet, and Marte R. Gómez also worked with the press to unify sports language and teaching for the public. These men hoped the program would develop social and cooperative leaders willing to work for social justice through the teaching of sports, lessons that architects hoped would last for a lifetime, not just for a few moments in the gym. Vasconcelos named Peralta as the national Director de Educación Física and Peralta, in turn, charged professor José V. Escobar to run the new school. Lessons at the institution included sports terminology, kinesiology, physical education theory, anatomy, physiology, hygiene, and even psychology, in addition to specialized training in gymnastics, athletics, aesthetic dance, calisthenics, and more.²⁴

²³ Luz Torres Hernández, “Educación Física en el Proyecto de Cultural Nacional Posrevolucionaria,” 45–46.

²⁴ Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en México en el Siglo XX*, 95–98; “Antecedentes de la Escuela Superior de Educación Física,” *Escuela Superior de Educación Física*, accessed December 3, 2016, <http://estudiantes-esef.wixsite.com/esef/historia>.

On January 16, 1921, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a communist and the future founder of the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), celebrated the planned opening of the EEF by restating his support for an education that incorporated physical education. In his words, its lessons stood as the “cornerstone of the edifice of morality.”²⁵ Lombardo admitted to the scant availability of capable specialists and forcefully absconded those existing as ignorant to the basic laws of hygiene and incapable of adequately teaching physical or military education. Indeed, one SEP report lamented the sad quality of physical culture instruction in which “feeble” teachers forced students to mimic foreign exercises they read out of a book in a manner that nearly put students to sleep for boredom. Lombardo believed physical education, beyond special training for police and military, represented a window for spiritual-cultural education that taught the discipline that the country needed to solve its most immediate problems. It also provided students a sense of mission that imbued public decency and respect.²⁶

The school lasted just four years before folding officially on March 11, 1927, largely due to disorganization but also because of its own difficult standards for entry, requiring great enthusiasm for sports and a secondary degree that few possessed. Nevertheless, it graduated a generation of some of the most important names for national sports development, including Rubén López Hincosa, Alura Flores, Agapito Bravo, Antonio Estopier, Félix de Canto, Luis Felipe Obregón, Alfonso Rojo de la Vega, and María Uribe Jasso, among more.²⁷

Figures like Lombardo helped bring this education from the realm of the schools to the workplace, as well. Since the end of the nineteenth century, worker sports and physical education at trade schools remained common practice. In 1922, the SEP even mandated that students in

²⁵ Vicente Lombardo Toledano, “Palabras,” *Educación Física* 1 (February 1923).

²⁶ Ibid.; Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Observaciones Al Reglamento de La Secretaría de Educación Pública,” *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 2 (1922): 29–31.

²⁷ Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, 95–98; “Antecedentes de la Escuela Superior de Educación Física.”

manufacturing schools practice six hours of physical exercise per week at the minimum, as many hours as spent in mathematics courses and only less than technical machining training.²⁸ Much of the promotion of sports in factories and work camps existed from long-standing mistrust and prejudice from company bosses about working-class leisure, typified by after-work visits to cantinas, brothels, and centers of gambling. Supervisors believed that immoral behavior made workers untrustworthy and clumsy on the job. But sports were also promoted in factories and at job sites to improve the productivity of workers by giving them more meaningful and happy lives and strengthening their bodies to overcome the ever-present problem of fatigue. Many proprietors even mandated sports as a “safety valve” or as a distracting “opiate” for workers, employing it either as a way for participants to release frustrations from the workday in a healthy way through vigorous physical exertion under a set of strict and monitored rules, or as a way for workers to escape from the miseries of everyday life, if just for a few moments.²⁹

No matter the intention of company programs, sportsmen often seized control of its meaning and used it to meet practical ends. Supervisors hoped sports could help them better control their workers but employees played enthusiastically as a form of positive socialization, and exciting fun. For example, union workers at Río Blanco, Veracruz independently formed a Grupo de Cultura Física for factory labor and petitioned President Plutarco Calles (1924-1928) for material and moral assistance.³⁰ But participation in company sports did not necessarily portend quitting drinking and other pastimes deemed immoral. Moreover, many workers used it to politically organize. For example, henequen plantation bosses sponsored baseball in the Yucatán Peninsula as a subtle way to modernize the Maya labor force by improving their health

²⁸ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Curso de Tecnicos Manufacureros Plan de Estudios,” *Boletín de la Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 2 (1922): 108–9.

²⁹ Vinokur, *More than a Game*, 6; Steven J. Overman, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Sport: How Calvinism and Capitalism Shaped America's Games* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), 136–37.

³⁰ Isaias Hernandez, “Letter to Plutarco Elias Calles,” January 26, 1927, Presidentes; OC 241-E-D-48, AGN

and morality and increasing productivity through integration and teamwork exercises. The games allowed workers to control their own destiny in a time of rapid industrial change and participants also often had opportunities to earn extra money with good performances. But baseball's popularity also helped create vast grassroots communication networks that blanketed the peninsula unlike anything before. They became so important that socialist governor Felipe Carrillo Puerto, who admired the games' ability to ingrain attitudes of collectivity and sacrifice, exploited the networks to revive the Maya Caste War with socialist revolution in the 1920s. Clubs fused community identity and political organization to form "Ligas de Resistencia." For many Maya, the game provided a more spiritual experience than even religion.³¹

Subsequent SEP ministers José Manuel Puig Casauranc and Moisés Saenz, appointed under Calles, intensified rural education programs launched by Vasconcelos and Obregón. In 1923, the ministry recorded just 690 federal rural teachers but Puig and Saenz added an additional 2,000 rural schools to speed acculturation programs.³² Echoing concerns from Gamio and other anthropologists working for social change, anthropologist Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez presented a paper at the Third Scientific Congress about Indian populations in the Americas in 1925. Specifically, Mendieta claimed that Mexico needed to usher in new laws to protect native peoples from exploitation and help them incorporate into society after centuries of imperfect racial mixing and colonial indifference had left them trapped in moral denigration and material ruin. In his estimation, rural peoples had adopted and maintained fanatical and rudimentary practices that religion could not remedy and that lied at the root of inequality.³³ Cultural leaders increasingly directed their energies to this aspect of rural life.

³¹ Joseph, "Forging the Regional Pastime: Baseball and Class in Yucatán," 33–38, 42, 44–50.

³² Letter from JM Puig Casauranc to Plutarco Calles, March 21, 1927, Presidentes; OC 104-E-63, AGN; Michael C. Meyer, *The Course of Mexican History*, 9th ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 435; Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 12.

³³ Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez, "Presentation at the Third Panamerican Scientific Congress," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 3, no. 10 (1925).

In 1926, a SEP census detailed the troubled state of national education and the enormous work still to be undertaken. Of 10.5 million students over nine years of age, 6.9 million, or 64.97%, were considered completely illiterate. Additionally, 61.8% of students aged six to 14 did not regularly attend school.³⁴ A year later Rafael Ramírez's cultural missions dispatched 3,243 teachers in six multi-state campaigns that each lasted five-weeks to learn about "hidden" communities around the republic. Teachers promoted a new way of life based in science and collective action in them, and sports and recreational games often proved the most successful in eliciting participation³⁵

Reports on sports promotion from 1926 to 1929, nevertheless, illustrated the varied experiences that teachers faced around the country. For example, one school in Juárez, Chihuahua banned sports activities during school hours because students liked them so much that they could not focus on other subjects. In fact, inspector Juan B. Salazar found great devotion to sports all around the state in new schools as well.³⁶ But in the middle of the Cristiada (1926-1929), sports installations also often became targets of religious militants. For example, agitators at a school at Tixla, Guerrero ransacked new basketball courts and intimidated teachers and administrators to the point that many school programs were left in a virtual standstill. In Cárdenas, Tabasco, threats from community leaders led instructor J. Humberto Paniagua to abandon his school, only leaving behind successful hygiene and sports societies still embraced by many in the community.³⁷

³⁴ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Censo General, Población Analfabeta, Población Escolar y Erogaciones Para Educación: Año de 1926," *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 7, no. 4 (1928): 104–5.

³⁵ Rafael Ramírez, "Informe: Dirección de Misiones Culturales," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 7, no. 1 (1928): 257–73.

³⁶ Juan B. Salazar, "Informe General del Director de Educación Federal en el Estado de Chihuahua, Relativo a Las Visitas Practicadas a las Escuelas Primarias Federales de Aquella Capital y de la Zona de Juárez y Parral," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 7, no. 1 (1928): 150–55; Juan B. Salazar, "Informe General del Director de Educación Federal en el Estado de Chihuahua, Correspondiente al Año 1927," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 7, no. 1 (1928): 155–62.

³⁷ M. López, "Informe del Inspector Instructor Der La Primera Zona Del Estado de Guerrero, Relativo al Funcionamiento de las Escuelas Primarias Federales, durante el Año 1927," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública,

In 1928, Puig positioned physical education as more important than other activities like art and music in the DBA.³⁸ Calles also bolstered the quality of sports education by mandating that rural teachers pass rigorous physical exams, indicating a base-level of strength and general good health to serve as capable instructors and as role models for rural students.³⁹ Finding experts to lead programs, nevertheless, remained a difficult task, especially with the disintegration of the EEF. The SEP filled much of the expert-gap by sending bright students to elite programs abroad and they also imported coaches as a matter of necessity. One student dispatched abroad was Franklin Oliveiro Westrup Leal who completed his primary and secondary education in Monterrey, Nuevo León and a bachelor's degree in physical education at the International YMCA College in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1924. As a student, he also joined the Cosmopolitan Club, an organization that oriented international students to an American way of life. He later received a master's degree at the University of West Chester in Pennsylvania and returned to Mexico as a principal promoter of sports in the north, introducing and overseeing modern physical education to state of Nuevo León and working earnestly on behalf of primary schools and as a teacher in the Colegio Civil in Monterrey. In 1927, he served as head of physical education in the SEP for a short time during reorganization efforts and assembled many of the first basketball, volleyball, baseball, and track and field competitions.⁴⁰

Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública 7, no. 1 (1928): 174–84; Elpidio López, “Informe de Trabajos Desarrollados en el Estado de Tabasco, Durante un Periodo Aproximado de dos Años, en que tuvo Caracter de Director de Educación Federal,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 7, no. 1 (1928): 220–27.

³⁸ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Departamento de Bellas Artes,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1928, XL.

³⁹ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “El Departamento Y Sus Organos,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1928, 8.

⁴⁰ Hector Franco Saenz and Martin Cepeda Obregón, *Maestros de Nuevo León* (Fondo Editorial de Nuevo León, 2012), 265.



Illustration 2.1: Springfield College Cosmopolitan Club (1920-1921). Franklin Oliveira Westrup Leal is located on the bottom row, second from the left. Courtesy of the Springfield College Digital Collections.⁴¹

Puig, working with rector Dr. Alfonso Pruneda, relaunched the physical education normal school in 1927 and moved it to the National University under the leadership of its new director Prof. Roberto Velasco. Officials hoped that the new Escuela Universitaria de Educación Física (EUEF) could promote a fresh vision that would attract higher quality students. Without naming Spencer, the new program reemphasized its orientation towards the physical, moral, and intellectual development of participants as part of a complete education that would cooperate and interact with social and artistic programs in the community. The school faced several significant disruptions in its first few years, including the common struggle to find regular financial support, but major anti-government strikes led by preparatory and law students on campus between 1928 and 1929 shut the school down completely for extended periods. In May of 1929, the entire student body and faculty of over 8,000 had joined, including the physical education cohort, to

⁴¹ “Cosmopolitan Club (C. 1920-1921),” n.d., Cosmopolitan Club Records, Coll. 175, Box 1, Folder 6, Item 2, Springfield College Digital Collections.

protest police and government brutality in the conflict. Courses resumed after 46 days on July 16 when President Emilio Portes Gil (1928-1930) designated the campus as an autonomous institution. But as the government's role in the university diminished, so did the prioritization of physical education which university administrators left on life-support. Continued tumult among the students, followed by diminished federal funding, put the EUEF and its relatively paltry enrollment in the university's cross-hairs and by 1933 the university had purged much of the school's faculty. The school officially closed in 1935.⁴²

In the countryside, the SEP counted 4,435 teachers in 3,392 federal rural schools, including 1,417 schools in indigenous communities, a big jump from the previous administration. By the end of 1928, the Departamento de Escuelas Rurales e Incorporación Cultura Indígena (DERICI) had varying technical sections for different age groups and oversaw 4,712 rural teachers and 117 inspectors around the republic. By 1929 the number of primary rural schools had increased to 6,032. According to SEP figures, indigenous students accounted for over 95,464, or about 43.3% of total rural school enrollment. Young women and girls attended around one-quarter to one-third of the rate to that of boys.⁴³

Figure 2.1: Federal Rural Primary Schools and Sports in 1929⁴⁴

States	Federal Schools	Hygiene Campaigns	Anti-Alcohol Campaigns	Sports Associations	Parks	Sports fields
Aguascalientes	75	45	45	45	-	45
Baja California	66	66	66	13	8	47

⁴² Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, 109–14; “Antecedentes de La Escuela Superior de Educación Física.”

⁴³ Departamento de Escuelas Rurales, Primarias, Foráneas e Incorporación Cultura Indígena, “Resumen Estadístico Relativo a Escuelas Rurales, Numero de Maestros Y Asistencia Media de Alumnos,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1928, 110–11; Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Organización Del Departamento de Escuelas Rurales E Incorporación Cultura Indígena,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1928, 5.

⁴⁴ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Departamento de Escuelas Rurales Primarias Foráneas E Incorporación Cultura Indígena: Actividades Sociales E Industriales En Las Escuelas Federales,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1930, 44–47.

Campeche	67	66	66	47	24	47
Coahuila	117	118	118	39	4	96
Colima	59	59	59	13	3	59
Chiapas	329	159	159	11	1	146
Chihuahua	152	142	136	104	-	105
Distrito Fed.	7	7	7	2	1	4
Durango	171	83	83	12	-	83
Guanajuato	412	151	150	63	6	117
Guerrero	387	378	421	242	-	227
Hidalgo	296	216	216	75	13	177
Jalisco	153	129	129	75	5	67
México	375	295	326	129	60	210
Michoacán	202	165	177	39	10	93
Morelos	92	89	89	33	-	50
Nayarit	180	189	189	189	13	134
Nuevo León	236	201	156	59	1	121
Oaxaca	634	282	282	127	-	127
Puebla	532	200	200	162	18	200
Querétaro	108	67	67	2	1	15
Quintana Roo	28	11	7	2	-	6
San Luis Potosí	472	203	203	120	2	133
Sinaloa	118	72	82	1	2	42
Sonora	100	64	92	-	-	73
Tabasco	85	85	85	85	11	69
Tamaulipas	95	75	75	30	-	75
Tlaxcala	71	71	71	71	9	71
Veracruz	245	202	199	63	2	130
Yucatán	19	18	18	13	3	13
Zacatecas	149	139	142	33	-	33
Totals	6,032	4,047	4,115	1,899	288	2,815

Sports had also grown considerably by the late as a 1929 federal school census showed that 2,815 schools out of a possible 6,032 had sports fields on campus. Based on state and federal public school expenditure data from the SEP, no clear correlation between state funding and increased commitment to sports existed except in the cases of the most extreme poor. Querétaro, for example, was one of only a handful of states not to at least match federal money for schools.

The state of Oaxaca had by far the most rural schools with 634 but had only 127 sports fields, or about 20%, the second-lowest percentage in the country. Similar ratios existed for Quintana Roo (21.4%), Zacatecas (22.1%), Guanajuato (28%), San Luis Potosí (28%), and Sinaloa (35.6%), and Puebla (37.5%), but many states boasted near full cooperation, such as Colima and Tabasco (100%), Coahuila (82%), Tamaulipas (78.9%), and Sonora (73%). In total, 46.7% of all rural schools reported the maintenance of sports fields and 31.5% had organized local sports associations for children and adults.⁴⁵

Gains had clearly been made in Mexico City, as well. In February of 1929, the Departamento del Distrito Federal (DDF) constructed the Centro Deportivo Venustiano Carranza in Balbuena to provide reprieve from the arduous work day and spaces for physical exercise to increase general health and to promote teamwork. At forty acres, the park was the largest construction project taken on by the Department of Buildings and Monuments and was the first major public sports park of its scale to be dedicated in all of Latin America. The government made the sports center available for all social classes and provided a gymnasium, swimming pool, an open-air theatre for dancing, outdoor fields for baseball and soccer, and a cultural center that housed a library and medical offices. The center also provided sporting and intellectual activities for child workers, vagrants, and poor mothers as part of a wider social welfare effort. It officially opened on November 20 of the same year, or Día de la Revolución.⁴⁶ Just a couple of years later, a SEP report on physical education in federal schools around Mexico City showed that 208 campuses had access to a physical education instructor in the Federal District and 572 sporting festivals had taken place the previous school year from August, 1931 to June, 1932. Additionally, in those 208 schools 2,101 sports teams had formed in volleyball, “playground

⁴⁵ Ibid.; Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Tabla 4: Cantidades Dedicadas a Educación Pública,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1931, 459.

⁴⁶ Patrice Elizabeth Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution: Architecture, Society, and Politics in Mexico City, 1920-1940*, *Latin American Silhouettes* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 52–53.

ball” (a variant of baseball), basketball, baseball, jai-alai, and tennis and 8,919 students also reportedly participated in individual events like boxing, wrestling, track and field, swimming, gymnastics, and fencing.⁴⁷

Spending for the Dirección de Educación Física (DiEF) ebbed and flowed and often officials spent funding in large chunks, often monies directed to sports field construction projects. For instance, in January of 1930 commitments to physical education dwarfed all other expenditures in the DBA, representing \$1,414 pesos of the DBA’s entire \$2,320-peso budget for the month. Yet the DiEF received little to no money the rest of the year from the federal government. The directive promoted national sports and hired inspectors to monitor activities around the country, but the construction of facilities, the pay of most teachers, and other related sporting efforts came out of different departmental budgets when money became tight, creating significant confusion over jurisdictions and obligations.⁴⁸ Sports had grown in the country but control and direction remained minimal.

PNR Sports Reformation, 1931-1934

The Partido Nacional Revolucionario’s (PNR) relationship with sports became an obsession on the eve of the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. The party revealed grand plans to restructure the national sporting system to unify and control its interpretations and assure greater success in future international tournaments. Citing the country’s twenty years of sports experience, Professor Manuel Velázquez Andrade on XEO, national radio, in June, 1931 argued for the need to promote constitutionally-supported and scientifically-directed sports for the safety of participants. He argued that the proper development of a system could also help the country

⁴⁷ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Sección de Educación Física,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1932, 484–87.

⁴⁸ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Departamento de Bellas Artes,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1930, 624–25.

produce champions and show off the gains of the revolution.⁴⁹ Many physical education inspectors on rural missions observed local leisure and pastimes but they rarely described them as sports, instead calling them disorganized games played under varying and discordant sets of rules. Juan de Dios Bojórquez, a longtime PNR functionary and former ambassador, cited surveys to claim in jest that the country had roughly 100,000 sportsmen and 100,000 different interests and interpretations in sports.⁵⁰ In unifying sports, officials hoped to channel the many sporting activities into versions that could be understood and controlled by the government, while also putting the best athletes into a sports funnel that help identify the best talent.

Concerns over disorganization inspired President Abelardo Rodríguez (1932-1934), a former professional baseball player himself, to bring together the country's sports promoters to create a body that would train athletes, promote physical culture, and coordinate sports. On December 22, 1932, Rodríguez created the Consejo Nacional de Cultura Física (CNCF) through special decree and promised a federal stipend to carry out its work. He then named Bojórquez the organization's president. Soon after, the new leader proposed the creation of a national sports bureau that would work under the CNCF and coordinate and organize all the country's national sporting federations they hoped would be founded.⁵¹

Great impetus and urgency for Rodríguez's CDM came from the realization of many sports experts that nobody had capably prepared athletes on the eve of the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics. The training situation grew so dire that at the end of June of 1931 the Olympic committee (COM) and the SEP declared an emergency task force to locate and prepare athletes

⁴⁹ Manuel Velázquez Andrade, "Cual es el Objeto de la Confederación Deportiva," *El Nacional*, June 5, 1931, Archivo Económico, Deportes: Programas de Gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; Alfonso Guerrero, "La Salvacion del Deporte Estriba en la Creación de la Confederación Nacional," *El Nacional*, June 19, 1931.

⁵⁰ JF Maldonado Arpe, "El Actual Presidente del PNR Estimula los Deportes en Bien de la Futura Generación Mexicana," *El Nacional*, June 14, 1931.

⁵¹ Consejo Nacional de Cultura Física, *Confederación Deportiva Mexicana: Memoria de Su Convención Constituyente* (México: Imprenta Mundial, 1933).

and asked anyone in the public with sports experience to volunteer and aid in the effort. Calls also came to expunge the COM, with which many had completely lost faith. One of the movement's strongest opposition voices was champion gymnast Francisco José Álvarez, who urged the government to replace the sitting board with a competing version made up of honorable men who worked in good will. He argued that with such great disorganization, choosing and training the best athletes proved an impossible task and he believed that the ineptitude was so high that he wondered if some in the COM hoped to sabotage the country's achievement in the Olympics. Specifically, he noted that the committee selected athletes far too late to train them, had no real relationship with sporting centers or clubs, did not know or share knowledge of Olympic regulations with athletes that potentially left them ineligible for the games, and had not properly studied opportunities to push athletes into appropriate sports.⁵²

Rodríguez asked all governors of the republic to select the best sportsmen in their states to serve as representatives in an upcoming sports congress. On July 20, 1933, governors were instructed to dispatch these representatives to Mexico City for a three-day sporting convention at the Salón de Cabildos in the Palacio Municipal where sporting dignitaries such as Bojórquez, Jesús Monjaraz, vice-president of the Comité Olímpico Mexicano (COM), and Gen. Joaquín Amaro, director of military education, presided over debates to formulate what would become the Confederación Deportiva Mexicana (CDM). The congress of 43 participants wasted little time and drafted a constitution on July 22, where Rodríguez and other organizers marked the definitive beginning of the country's directed sports movement that would also purportedly prepare the nation's youth civically and militarily.⁵³ Newspapers lauded the creation CDM as an

⁵² Francisco José Álvarez, "Debe Desaparecer el Actual Comité Olímpico," *El Nacional*, June 19, 1931; "El Gobierno Considera que es de Urgencia Irse Entranando para la X Olimpiada," *El Nacional*, June 28, 1931.

⁵³ "Un Organismo con Autonomia," *El Nacional*, October 9, 1932, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, 153; Armando Satow, *Confederación Deportiva Mexicana: 7 Decadas* (Mexico: Confederación Deportiva Mexicana, AC, 2003), 30.

act of patriotism, forming what was said to be the triangle of racial improvement based on the physical, intellectual, and moral elevation of the masses.⁵⁴

General Tirso Hernández argued that the mission of the CDM did not stop with unification of sports groups, but it also worked for the incorporation of all social classes for the betterment of the Mexican sports movement. The group also established a sports calendar and created a pyramid system or funnel that established state, regional, and national sporting organizations and tournaments that would select its best athletes. The creation of the CDM gave *deportistas* recognition as their activities were now classified as patriotic and revolutionary acts. Yet, for the athlete, incorporation also included new obligations. The organization had great ambitions internally and abroad, as their point by point mission showed:

- 1) Unite sporting institutions around the country to promote uniformed physical education and healthy competition
- 2) Contribute to and work with other sporting confederations to promote the sports movement
- 3) Study and select appropriate methods for the improvement of the physical, intellectual, and moral health of all participants affiliated with the CDM
- 4) Educate and illustrate to the public the dire importance of sports to the individual and society
- 5) Cooperate with local, state, and regional institutions to carry out the adopted sporting calendar
- 6) Produce and distribute sports literature in Spanish, including rulebooks, books, and articles
- 7) Establish and maintain friendly relations through sports, especially other nations with international sports affiliation (presumably through the IOC)
- 8) To watch and protect the rights of its affiliated state federations and athletes
- 9) To act as supreme judge over sports related conflicts that cannot be solved at a local level⁵⁵

⁵⁴ “El Cultivo del Deporte es el Mejor Medio de Hacer Patria,” *El Nacional*, June 7, 1931, Archivo Económico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁵⁵ Tirso Hernández, “La Alta Misión Reservada a La Futura Confederación Deportiva de Aficionados,” *El Nacional*, June 11, 1931.

One opinion piece in *El Nacional* captured the general sentiment of sports promoters around the republic, stating that the country had grown too comfortable in unproductive and unhealthy pastimes and needed a directed sports movement to erase the divisions in society. Sports provided a window of opportunity for a divided country like their own, for in the middle of the game, sports, like nothing else, leveled the playing field, where competitors rarely thought of class or race but instead of achievable individual and collective goals.⁵⁶

In the middle of 1931, Michoacán governor Lázaro Cárdenas, who had already gained a reputation as a champion for the physical and material improvement of the masses and for “racial unity,” proclaimed support for the PNR’s new project. Indeed, he considered sports, as one writer related, a “primordial element in the formation of an integrated nation for healthy, virile, and enthusiastic men” and held that the revolution had a sacred obligation to improve the bodies and health of the population as much as it did in fixing economic and social problems.⁵⁷

Many claimed that the CDM’s formation sparked fervor among citizens of the republic for the supposed “salvation” of sports, and hundreds of petitions from small sporting collectives and organizations of influence asked for moral and material support and pledged quick allegiance flooded the president’s office in exchange. One skeptic was Minister of Public Education Narcisso Bassols, who forcefully argued to Rodríguez that the creation of CNCF and CDM would at best effectively strip control of physical education programs in the country from the SEP, which had directed such programs since its inception in 1921 under legal pretext of articles 90 and 92 of the constitution, and at worst drive sports and exercise development programs, already greatly disorganized, into a state of anarchy with competing interpretations, philosophies and varying instructions from multiple national experts. Bassols expressed the

⁵⁶ Pablo Buendía Aguirre, “La Confederación Deportiva es una Obra Necesaria,” *El Nacional*, June 12, 1931.

⁵⁷ Maldonado Arpe, “El Actual Presidente del PNR Estimula los Deportes en Bien de la Futura Generación Mexicana.”

SEP's opposition to a coordinating sporting body that combined the interests of private and public sporting efforts into a single program and considered that using the term "physical culture" instead of "physical education" in the new group would erase all linkages to the SEP's actual contributions.⁵⁸ Bassols' concerns were heard but no changes to the name were ever made.

The project, dubbed as a "PNR mission" by some journalists, lend incorporated sports organizers new power but also levied some restrictions. Article 8 of the CDM charter, on the one hand, specifically outlined that the confederation would only recognize federated state sporting groups, which would thereby have legal control over the associations that fell under its umbrella. On the other hand, it also noted that the confederation would honor and respect the varying statutes and rules of each existing federation. Many of the country's most powerful sportsmen grew concerned over the prospect of losing authority over the organizations they often helped build from nothing. For example, Óscar Mauro Camacho, a fencing Olympian and president of the Legion Patriótica, Ernesto Carmona, co-founder of the Liga Mexicana de Béisbol (LMB) and president of the Federacion Mexicana de Base-Ball, and Eduardo R. Rodríguez, president of the Asociacion Mexicana de Aficionados de Base Ball, sought meetings directly with Rodríguez to speak on their joint concern and explication on the new organization of sports, but were redirected to speak with CNCF president Bojórquez.⁵⁹

As national associations formed around Latin America based on prescriptions from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), of which the CDM was compliant, international organizations tried to gain influence and grow their games. The Fédération Internationale de

⁵⁸ Memorandum from Narcisso Bassols to Abelardo Rodríguez, December 14, 1932, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/82, AGN.

⁵⁹ Ernesto Carmona, Óscar Mauro Camacho, and Eduardo R. Rodríguez, "Letter to Abelardo Rodríguez," April 18, 1933, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/82, AGN; Andrés Llorente Izquierdo, *La esgrima*. (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1985), 27; Consejo Nacional de Cultura Física, *Confederacion Deportiva Mexicana: Memoria de Su Convencion Constituyente*; Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, CIII.

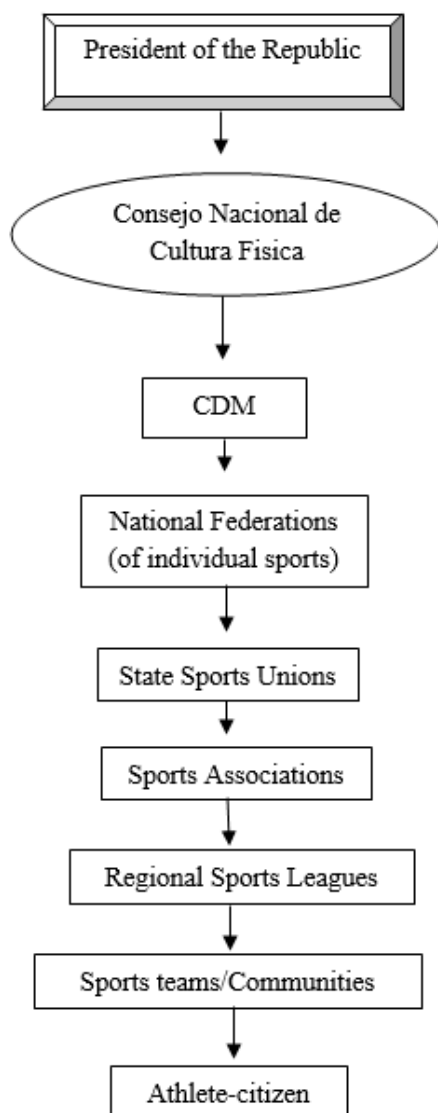
Football Association (FIFA), the preeminent authority on global soccer, asserted its international power in the 1930s by aligning with national associations in Central America, a place it considered “terrae incognitae” in the heart of the US cultural influence where soccer had historically taking a backseat to baseball and basketball.⁶⁰ Mexico joined FIFA in 1929 and reorganized under its own national soccer federation, the Federación Mexicana de Fútbol Asociación (FMFA) under the CDM in 1931. They sent a team to Montevideo, Uruguay for the first World Cup in 1930, although “El Tri” lost all three of its games in embarrassing fashion and did not appear in the tournament again until 1950.⁶¹ Many Mexicans found strict association rules difficult to comprehend, but by 1934 most major sports in country had affiliated with the CDM.⁶²

⁶⁰ Paul Dietschy, “Making Football Global? FIFA, Europe, and the Non-European Football World, 1912–74,” *Journal of Global History* 8, no. 2 (2013): 288–90.

⁶¹ Arbena, “Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970,” 354.

⁶² Mónica Patiño Pineda and Arturo Olmedo Díaz, *El Galope del Caballo en México* (Xalapa, Veracruz: Editorial Las Ánimas, 2012), 259.

Figure 2.2: Organization of the National Sports Funnel⁶³



Socialist Education and the Plan Sexenal

Promoters in the West often considered sports participation a harbinger for capitalist development. Indeed, Walter Dodge, president of Phelps Dodge Co., okayed the donation of \$5,000 to the Mexico City YMCA in 1929 as a contribution to the spread of US middle-class

⁶³ Consejo Nacional de Cultura Física, *Confederacion Deportiva Mexicana: Memoria de Su Convencion Constituyente*.

values and to help undermine and “exterminate revolutions.”⁶⁴ Likewise, baseball’s top promoter in the start of the twentieth century, AG Spaulding, did not shy from associations between western ideology and sports participation, adding that baseball exemplified US morality, discipline, confidence, and opportunity for its participants.⁶⁵ But sports programs under President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) only sharpened revolutionary nationalism.

While Calles coupled mass government-subsidized infrastructure projects with an economy that grew at a breakneck rate of nearly 6 percent, global crisis led to negative growth into the early 1930s leaving many to question the viability of free-market economics altogether. According to the 1930 population census, 66.5% of Mexicans lived in rural communities of 2,500 people or less, while 68.7% of the economically active population still worked in agriculture. In the most rural states of the country, up to 34% of all inhabitants spoke only an indigenous language and only operated through local markets, while 50 to 75% still went barefoot, a difficult situation amplified after a “softened” revolutionary leadership halted land redistribution, believing it a threat to economic stability. Cárdenas’ Plan Sexenal involved uplifting the masses through various cultural and public health programs, mass land-redistribution, and greater intervention in the economy, especially export sectors, to protect the country from the volatility of global markets and to fulfil the promises of the revolution to the people who needed it most.⁶⁶ Much of his investment came through sports.

Newspaper statements by the Oaxaca state DEF in the late 1930s evidenced the level of concern many had with the country’s perceived social problem and the urgency in finding revolutionary and scientific solutions. One journalist for *Oaxaca Nuevo*, for example, claimed

⁶⁴ Thomas F. O’Brien, *The Revolutionary Mission: American Enterprise in Latin America, 1900-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 293.

⁶⁵ AG Spaulding, *Baseball: America’s National Game, 1839-1915* (Halo Books, 1991), 9.

⁶⁶ Lorenzo Meyer and Héctor Aguilar Camín, *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution: Contemporary Mexican History, 1910–1989* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 75–76, 107; Stephen Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment: The Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940* (Stanford University Press, 1995), 172–73.

that the lack of physical education for children was the “gravest problem facing man today, because, after all, physical health was life itself.” People without physical training, after all, were like a machine without control. In other words, managing muscles meant managing will and corporeal training produced good work habits that educated the mind as much as muscles. The brain learned, but the body executed. As Spencer warned in an oft-cited passage, too much intellectualism led to a physically weak, neurotic, and unbalanced population who lived disturbed lives.⁶⁷

Cárdenas spent nearly 40% of his budget in 1928 as governor of Michoacán on education and required all schools to have sports fields and theatres for civic and cultural events. During the Cristiada, he leaned on teachers to act as defenders of freedom and protectors of the poor against exploitation and other injustices at the hands of corrupted priests, landowners, and foreigners.⁶⁸ Such sentiments helped form the cornerstone beliefs underlying education in his presidency under a “socialist” and indigenista orientation in which intellectuals re-situated national history in Marxist evolutionary terms, creating programs sympathetic to the difficulties of campesino life and partly absolving the poor of responsibility for the circumstances in which they lived. Cárdenas amended Article 3 of the constitution to institute an anti-clerical reform that called for the formation of an education rooted in scientific socialism, a maneuver backed by Calles in his “Grito de Guadalajara.” The focus of SEP labor in this period distinctly shifted from developing individuals to community-building and civic campaigns that encouraged collective and social action. Sports maintained a central position in such efforts with the president announcing them as paramount for the racial regeneration and intellectual improvement.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ “La Importancia de la Educación Física en la Infancia,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 18, 1937.

⁶⁸ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 30.

⁶⁹ “Nueva Orientacion,” *Educación Física* 1, no. 1 (May 1936): 1; Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 40; Stephen E. Lewis, *The Ambivalent Revolution: Forging State and Nation in Chiapas, 1910-1945* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 84–85.

Conservatives characterized the platform as exotic and out of touch with the realities of national culture that was still strongly influenced by Catholicism, but supporters defended the program as necessary to soften the blow of capitalism. They instead promoted a national culture and identity based more on rationality and collective work that they believed the country desperately needed. Even so, many SEP officials and functionaries spent little time understanding the “socialist” aspects of the new program at all and the *New York Times* uncovered more than thirty different interpretations. Campesinos in the most indigenous regions did not adopt socialist sentiments on a wide-scale when local economies were still largely pre-capitalist and social and economic relations were still largely defined around ethnic divisions. Still, many in the ministry, like Rafael Ramírez, believed that socialist education was simply an expression of revolutionary optimism for the improvement of spiritual and material conditions for the masses.⁷⁰

Socialist education represented one of many programs crafted by revolutionaries based on ideas from other countries they believed could be used to meet the unique challenges presented at home. Many intellectuals found inspiration in the programs from the Soviet Union.⁷¹ In the early 1920s, the countries bonded over shared national problems and envisioned themselves transforming their supposedly backward agrarian economies into modern industrial states. As the US became locked in economic turmoil, and fearing their own revolution catered more to elites, Mexican leftists sought a more intimate relationship with the USSR, whom they considered a “world of tomorrow.” National newspapers thoroughly reported Soviet modernization and civilizing campaigns in the countryside and magazine *Arte y Sport* even detailed games from a Mexico City club baseball team named “Bolshevique” in 1920. The

⁷⁰ Lewis, *The Ambivalent Revolution*, 83–84.

⁷¹ William Richardson, *To the World of the Future: Mexican Visitors to the USSR, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1993).

government also dispatched multiple groups of intellectuals on tours to the USSR in the late-1920s and the mid-1930s, including historian Rafael Ramos Pedrueza, Lombardo Toledano, and Ambassador Jesús Silva Herzog. Many returned from these trips discouraged in the results of some Soviet efforts, yet came away impressed by rural education programs led by enthusiastic teachers and a pedagogy allowing students to work at their own pace. Further, programs emphasized collectivity through scientific physical education to provide a social training intended to serve the interests of the society as a whole rather than the children of elites and foreigners.⁷²

Hard-line *cardenistas* likely found some Marxist philosophies on education, work, and the body pertinent. British Victorian recreation movements that philosophically belied modern western sport largely considered physical recreation as only a portion of life unconnected with class and values and the body was only measured in its performance. Based on metaphysics of the period, the body was considered something natural, universal, and known by a set of scientific laws. There implied, then, a metaphysical separation between the mind and the body in which the mind received developmental preference, while the body represented a villainized “warring party” of the soul and a weakness to overcome.⁷³

Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin denied the body was secondary to the mind and posited that physical development stood as the most crucial moral and educational underpinnings of the economic base of society, its strength determinant for the development of mental, spiritual, and other capabilities in concert.⁷⁴ After all, for Marx, the mind only subjectively reflected the matter of material world, and thus the mind was secondary in importance. Marx placed the body as a mediator between man and nature by articulating the its role in labor, emphasizing the human

⁷² Ibid.; “Base Ball,” *Arte y Sport*, January 31, 1920.

⁷³ James Riordan, *Sport, Politics, and Communism* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), 10–13.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 7.

need for intellectualism, physical training through gymnastics or military exercises, and technical training to instill in them proper habits.⁷⁵ Further, workers needed leisure and free time to restore energy to maintain production.⁷⁶

Sociologist Marcel Mauss, widely read in the 1930s, also recognized the spiritual and material importance of proper physical health maintained in bodily techniques. In a comparative study detailing great differences in swimming techniques in Polynesia and Europe, he asserted that unique “techniques of the body,” acted out in work and all physical activity, reflected the specific values and particular needs of societies and, citing his own inability to eliminate poor breathing habits while swimming, he professed that such lessons stuck with individuals for a lifetime.⁷⁷ For Mauss, the body was humanity’s most natural “instrument,” a technical object and a “technical means.”⁷⁸ Under such considerations he advocated strongly for new studies of social life that incorporated a triple consideration of its biological, sociological, and psychological elements that together helped constitute the “total man.”⁷⁹ Like any “attitude of the body,” or “habitus,” he related, no technique came naturally to man and must be learned. Mauss believed further that inside these practices and techniques was a material component, developed and maintained for practical reasons that moved beyond one’s individual “soul.”⁸⁰ Such conclusions emphasized the gravity of procuring specialists versed in the spiritual and technical aspects of physical education, for bad habits learned at young ages would propagate lasting negative consequences.

⁷⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge: The Electronic Book Company, 2001), 693.

⁷⁶ Riordan, *Sport, Politics, and Communism*, 21.

⁷⁷ Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” in *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life*, ed. Margaret M Lock and Judith Farquhar (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 50–51; Thomas J. Csordas, “Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology,” *Ethos* 18, no. 1 (1990): 5–47.

⁷⁸ Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” 50, 56.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 52, 60–61.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 50–53, 61–68.

Under Cárdenas, the materialist philosophy combined with resuscitated Greek mind-body metaphysics and “action pedagogies” of John Dewey and Maria Montessori that stressed learning through everyday action to reinvigorate the more radical elements of the revolution that many believed had slipped during the Maximato. Even as few believed or understood the Marxist components of socialist education, the program significantly aided incorporation efforts as it celebrated the imperative and unyielding work and resolve of teachers, unionists, and campesinos like never before. As a means of transforming nationalist behavior into a collective ideal, reformers of the program rallied behind “socialist” sports to promote new national life as messages of class struggle and indigenist citizenship fused with the existing sports lexicon.⁸¹

The Formation of the DEF

In order to complete sports organization begun with the formation of the CDM and to reorient national sports under a socialist aesthetic as part of his Plan Sexenal, Cárdenas staged the largest meeting on sports in the country’s history with the First National Physical Education Congress from December 22 to 28 of 1935 at the historic Teatro Degollado and Estadio Jalisco in the Tapatia capital of Guadalajara. The meeting featured nearly all of the country’s sports luminaries, including SEP minister Gonzalo Vázquez Vela, who presided over the congress, congress vice presidents Lauro Ortega and Salvador Ojeda, and meeting officers Federico Juncal, Max Tejeda, Prof. J. Jesús Morfin, and Francisco Martínez de la Vega. For seven days, the country’s most experienced and impassioned leaders in the sports movement deliberated over shared problems. They intensely debated solutions that included strategies for primary and secondary schools, specialized physical education programs for the military, blue and white

⁸¹ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 5, 190.

collar workers, campesinos, and women, practical sports facilities construction and international exchanges, and the necessity of medical supervision over future programs.⁸²

Teachers and inspectors at the congress made it clear that while things were better than before, physical education in the country remained abysmal, at least relative to the new administration's lofty sporting goals. For one, schools across the country, even in cities, were said to have had insufficient spaces to incorporate so many children. Delegates argued that even sports gyms and centers in the capital tested the patience of even the best students as the facilities were greatly out of date and in need of significant repair. Many schools lacked land altogether and most did not provide access to proper hygiene facilities, such as bathrooms with toilets, sinks, or showers, an especially disheartening roadblock to sporting development in the poor and underdeveloped countryside. Experts faced the reality that most communities simply could not create these modern sports centers, lacking financing, construction equipment, and know-how. More discouraging was that many pueblos did not even have access to clean running water with which to start, let alone ability to install modern plumbing. Inspectors also detailed that these conditions produced troubling outcomes. For example, in many communities, school children rarely bathed and often owned just one or two sets of clothing. These clothes were worn through the week, including through the morning physical education class, which was said to have soaked and stained the clothes and released a "series of physical forces" that left children to wallow in their own filth through the day. Considering the miserable state of hygiene in these

⁸² "Celebración del Primer Congreso Nacional de Educación Física," *El Universal*, November 8, 1935, Archivo Económico, Deportes: Programas de Gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "El Congreso Nacional de Educación Física en la Capital Tapatia," *El Día*, November 13, 1935, Archivo Económico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "Delegado del Depto. de Psicopedagogía en el Congreso," *El Nacional*, December 11, 1935, Archivo Económico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "El Licenciado Vázquez Vela en el Congreso de Cultura," *El Día*, December 17, 1935, Archivo Económico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

schools, and possessing little ability to make immediate change, some physicians wondered whether physical education was doing more harm than good.⁸³

Few delegates could provide solutions to the hygiene question and facilities construction remained a primary barrier. Some offered wild propositions including having teachers hold physical education first thing in the morning hours before school started. The idea was that students could come to school early to exercise, then return home to eat and bathe before coming back to school for their other lessons, ignoring the fact that many children lived great distances from campuses. Teachers and directives also pledged to help negotiate with local businesses to allow students to use their hygienic facilities if none were otherwise available. To help settle the problems of sports spaces, delegates even voted for the country's sportsmen to lobby for federal annexation of unused park and hacienda lands for the use of scholarly and community sports programs. The congress further promised to train more specialists to alleviate the country's constant shortage in physical education teachers.⁸⁴

The congress concluded with the formation of the country's first autonomous Department of Physical Education (DEF) to replace the CNCF and answer directly to the president. Its dedication to public health and sporting efforts in rural areas made Mexico a leader in sports development in Latin America. Under the Ley de Secretaría del Estado, DEF duties included:

- 1) Studying, creating, and applying the laws and rules dictated by the government on sports
- 2) Direction and technical control over physical education and sports in all official dependencies
- 3) To foment and orient all sports activities in particular institutes
- 4) Organization and control of all athletic celebrations
- 5) Direct and watch over the participation of Mexico in international sports tournaments
- 6) Control and sustain the CDM

⁸³ "Ponencias al Congreso de Educación Física," *El Nacional*, December 24, 1935, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

- 7) Direction of the Escuela Normal de Educación Física
- 8) Provide general direction and material assistance to sports of all classes

Articles two and six particularly stood out by officially stripping the SEP of its advisory role over sports education and by controlling the CDM. Through this action, Cárdenas had taken legal authority over sports more than any other president to date and created a streamlined institutional structure that allowed him to control amateur sports production at virtually every stage except for the labor of the COM, of which government oversight was strictly forbidden by the IOC charter. By including article five, Cárdenas, nevertheless, made even those responsibilities murky in practice.⁸⁵

The creation of the DEF marked a definitive turning point in sport. The government used it to promoting sports as a social leveler and racial improver, while also forging relationships between the varying sports organizations in the country. The new national funnel was controlled and directed by the DEF, which now oversaw the CDM, the technical and administrative aspects of sports and physical education, the Oficina de Educación Física Escolar, the Oficina de Educación Física Ejidal, and all other smaller organizations affiliated with sports. It also directly employed federal inspectors to monitor the varying directors of physical education in each of the states of the republic to ensure they carried out the national plan appropriately. The DEF, moreover, worked with the Secretaría de Marina y Guerra (SMG) to name a special physical education director managed by both departments for the military and the COM to direct the best athletes to international competition as well.⁸⁶ Sports leaders hoped that the organization could definitively end the “circus of gladiators” that existed in national sports.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ “El Departamento de Educación Física,” *Educación Física* 1, no. 1 (May 1936): 15, 27.

⁸⁶ Departamento de Educación Física, “Programa de Trabajos,” 4, 6–8, 12–13; “Temario para el Congreso sobre E. Física,” *Excelsior*, November 14, 1935, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁸⁷ “Nueva Orientacion”; Federico Juncal, “Ponencias al Congreso de Educación Física,” *El Nacional*, December 25, 1935, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “Se Clausur el 1er.

Cárdenas named Gen. Tirso Hernández the department's new *jefe* and he quickly undertook several ambitious projects including the resuscitation of trade journal *Educación Física*, now guided by lead editor Jesús E. Ferrer Gamboa. To help provide an impulse for sporting fever, he made the journal more widely available to the public in monthly editions at 10 centavos each, or \$1 peso for a year-long subscription. Its first issue in May of 1936 profiled ideal men and women athletes from around the world, gave snapshots of sports around the country including photos of mountain climbers on volcanoes Ixtaccihuatl and "La Malinche," and transmitted news on the Berlin Olympics. It also offered question and answer sections on technical sports rules and sports-themes crossword puzzle and cartoons. Hernández announced to readers that within its pages contained the most noble and well-intentioned sports literature to date, written for the pleasure and utility of the technical sports teachers and coaches but also for typical *deportistas*, as well. The DEF and the Departamento de Psicopedagogía, Medico Escolar, e Higiene also forged partnerships with periodical *El Nacional* to cover regular sports stories to help improve public health and stimulate the sporting movement in the country.⁸⁸

Hernández soonafter relaunched the normal school, renaming its third incarnation the Escuela Normal de Educación Física (ENEF) after relocating it to the Parque Deportivo Venustiano Carranza. Under Cárdenas, he redirected its character to meet socialist school reform. Prof. Manuel Aguilar Herrera directed the school from its inauguration on March 26, 1936 but was replaced by Velázquez Andrade in November of the same year. Men and women studied many of the same subjects and sports, but there were some noticeable topical differences. For example, while swimming, tennis, basketball, play-ground baseball, volleyball, and athletic events were practiced by both men and women, men also practiced soccer, natural gymnastics,

Congres de Educación Física," *El Nacional*, December 29, 1935, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁸⁸ "Nueva Orientacion"; Letter from Lauro Ortega to Moisés Reyes Acosta, May 4, 1936, DPH, Caja 35567, Exp. 18, AHSEP.

military exercises, and boxing while women uniquely practiced rhythmic gymnastics. Both groups also took courses in English, music theory and singing, massage therapy, and sociology.⁸⁹

In addition to continued attention on general prophylaxis, including emphasis on sexual health, the DEF wanted socialist sports to represent a powerful and inclusive social action in the sentiment of cooperativism. This meant strengthening the body for the rigors of everyday work, but also enhancing and developing a socialist spirit among participants.⁹⁰ On its first page of *Educación Física*, the DEF proclaimed a definitive change in sports culture from the official point of view. In the past, sports had been reserved for the “well accommodated,” but they now belonged to the campesinos and workers of the revolution. The organization outlined its primary goals as promoting sports in the countryside and the factory and removing the roots of the problems that had previously left sporting programs delayed and sterile. This effort to invigorate and enliven the masses would go hand-in-hand with Cárdenas’ programs for economic improvement in the countryside.⁹¹ In September of 1936, for example, the Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas launched a regional conference in which they discussed sports as a way to uplift the economically and spiritually bankrupt Otomí. But the Oficina de Economía y Cultura Indígenas also called for sports programs to help a wider effort to prepare men to learn to achieve and fight for success in life, embed general understandings of good health and hygiene, distance the masses from vice, replace fanaticism with science in all its corners, and help indigenous peoples to reach the quality of life of the “*gente de razon*.”⁹²

Max Tejeda and Roberto Sánchez Lima’s national plan of study for physical education for 1936, presented at the Guadalajara congress, expanded on such sentiments. Citing the

⁸⁹ Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, 164–67.

⁹⁰ Departamento de Educación Física, “Programa de Trabajos,” 3, 8–10.

⁹¹ “Nueva Orientacion”; “Acuerdos Del Primer Congreso de Educación Física En Guadalajara,” *El Dia*, December 31, 1935, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁹² Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas, “Memoria del Primer Congreso Regional Indígena Celebrado en Ixmiquilpan, Hgo.,” 1938, 12–13.

primary purpose of physical education as preparation of citizens for work and health, the DEF overhauled basic gymnastic and callisthenic programs to emphasize its corrective and social tendencies to best serve the “sacred interests of the proletariat,” minus pernicious egoism. Team sports that promoted social harmony in its lessons on fraternity, teamwork, and sacrifice were favored over others and they vowed to drop what they saw as false divisions between physical and other forms of education. DEF leaders also publicly rejected all adaptations of “championshipism,” dismissing the valor in individual achievement. Similarly, they renounced programs that reproduced the egotistical and mammoth muscle-bound strong men that typified the athletic ideal of the past in favor of those that developed neuro-muscular coordination and agility exercises for improved brain functionality and muscle growth most useful in everyday life.⁹³

The men also promised to form the “Vanguardia Infantil Socialista” under government direction, believing that physical culture needed to be promoted outside of school, as well. This community organization directed children into healthy, moral, and physical activities that promoted sports, taught communities how to fabricate sports equipment, built sports facilities, stamped out religious fanaticism and superstition, protected the environment, and authored and distributed socialist propaganda in communities around the nation. Under the Vanguardia’s black and red triangular flag, members chanted “Adelante Hasta Vencer” (Move forward until you Overcome) as a reminder of the class struggle in which *cardenista* educators situated daily life. Through such programs, physical culture operated as a “social conductor” for unifying a diverse revolutionary society by incorporating the masses under feelings of co-fraternity that would allow the country to triumph.⁹⁴

⁹³ Juncal, “Ponencias Al Congreso de Educación Física”; “Se Clausur El 1er. Congres de Educación Física.”

⁹⁴ Juncal, “Ponencias Al Congreso de Educación Física.”

Affiliation with the federal sports unions often streamlined access to rare and valuable materials and infrastructure projects and the government rewarded committed governors for their loyalty. National writers and sports leaders frequently broadcasted the most patriotic actions of individuals publicly. In Oaxaca, for example, Gov. Col. Constantino Chapital worked closely with Cárdenas, Hernández, and professors like Teodoro Ávila, who had previously toured the state in a census of the state's sporting capacity, to open new sports facilities like gyms, stadiums, and public pools. The same principle applied for local federated sporting clubs who negotiated for the acquisition of sporting equipment. Their commitment to the CDM and federal sports could be proven several ways, including with long-hand descriptions of group activities, census rolls, or even photographs of campesinos playing sports.⁹⁵ Funds, nevertheless, frequently ran short even in states that had taken up sports enthusiastically and sunk great amounts of money into its development. For example, Coahuila governor Jesús Valdés Sánchez, remembered for his crucial work for rural education, wrote to Cárdenas in May of 1937 that even with the valiant efforts of promoters like Professor Hugo del Pozo, who had helped bring modern sport to even the most distant pueblos and organized tournaments between them in the socialist spirit, the community still desperately needed federal money just to keep clubs alive.⁹⁶ Many state and local governments faced challenging budgetary choices and felt abandoned by the president after arduous grassroots organizing for local clubs fell short. Cárdenas invested more in sport than any other president to date, but when the coffers dried the only support offered from

⁹⁵ Teodoro Ávila, "Impulso Decidido Se Dara En Nuestro Estado a Las Actividades Deportivos," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 14, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez"; "Los Deportes en el Ejido," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 14, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez"; "La Juventud Isthmena en los Primeros Juegos Deportivos," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 23, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez."

⁹⁶ Letter from Jesús Valdés Sánchez to Lázaro Cárdenas, April 20, 1937, Presidentes; LCR 532.2/1, AGN; Teodoro Ávila, "Departamento de Educación Física," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 21, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez."

Mexico City came in the form of encouragement and reminders of their romantic and sacrificial duty for the betterment of the nation.

Rural Sports Missions and Delegations

As officials used sport to defuse tensions in the countryside and channel a largely armed population out of revolution into healthier and more peaceful habits,⁹⁷ cultural leaders reimagined the indigenous body as inherently strong and healthy. The SEP-commissioned statues of muscular pre-Columbian warriors, like Tlahuicole. The renowned Tlaxcalan leader was depicted in 1925 as a powerful and stoic moral example of physical and moral perfection. Paintings, such as Rufino Tamayo's "Atleta" (1930) and Jorge González Camarena's "Las bañistas" (1935), and calendar art for the Cemento Cruz Azul company, further depicted fit, modern, and confident dark-skinned peoples engaged in sports activities.⁹⁸ The works indicated that physical and cultural regeneration of the masses through sport had become an expectation in the quest for realizing the total and ideal revolutionary man.

Captain Antonio Haro described the work of physical educators as the most noble in the country. An idealistic generation of university students shared his enthusiasm to promote sports to improve the everyday life of the masses. In Oaxaca City in April of 1937, for example, the Federación de Estudiantes Oaxaqueños issued a manifesto demanding improved cultural education and called for more collaborations between the capital and provincial pueblos. Rather than solely dropping off medicine, the group urged the state government and the university to send students to organize sporting tournaments as a form of practical education and as part of

⁹⁷ Brewster, "Redeeming the 'Indian,'" 222.

⁹⁸ Fabiola Hernández Flores, "Cuerpo de Modernidad, Cuerpo de Publicidad: Las Bañistas Por Jorge González Camarena," *Bitacora Arquitectura* 29 (2014): 124–33.

wider effort to build a more meaningful relationship between communities. They also hoped to learn the sociologies, economics, and cultures of rural and indigenous communities.⁹⁹

Physical educators in the Cultural Missions were assigned to teach gymnastics, sports, and games to boys and girls and to organize sporting tournaments. The DEF also asked instructors to take control of local sports and re-direct them as they saw necessary to meet federal standards. By 1936, the number of rural teachers increased to an astounding 16,079, a hike of over 15,500 in just 13 years.¹⁰⁰ Typically teachers received five to 10 centavos weekly for sports materials in their first few weeks in a new community before managing their own grassroots fundraising. They helped communities transform unused lands into crude fields and distributed rule books, hygiene propaganda, and pamphlets on how to manufacture basic sports equipment without machines. In the missions, physical educators worked with the local ejidal commissions to organize clubs for each sport. Once established, these clubs answered directly to the DEF and participated in a variety of regional and, if they succeeded, national ejidal and campesino tournaments to identify the country's athletic stars.¹⁰¹

These local sports clubs had to structure their leadership in accordance with federal standards in order to receive the benefits of membership. Rules dictated that each group should have a president, secretary, treasurer, and three lower officers, all of whom were hand-picked by federal physical education inspectors. First and foremost, the CNCF and the DEF sought out respected community leaders of high character to serve as sports club leaders and they expected them to act as model revolutionary sportsmen and citizens. These officers wielded significant

⁹⁹ “El Capitan Antonio Haro Tomo Posesión de La Escuela de E. Física”; Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 12; “Manifiesto Lanzado por la Federacion de Estudiantes Oaxaqueños,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 25, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

¹⁰⁰ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 12.

¹⁰¹ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Programas de los Distintos Miembros de Las Misiones Culturales,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1930, 114–18; Departamento de Educación Física, “Programa de Trabajos.”

power over local sports. For example, they organized local tournaments and had the authority to dictate which sports local athletes could play based on their own judgement of his or her athletic talents. Presidents also could expel anyone deemed an enemy of the national sporting effort from the organization, interpreted at the discretion of club officers. For regular members, this meant that showing poor moral character or judgment in public, missing events or tournaments, or failing to contribute a donation to support club causes were all grounds for expulsion. Membership in a group often paid dividends to athletes as clubs had access to valuable and rare subsidies for sporting equipment. Athletes were also offered the possibility of advancement in the national sports funnel. Treasurers kept regular books on spending and oversaw all distribution of federal resources into communities.¹⁰²

In May of 1937, a special DEF sporting delegation, led by Prof. Jorge Porrás and 12 students from the ENEF, was dispatched to Oaxaca City and were greeted by dozens of uniformed student-athletes who swarmed the train platform on which the group arrived. The “Misión Deportiva,” sent to collect a census on sporting activities in the state, federate local sports clubs, and promote modern and scientific sports, promised to stay as long as it took to see sports work in the state completed. The state of Oaxaca, an underdeveloped and highly indigenous state, was of interest to Cárdenas as progress achieved in sports programs helped measure the success of one of the revolution’s greatest social and scientific investments.¹⁰³

During their trip, the city and the delegation worked together to stage a large festival at the Instituto de Ciencias y Artes that included speeches, gymnastic presentations, and music.

¹⁰² Francisco Arcos and Antonio D. Alvarado, “Proyecto para la Organización de Clubes Deportivos en las Comunidades Rurales,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 4, no. 5 (March 1, 1934).

¹⁰³ “Alumnos de la Escuela Normal de Educación Física en Oaxaca,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 21, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez”; “Hoy Liega la Delegación Deportiva que Viene de Capital de La República,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 22, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez”; Teodoro Ávila, “Invitación,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 24, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez”; “Quiénes Integran la Delegación Deportiva de Educación Física,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 24, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

Prominent athletes, such as luchador Arturo Ogesto Martínez, swimmer Roberto Rojas, and runners Alfredo Mariscal and Vicente del Rey, made appearances to dazzle eager crowds. The gymnastic demonstrations were said to have inspired children to tumble about the concrete. Local newspaper *Oaxaca Nuevo* ran features on children that participated in the events, detailing their age, skin-color, and body type, to show readers that anyone could succeed in sports.¹⁰⁴ The delegation also authored advice columns on stretching and technique in local papers, reminding the state of its low-skill level, but also its promise.¹⁰⁵

Local sports leaders, who often established leagues and improvised everything from rules to equipment with little help, were subject to removal from high ranking positions if sporting delegations or teachers deemed their leadership was unenthusiastic or uncooperative with revolutionary plans.¹⁰⁶ The delegation, made up of students in their late teens and early twenties, replaced much of the leadership of Oaxaca's state baseball association with new officers because of the supposed apathy among its previous members. Other examples existed around the republic. In June of 1939, several citizens representing education, sporting, and campesino leagues in the state of Colima demanded the firing of the newly anointed sports leader Ramón Farias, charging him with fraud and corruption. Petition signers depicted Farias as a pencil-pushing assistant who had once embezzled money at a benefit dance in Piscila. In the petition, sportsmen demanded the re-instatement of popular sportsman Armando Rodríguez who, they contended, had organized the first Ejidal Athletic Tournament in 1937, the first-time Colima's sporting youth had been represented to national sporting audiences. His supporters also noted

¹⁰⁴ "Quienes Integran la Delegacion Deportiva de Educación Física"; "Ya Iniciaron sus Entrenamientos los Atletas Visitantes," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 26, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez."

¹⁰⁵ *Oaxaca Nuevo*; Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 92.

¹⁰⁶ "Se Reorganiza el Deporte," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 27, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez"; "Ayer Partio para la Metropoli la Delegación Deportiva de Educación Física," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, June 2, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez."

that he had shown generosity by personally funding the travel of athletes for national tournaments. According to the authors, he also provided hands-on training throughout the state. The signed off on the letter with, “Tierra y Libertad; Menos Vicios; Más Deportes.”¹⁰⁷

Teachers that worked in SEP cultural missions often were left to fend for themselves and they faced frequent challenges. One report on a cultural mission to Tasquillo, Hidalgo detailed the frustrating experiences of an instructor who had worked painstakingly to raise \$54 pesos for the construction of a sports field. Soon after its construction, the teacher deemed it unsafe due to poor construction.¹⁰⁸ Instructors without access to equipment were expected to build make-shift fields on their own based on detailed instructions from trade journal *El Maestro Rural*. The magazine often published diagrams with simple instructions on how to grade the earth, provide drainage, pour concrete, and chalk dimensions for multi-use outdoor facilities. While this advice could not substitute for experience, it was often the best the indigent government could do.¹⁰⁹

Indigenous Sports Promotion

Cultural missionaries carried out numerous tasks related to public health and sports. Alura Flores, a former EEF student, championship basketball coach, and teacher with the cultural missions, noted that communities were often suspicious of the teachers and doctors, as many had never had contact with outsiders before. The most successful teachers were sensitive to their role as outsiders and flexible in their lessons. As a physical education representative, Flores engaged in anything she deemed practical that could inspire people to exercise including folkloric dances, local games, or modern sports. She avoided scientific messages that the government wished to

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Jerónimo Sotelo to Lázaro Cárdenas, June 28, 1939, Presidentes; LCR 534.6/207, AGN; Letter from Pedro Aguilar Despart to Lázaro Cárdenas, December 26, 1939, Presidentes; LCR 534.6/207, AGN.

¹⁰⁸ José M. Bautista, “Informe General de la Labor Desarrollada por la Escuela Primaria Numero 165, en Tasquillo, Hgo., Del Primero de Marzo al 30 de Noviembre de 1927,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 7, no. 1 (1928): 184–89.

¹⁰⁹ Isidoro Salazar, “Como Construir un Campo Deportivo,” *El Maestro Rural* 5, no. 11 (December 1, 1934): 12–13.

attach to such activities to avoid conflict and typically promoted sports simply as fun pastimes instead. Over time, Flores accepted that government missionaries would not inspire dramatic changes in the everyday life of communities immediately, but she grew to appreciate any incremental victories.¹¹⁰

The DEF had been interested in promoting indigenous dances and sports to increase enthusiasm for exercise for a decade. They believed that doing so could also help its athletes excel in sports that those in other countries did not. In fact, in some cases DEF officials asked teachers to provide reports on indigenous sports that may have proven beneficial for other communities as well. These efforts included revitalizing “*quemada de restar*,” a forerunner to baseball played largely in Sonora and Chihuahua. Instead of referring to “bases” and “home” indigenous participants used the terms “iglesia” and “cathedral.” They also promoted the Mesoamerican ballgame of *tlaxtli* once played in Mayan ball-courts. SEP experts, nevertheless, often had to create rules to consistently officiate matches between communities. Sometimes, they had to reinvent rules altogether for games that had not been played for centuries. Only a few ball games, descended from their pre-Columbian antecedents, remained, including *ulama* and *pelota mixteca*, the latter of which used a large rubber ball and heavy leather gloves with which to volley the ball across the court.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Gabriela Cano and Verena Radkau, *Ganando Espacios: Historias de Vida: Guadalupe Zúñiga, Alura Flores Y Joséfina Vicens, 1920-1940* (México, D.F: Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, 1989), 68–71.

¹¹¹ “Mexico Seeks to Popularize Old Ball Games of Indians,” *Herald Tribune*, November 24, 1929, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Mexico G08230-G08236, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; “Deportes y Juegos Indígenas,” *El Nacional*, February 7, 1935, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Mexico G08230-G08236, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; Gillmeister, *Tennis*, 71–72; “Los Deportes Aborigenes van a ser Popularizados En Mexico,” *El Universal*, November 2, 1929, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Mexico G08230-G08236, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

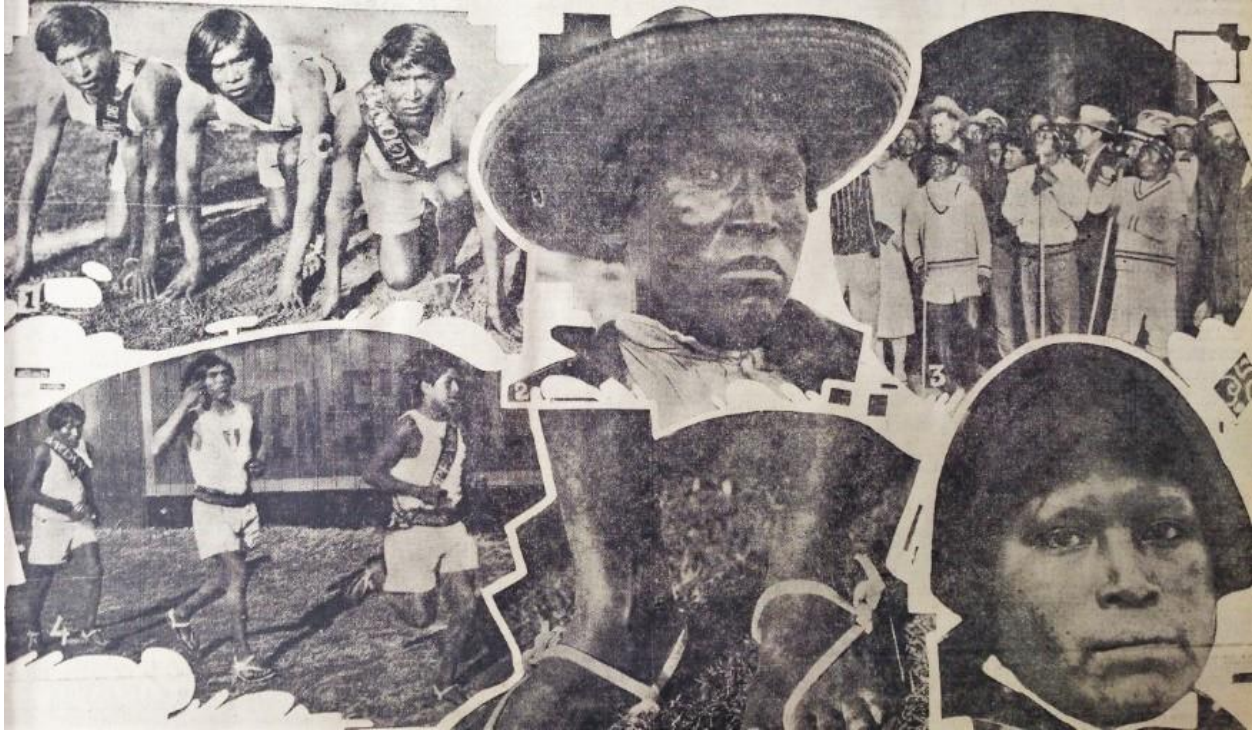


Illustration 2.2: “Los Indios Tarahumaras en las Carreras de Texas.” Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.¹¹²

Missionaries who worked in Tarahumara communities in the Copper Canyon region of Chihuahua described a people trapped in “Stone Age” civilization. But federal sports leaders hoped the tribes’ experience in *rarájipari*, a game played during inter-village celebrations in which athletes ran and kicked a wooden ball for up to 40 miles, would help the country achieve in endurance sports with minimal federal support. One test came in 1927 when Kansas University Athletics Director and showman F.C. “Phog” Allen arranged a series of spectacles to promote the Kansas Relays in Topeka. The annual competition included festivities such as a rodeo, guessing the weight of a buffalo (which was subsequently barbequed after the competition), and a golf-ball driving contest. In addition, five Tarahumara runners, including men José Torres, Manuel Salida and Thomas Zafiro and sisters Lolita and Juanita Cuzarare, competed in special 50.7 and 30-mile endurance races against other Native American and US collegiate athletes. Newspapers exaggerated the exotic qualities of the indigenous visitors,

¹¹² *El Universal*, April 4, 1927.

describing them as only “semi-civilized” and detailing their curious pre-race dietary habits. The men raced against two Arizona Native Americans, a 17-year old Apache named Purcell Kane and an 18-year old Navajo man named Burt Betah, both of whom struggled to keep up with the Tarahumara competition. Torres won his race, entering the Memorial Stadium after just six hours and 46 minutes. Lolita Cuzarare, likewise, won her race in five hours and 37 minutes. Only weeks before the race, Tarahumara runners had completed a similar goodwill trek from San Antonio to Austin, Texas, roughly 80 miles.¹¹³

¹¹³ Sara Shepherd, “When the Tarahumara Indians Ran’: Ultra-Marathon Fueled Excitement in Early Days of Kansas Relays,” *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, April 14, 2015, <http://www2.ljworld.com/news/2015/apr/14/when-tarahumara-indians-ran-ultra-marathon-fueled-/> (accessed March 2, 2017; Joe D Schrag, *The Kansas Relays: Track and Field Tradition in the Heartland*, 2014.

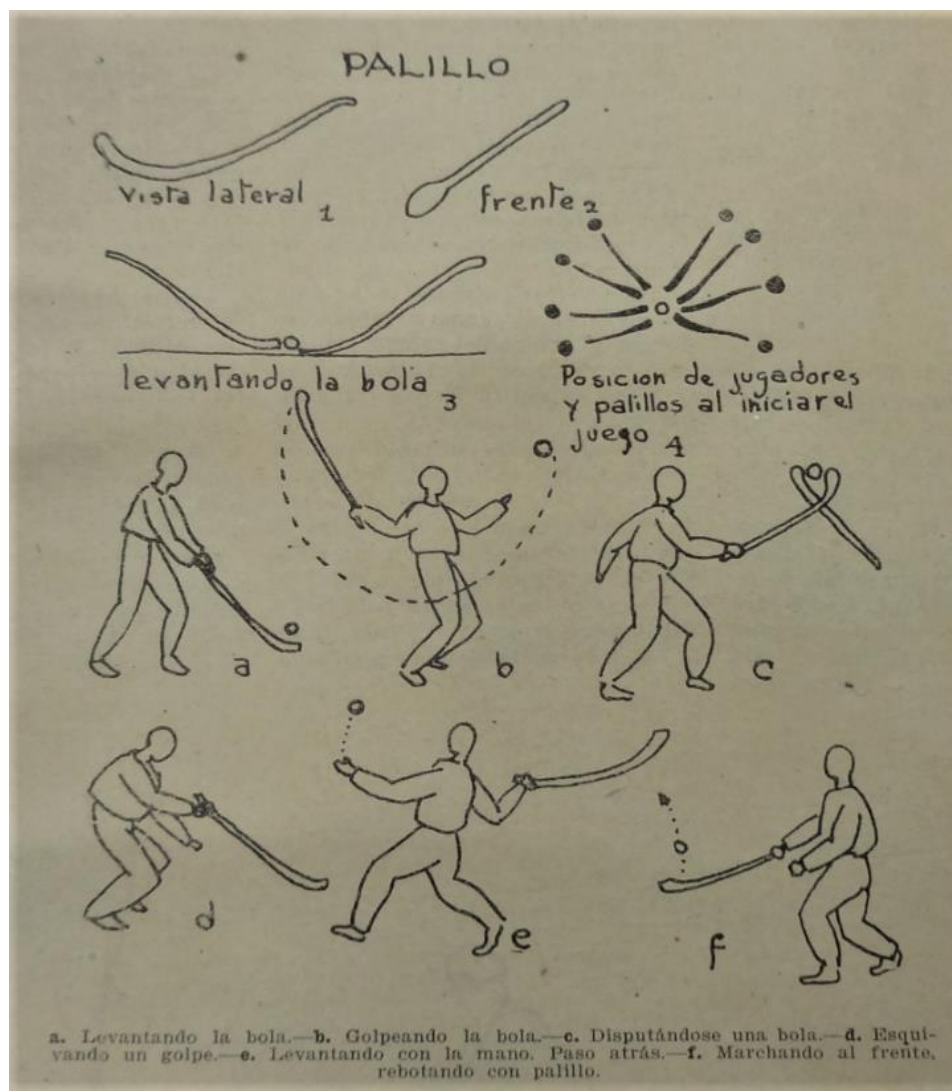


Illustration 2.3: Palillo of the Tarahumara. Courtesy of the AHSEP.¹¹⁴

Interest renewed in promoting indigenous games in the Cárdenas presidency. One indigenous game promoted in this period was “*La Chueca*,” a form of pre-Hispanic field hockey. *El Maestro Rural* published rules, field dimensions, and strategies on the sport in hopes that indigenous students may somehow find such games more familiar. The game was most commonly associated with a Mapuche version in Chile, but physical educators noted its popularity in the canyon pueblos of Michoacán. Another sport included a game called “*palillo*”

¹¹⁴ Luis Ramírez Rodríguez, “El Palillo,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 4, no. 12 (June 15, 1934).

from Chihuahua, described by Luis Ramírez Rodríguez as a game that combined the elements of golf and baseball but with more activity. Teachers shared news on successful local games like “el juego del piso” that combined exercise with arithmetic.¹¹⁵ In Chiapas, teachers detailed a relay race in the honor of the pilgrimage to the Virgin of Guadalupe.¹¹⁶

Max Tejeda and Luis Obregón, the most well-known author of manuals on rural physical education, created the Comité de Deportes y Juegos Indígenas Nacionales in 1935. The committee dedicated itself to establishing relationships with rural communities to identify and promote local sports.¹¹⁷ Obregón noted that even regional dances fit well into national incorporation programs by synthesizing local cultures and bringing distant pueblos, that often held centuries-old regional rivalries, together in a peaceable setting. He believed that the inherent softness of dances complimented the crude daily work of campesinos and, combined with select sports, would help develop healthy and hardened populations.¹¹⁸

After the creation of the DEF, promoters also created new games that combined elements of modern sport and popular pastimes already practiced. “Bola al Rey,” for example, was created by physical educators in Nuevo León as a hybrid sport with elements borrowed from basketball, volleyball, and American football. Playing the sport required two teams with eight players each, featuring a center, two defenders, two *ayudantes*, two generals, and a king. The goal was to successfully pass a large rubber ball, referred to as a “globe,” to each other as many times as

¹¹⁵ Enrique Aceves M., “La Chueca: Juego de Origen Mexicano,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 4, no. 5 (March 1, 1934); Rosita Barrera, *El folclore en la educación* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 1998), 135; Ramírez Rodríguez, “El Palillo”; Fructuoso Irigoyen Rascón and Alfonso Paredes, *Tarahumara Medicine: Ethnobotany and Healing among the Rarámuri of Mexico*, 2015, 303; Daniel Garza, “El Juego de El Piso,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 4, no. 11 (June 1, 1934): 26–27.

¹¹⁶ Lisbona Guillén, “Mejorar La Raza” 65–66.

¹¹⁷ “Deportes y Juegos Indígenas.”

¹¹⁸ Luis Obregón, *Recreacion Física Para Escuelas Y Comunidades Rurales* (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1935), 10–11.

possible on the 18-by-12-meter court. This court contained fixed zones, including the Zonas del Reyes in which possession teams could score the most.¹¹⁹

Teachers did not deny the need to alleviate the depressed state of campesino life with practical recreation, but some felt as if the government was trying to move too fast. Professor Salvador Infante V., a physical education instructor with the cultural missions in Guerrero, for example, criticized the construction of basketball courts in communities without clean water to drink. Exercise, in his estimation, may have done more harm than good as campesinos already spent hours every day in the field and survived on a small diet of corn, beans, and chiles, a point that surprisingly few experts discussed at length. He argued that playing sports like basketball required significant energy that most did not have to give.¹²⁰ Infante later offered a solution to play croquet instead, a sport that did not require energy or athleticism and that could be done on a slim budget, requiring only a few balls, some small sticks, and any amount of open space.¹²¹ Officials were apparently not enthused with the idea.

Land and Equipment

In 1921, the Secretaría de Hacienda issued a decree freeing outdoor sports facilities from tax obligations to incentivize the construction of sports fields. A decade later, DDF sports fields became regular attachments to worker housing and tenement communities to promote physical fitness and general happiness among laborers.¹²² Perhaps as much as money, finding land to build fields proved an ongoing obstacle, but the pace of field construction sped in the late 1930s. Cárdenas erected revolutionary monuments as part of his effort to stamp out ignorance and

¹¹⁹ Departamento de Enseñanza Rural, "Bola al Rey," *El Maestro Rural* 5, no. 1 (July 1, 1934): 12–13.

¹²⁰ Salvador Infante V., "El Deporte en el Medio Rural," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 4, no. 5 (March 1, 1934).

¹²¹ Salvador Infante V., "El Deporte en el Medio Rural," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 4, no. 11 (June 1, 1934).

¹²² *Ibid.*, 92; "Los Deportes al Aire Libre No Pagarán Impuestos," *El Universal*, January 21, 1921.

inequality, but these monuments were not dedications to revolutionary heroes, but to nameless peasants and mothers that represented the revolution. These monuments included the construction of schools, hospitals, and sports fields.¹²³

Ejidal land distribution was uneven around the republic and in some places it was only delivered where local power could be negotiated.¹²⁴ To find ample land, the Cárdenas government seized and sold ex-hacienda properties and some developers successfully transformed fallow and unused fields into children's parks for free-play and exercise as part of larger sub-division construction projects.¹²⁵ Authorities that worked in areas where ejidal land was difficult to find became inventive. In Teziutlán, Puebla, for example, the government leased national railroad land to the community for local sports development.¹²⁶ In rural areas, some communities requested land upon the death of a local owner.¹²⁷ Sometimes inconvenient locations of fields could render them useless. For example, citizens from San Mateo Atenco received land in 1938 to build ejidal sports fields, but because it was 8 kilometers from any town, local leaders struggled to get the field built and it largely went unused. Community leaders wrote back in 1942 and asked for the government to seize land closer to the homes of the people.¹²⁸

Families owning large tracts of land frequently blocked government land appropriations and deemed them unlawful. Meanwhile, ejidatarios often complained of former *hacendados* infringing on their land or destroying their crops, leading some campesinos to believe that they could use the land only by the generosity of its previous owner. In one case, inhabitants of the Hacienda of Santa Lucía, Coahuila wrote desperate letters for legal help in 1936, claiming that

¹²³ Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution*, 169–70.

¹²⁴ Benjamin T. Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca*, The Mexican Experience (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

¹²⁵ Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution*, 204.

¹²⁶ Letter from Federico Romero Soto to Lázaro Cárdenas, February 2, 1939, Presidentes; LCR 532.2/25, AGN.

¹²⁷ Letter from the Colonia Agrícola “Ignacio Zaragoza” to Lázaro Cárdenas, September 22, 1936, Presidentes; LCR 532.2/37, AGN.

¹²⁸ Letter from the citizens of San Mateo Atenco to Manuel Ávila Camacho, June 6, 1942, Presidentes; MAC 532.2/20, AGN.

former landowner Efrain López had refused access to sports fields built on an infertile piece of land arranged by Gertrudis Martínez, director of the local rural federal school.¹²⁹ Other petitions to the CDM detailed the legal challenges that former landowners launched, including the incorrect claim that the only allowable use of the land was for sustainable agriculture. When the government was slow to intervene, communities felt betrayed and as if the government was penalizing them for their impoverished condition.¹³⁰ The desperate Centro Social Deportivo in Coyoacán even petitioned for the conversion of former church patios and atriums into sporting facilities, but too many vehemently protested such a desecration of sacred land.¹³¹



Illustration 2.4: Campesinos playing baseball at Xichú, Guanajuato. C. 1936. Courtesy of the AHSEP and AGN.¹³²

By 1937, stadium inaugurations in big cities and small pueblos became common. The DEF and CDM often matched the enthusiasm of locals who received stadiums with large

¹²⁹ Letter from the Colonia and Hacienda of Sta Lucía, Coahuila to Lázaro Cárdenas, January 11, 1936, Presidentes; LCR 532.2/23, AGN.

¹³⁰ Letter from Ernesto Pozos H., Miguel Izaguirre, and Agustín Vázquez to Lázaro Cárdenas, December 4, 1935, Presidentes; LCR 532.2/21, AGN.

¹³¹ Letter from the Centro Social Deportivo Coyoacan to Lázaro Cárdenas, August 15, 1933, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/234, AGN; Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution*, 13.

¹³² Letter from Leobardo López Bautista to Dr. Salvador Ojeda, January 31, 1936, DPH, Caja 35549, Exp. 21, AHSEP.

festivals and music. High-ranking officials, like DEF chief Tirso Hernández or Manuel Ávila Camacho, then sub-Secretary of the SGM, attended the opening of new fields and stadiums with local politicians and debutantes.¹³³ The supposed discovery of rural communities that played sports grabbed headlines for flagship newspapers affiliated with the federal sporting effort.¹³⁴

The DEF promoted hundreds of sporting events in its early years under Cárdenas and worked with the DDF in the construction of dozens of facilities in Mexico City. Some of these included the recreational parks at La Vaquita, Tacubaya and Mextitla, Aragón in 1936, but also in the workers housing zone at Nextitla in 1937. The federal government donated land for the construction of facilities as well, like the 100,000-meter park at Villa Gustavo A. Madero that included soccer fields and basketball courts. In 1938 the “Plan Sexenal” and “18 de Marzo” sports parks opened to complement the Parque Venustiano Carranza.¹³⁵

Teachers, desperate for federal assistance, encouraged students to pen letters to presidents to ask for land and simple items like balls, bats, and trophies. Many communities appropriated government monikers such as “Menos Vicios, Más Deportes” and “Para Mejorar la Raza” or named sports clubs after prominent government figures to win favor with revolutionary officials in charge of disbursing materials. For example, in 1933, Félix Luna and Catarino Haro petitioned the CNCF on behalf of a sports center at the Cia. Carbonifera de Sabinas SA in Nueva Rosita, Coahuila for the acquisition of electronics including a microphone they said they would use to broadcast matches they hosted. Luna argued that the company games attracted 5,000 spectators and hoped the new items would help show off their workers as role models for other workers

¹³³ “Nueva Estadium Inagurado En León, Guanajuato,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 12, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

¹³⁴ “Importante Mejora En La Escuela Federal de Teococuilco,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 6, 1937, sec. Notas de Ixtlan, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

¹³⁵ Olsen, *Artifacts of Revolution*, 186.

around the country.¹³⁶ In March of 1934, a group of poor children from Jojutla de Juárez, Morelos wrote to Abelardo Rodríguez, begging for help with the construction of a sports field so that the boys and girls would not miss the valuable life lessons it provided. Lamenting the small pock-filled church atrium over four kilometers away from their pueblo, of which virtually all exercise was confined, they swore allegiance to the new sporting confederacy of the republic in return for assistance.¹³⁷ The anti-clerical nature of official programs was evident in some cases. In one community, athletes were said to have broken off the heads of saints at local churches to use as baseballs.¹³⁸ In another case in Guerrero, a pro-science sports club even requested official SEP conversion kits from Dr. Alfonso Priani, then head of the Scholarly Hygiene wing of the SEP in June of 1929 to help wipe out “*brujeria*,” or witchcraft. Letters almost always received a response, although communities did not always receive help.¹³⁹

An anti-clerical stance was often re-affirmed in thousands of petitions written like personal correspondences to a close friend. In Zapotitlán de Menden, Puebla, Leopoldo Manzano G. wrote conservative organizations in the community tried to sabotage sports because the members disdained the socialist ideology attached to them.¹⁴⁰ In Xichú, Guanajuato a teacher from the Centro de Educación Indígena requested rulebooks for basketball, baseball, volleyball, and soccer, including photos of the indigenous baseball games they had staged already to show proof of their commitment.¹⁴¹ One campesino union in Morelos, Michoacán patiently awaited federal assistance even as their own members played soccer without shoes.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ Letter from Félix Luna and Catarino Haror to the President of the CNCF, April 25, 1933, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/82, AGN.

¹³⁷ Letter from Fernando López to Abelardo Rodríguez, March 16, 1934, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/324, AGN.

¹³⁸ Brewster, “The Role of Sport in Post-Revolutionary Mexico,” 8.

¹³⁹ Letter from Juan de la Vega and Rafael Medina to Alfonso Priani, June 20, 1929, DPH, Caja 35539, Exp. 10, AHSEP.

¹⁴⁰ Letter from Leopoldo Manzano G to Lázaro Cárdenas, January 14, 1935, Presidentes; LCR 532/3 (4-10), AGN.

¹⁴¹ López Bautista to Dr. Salvador Ojeda.”

¹⁴² Letter from the Club Deportivo Futbolístico Morelos to Abelardo Rodríguez, July 20, 1933, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/215, AGN.



Illustration 2.5: La novena "Bayer" from Veracruz. January, 1936. Courtesy of the AHSEP and AGN.¹⁴³

Conclusion

In light of the large amounts of petitions for sporting equipment, rulebooks, and land from campesino communities, Cárdenas lamented that the government failed to meet all of their needs as most attention still was directed to Mexico City and other large urban areas.¹⁴⁴ Land problems and the government's inability to solve the most pressing issues on sports indicated the limits of *cardenismo*, with which meaningful and ambitious promises sometimes proved hollow.¹⁴⁵ Teacher Sara Cantu announced at the 1945 Pan-American Physical Education Congress that the country needed a public sports complex for roughly 5,000 residents to satisfy demand around the country, which meant, based on population estimates, the country needed to

¹⁴³ Letter from the Presidente del Club "Bayer" to Gonzalo Vasquez Vela.

¹⁴⁴ "El Departamento de Educación Física."

¹⁴⁵ Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised*, 120.

provide around 3,413-evenly spaced sports centers around the republic. The country was certainly thousands short of that goal by the end of 1940.¹⁴⁶

Like other forms of education, policy-makers in Mexico City relied upon local governments and communities to help fund and carry out federal projects. Curricula also often represented a negotiation between state, regional, and local actors and schools found themselves at the center of cultural-political compromises that loosely outlined prescriptions for revolutionary national life based on a mestizo aesthetic. New educational and public health campaigns, frequently referred to as “crusades,” often faced resistance from rural communities that distrusted the intentions of teachers and doctors. Sports was different because had a reputation as an innocuous and fun pastime and its adaptability made it a staple of many programs. Officials fused nationalistic and scientific messages to games in front of already captive audiences with positive outcomes. Even at the end of Cárdenas’ *sexenio*, promoters like Fernando Magro, director of the Instituto de Ciencias y Artes in Oaxaca, professed his faith that sport would become a new “religion of all of the pueblos of tomorrow.”¹⁴⁷

Affiliated sports unions and clubs aided the advancement of programs that helped the government establish relationships in rural communities. In some cases, competitions between rival communities helped improve relations between them.¹⁴⁸ As with other forms of vertical organization in the revolution, federated *deportistas* gained direct access to the PNR and inclusion in the revolutionary nation. Their membership, nevertheless, limited their ability to deviate from the framework of the larger government-led project.¹⁴⁹ Similar efforts to mobilize the poor under nationalist objectives limited the ability for members to make local demands even

¹⁴⁶ Francisco Alba, *The Population of Mexico: Trends, Issues, and Policies* (Transaction Publishers, 1982), 18.

¹⁴⁷ Fernando Magro, “Todo un Exito Constituyo el Festival Deportivo de Ayer,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 28, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

¹⁴⁸ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 94–95.

¹⁴⁹ O’Brien, *The Revolutionary Mission*, 286.

as the official party claimed it represented the poor's interests.¹⁵⁰ Rural communities successfully preserved culture and identity against the state's project of Hispanization but the state succeeded in incorporating the masses into a multi-ethnic nationalism that aided development.¹⁵¹ Sports were a prime component of this process.

¹⁵⁰ Susan Eckstein, *The Poverty of Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 85.

¹⁵¹ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 1–8.

Chapter 3

Between “Dignified Sciences” and “Clumsy Experiments”¹: Muscles, Mothers, and Femininity in Women’s Physical Education

In 1937, writer and educator Enriqueta de Parodi authored *Luis es un Don Juan*, relating the romance between a macho “Don Juan” Luis and Mati, the young female protagonist through whom the author spoke forcefully on a vision of the revolution lesser told. In opposition to the patriarchal norms present in revolutionary society, Mati challenged normative understandings of children and family as a requirement for women’s happiness, embodying de Parodi’s swelling frustration with inequality in the home.² For de Parodi, an educated *cardenista* born in Cumpas, Sonora, and many other women of her generation, the revolution made gains in efforts to improve the lives of the marginalized rural masses, yet less progress had been made to answer the “woman question.” De Parodi related that women lived steeped in pain as domestic slaves or as the “lascivious toys of men” but the time had come for them to become lions, fighting for liberation by demonstrating their strength and energy and exhibiting confidence in their civil value. For it would be in the “womb of the *mujeres de lucha*” that the emboldened *morena* of future generations would gestate and emerge as selfless and fair citizens of the future.³

The revolution was an agrarian and labor movement and citizen-building for women was central in revolutionary ideologies through sports, as well. Revolutionary leadership continually struggled to agree upon an ideal woman citizen and programs for developing her, even though most officials agreed that women had been left ignored, sickly, ignorant, and religiously fanatical, the result of patriarchal Catholic indoctrination and partnerships with abusive and vice-

¹ Maria Luisa de la Torre Otero, “Congreso N de Madres En Estados Unidos La Necesidad de Educar a Nuestras Hijas,” *El Diario*, December 29, 1908, Hemeroteca Nacional.

² Andrew M Gordus, “El proto-femenismo y la mujer nueva en Luis es un Don Juan por Enriqueta de Parodi,” in *Memoria: XIX Coloquio de Literatura Mexicana e Hispanoamericana*, ed. Coloquio de las Literaturas Mexicanas et al. (Hermosillo, Sonora: Universidad de Sonora, Departamento de Letras y Lingüística, 2005), 263–70.

³ Enriqueta de Parodi, “La Mujer de Lucha,” *El Nacional*, April 5, 1936.

ridden husbands. Leaders of the emerging revolutionary welfare state pursued rational solutions to the woman problem to liberate her from oppression. By valorizing her body as regenerative and in need of intervention, health experts and educators moved to control, shape, and legitimize the ideal “New Woman” through exercise programs. The new social and economic order demanded of her a new abnegation, no longer based on piety or religiosity, but on patriotism as she would exercise to ensure that future generations could build upon a strong physical and spiritual bedrock. Optimistic revolutionaries believed they could propagate a generation of rational athlete-mothers of high character who could contribute to the construction of a modern workforce and advance revolutionary cultural programs. Yet, the still largely male leadership failed to challenge traditional masculinity and femininity and sent contradictory messages about women’s proper role in sports participation.⁴

Women’s Education in the Porfiriato

Revolutionary cultural leaders believed that ignorance was an important factor in the lowly condition of the people and believed that the situation could be improved through education and the transformation of day to day habits.⁵ Like many ideas carried out in the revolution, such as *indigenismo*,⁶ late Porfirian reformers and scientists started new cultural programs for women that would carried further in the revolution. Liberal protests in favor of pedagogical reforms for women’s education had been present since independence, but officials with indigent coffers in the war-torn nineteenth century directed more attention and resources to

⁴ Mary K. Vaughan, “Introduction,” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, ed. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary K. Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 23.

⁵ Maximo Silva, “A La Juventud Escolar Femenina,” in *Memoria de La Secretaria de Educacion Publica*, 1st ed., vol. 7 (México, D.F, 1928); Stephanie J. Smith, “Educating the Mothers of the Nation the Project of Revolutionary Education in Yucatán,” in *The Women’s Revolution in Mexico, 1910-1953*, ed. S. E. Mitchell and Patience A. Schell (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 37–42.

⁶ Martin S. Stabb, “Indigenism and Racism in Mexican Thought: 1857-1911,” *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 1, no. 4 (1959): 405; Jorge Chávez Chávez, “El Indigenismo Chihuahuense Durante El Porfiriato,” *Ensayos Históricos* 21, no. 21 (2009): 1–23.

obtain political stability and to build infrastructure. While these remained priorities in the Porfiriato, improvements in these areas made social changes more possible and voices for reform reached crescendo.⁷ On December 29, 1908, María Luisa de la Torre Otero, a contributor to periodical *El Diario* and later author of *El folklore en México* (1933), represented one of the most recognized educational reformers for women. She urged debate on the country's pedagogical program after attending the 1908 National Congress of Mothers (NCM) meeting in the United States, an organization that evolved into the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). For de la Torre, educational programs had grown severely out of touch with the day to day realities of ordinary women. While a few upper-class ladies attended courses in business and cultural studies, she felt that most women, and especially lower class mothers, needed a practical education rooted in what should be considered the "dignified and domestic sciences." She considered cultural education of many "clumsy experiments" in women's education because they distracted women from more practical lessons that could improve day to day life such as coursework on child rearing, industrial skills, and modern hygiene.⁸ Educational opportunities proved rare for urban middle and upper class girls in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but, for the poor, private school admission was a virtual impossibility.

Some of the earliest and most influential criticism of the education of girls came from sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), best known as the father of modern sociology, whose landmark *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (1860) exerted significant pedagogical influence in advocating for action-based learning. Varying educational ministries, from the Secretaría de Justicia y Instrucción Pública (SJIP) to the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), consistently published his essays on inheritance and social evolution and situated his platform for

⁷ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 26–29.

⁸ María Luisa de la Torre Otero, "Congreso N de Madres En Estados Unidos La Necesidad de Educar a Nuestras Hijas," *El Diario*, December 29, 1908, Hemeroteca Nacional.

intellectual, moral, and physical education as the core of its programs until the mid-1920s.⁹

Spencer positioned physical education as a necessity in modern life and advocated for universal women's education. His work was used by some education officials to promote women's education reform.¹⁰

Spencer's study of western health and education found that contemporary girls' programs taught few practical lessons and even damaged the physical health of students. Lessons that taught conformity to ornate ladylike behavior and aesthetics were still predominately administered by religious organizations or private tutors for affluent families. With curricula consisting mostly of memorization exercises in poetry, literature, and general refinement, he argued that programs produced accomplishments that only helped a young woman gain in social position or attract a well-to-do husband, but failed to offer value to the individual or society at large. He also noted that girls were virtually imprisoned indoors in sickly conditions when in school, rarely leaving the classroom. Still, Spencer blamed the poor state of children's health on modern women's ignorance with child-rearing, nutrition, hygiene, and to the most basic rules of genetic inheritance.¹¹ He concluded that health was essential for preservation, and therefore the strength of human body lay at the foundation of the family and all human societies. Education programs should, then, dedicate more time to develop children in these areas. He avowed that physical education was an obvious law of nature, building strength, sharpening perceptions, quickening judgment, and raising spirits, and for him, the best way to teach it was to simply stay out of the way of children. Free play was healthy and got children outdoors. It also encouraged

⁹ The SEP distanced itself from Spencer because he was a positivist, but it kept the moral, physical, and intellectual educational model in tact. His book remained a core teacher's text into the middle of the 1920s. Wilhelm Mann, "Variedades Universtarias: La Doctrina de Herbert Spencer y las Lineas Directrices para el Progreso de la Educación," ed. Secretaría de Justicia y Instrucción Pública, *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 5, no. 6–8 (1906): 456–506.

¹⁰ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Análisis crítico de la labor desarrollado," *Memoria de la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1928, 180–84.

¹¹ Herbert Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*.

exercise and creativity, while not over-taxing the mind, a practice many believed induced illness and weakened brain-power through time.¹²

Public education officials in the Consejo Superior de Educación Pública (CSEP) invoked Spencer often in regular debates on physical education in the late Porfiriato as they devised curricula of usable knowledge for girls' schools. The Consejo featured prominent pedagogical and medical minds of the day, including Ezequiel A. Chávez, Dr. Eduardo Liceaga, José Terres, Cecilia Mallet, Esther Huidobro de Azua, Luis E. Ruiz, J. Arrangoiz, and J.R. de Chávez. Dolores Correa Zapata, a poet, activist, and participant, proposed a new program in one meeting for the establishment of girls-only secondary boarding schools in 1907 that included physical education as a part of core coursework. Instructors from the normal and preparatory school campuses gave their time to establish a pilot school and enrolled over 80 students in its first semester. They graduated 25 to 30 students per year after just one or two years of study. More importantly, these CSEP discussions represented among the first moments officials seriously debated action on exercise programs as an essential part girls' education before leaders made physical education obligatory in 1908. Indeed, they believed it was necessary for the development of their physical well-being and for teaching morality, both requirements for molding a complete, productive, and happy person. As Dr. Rafael Martínez Freg insisted, girls needed an institution that recognized them as humans first.¹³

The CSEP drew-up plans to complement primary education with curricula that more harmoniously developed women's supposed "natural faculties." This program again confined

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Dolores Correa Zapata, "¡Año Nuevo! A La Mujer Mexicana!," *La Mujer Mexicana*, January 1904, 1; Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., "Consejo S. de Educación Pública: Sesión Del 11 de Abril de 1907," *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 7, no. 1-3 (1907): 113-16; Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, "Consejo S. de Educación Pública: Sesión Del 11 de Abril de 1907"; Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., "Consejo S. de Educación Pública: Sesión Del 22 de Agosto de 1907," *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 8, no. 1-4 (1907): 53-55.

girls and women to the home as officials rationalized that they would prove most valuable to society there. The same line of reasoning led Martínez, a medical physician, to doubt the usefulness of courses in math and logic for girls. Without challenge from his peers, he argued that girls had consistently shown that their imaginative faculties naturally overpowered their ability to reason.¹⁴ Beyond classroom work, Justo Sierra and others saw opportunity to sell the school to the public as a monument of progress, including hygienic bathrooms that allowed regular bathing, clothes washing, and conservation of “girls’ modesty.” They would also practice Swedish gymnastic exercises daily, in addition to dance, swimming, and, when possible, tennis and other racquet sports that instilled habits of discipline, order, and cleanliness. Some teachers worried that poor transportation in the cities would limit admissions and they also raised doubts that families would even consent to boarding their daughters because they would lose their household labor. Public health experts further worried that administering vigorous physical education in the middle of the polluted city would prove counter-productive.¹⁵ On September 12, 1907, the Commission agreed to move the project ahead anyway and Díaz approved the facility’s construction.¹⁶

Women’s Education in the Revolution

Immediately after the formation of the SEP in 1921, low budgets tempered growth of physical education programs for boys and girls. Prominent sports voices continued to make the case for women’s physical education in government-subsidized trade magazine *Educación Física*

¹⁴ Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, “Consejo S. de Educación Pública: Sesión Del 11 de Abril de 1907”; Claude Dumas and Marta Pou Madinaveitia, *Justo Sierra y el México de su tiempo, 1848-1912*, 1. ed (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1986), 209.

¹⁵ Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., “Consejo S. de Educación Pública: Sesión Del 18 de Abril de 1907,” *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 7, no. 1–3 (1907): 126–30; Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, “Consejo S. de Educación Pública: Sesión Del 22 de Agosto de 1907.”

¹⁶ Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., “Consejo S. de Educación Pública: Sesión Del 3 de Octubre de 1907,” *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 8, no. 1–4 (1907): 214–217; Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*.

in the following years. Physical education inspectors José F. Peralta and José U. Escobar, functionaries of the Dirección de Educación Física (DiEF) under the Departamento de Bellas Artes (DBA) in the SEP, launched its publication in 1922 to help advance President Álvaro Obregón's "noble war" to improve the national race. The president enthusiastically supported the project and awarded \$500 pesos as a start-up for the operation and \$200 pesos as a monthly budget. Peralta continued to work closely on the content of the magazine with President Plutarco Elías Calles into 1925.¹⁷

Peralta intended the journal to circulate as widely as the respected medical journals of the day, featuring the latest science in physical culture and the most significant essays from experts both at home and abroad. Criticisms of girls' education featured prominently in a number of issues. For example, one article, presumably authored by Peralta or Escobar, cited a crisis in Mexico City where one could only find girls with flattened breasts, bent shoulders, stunted arms, narrow backs, and a lazy gait, likening them to the sickly salon girls described by Spencer of 1850s London.¹⁸ Further, the author contended that girls in the city possessed sunken posture and stiffness in motions, completely lacking the glowing eyes of a strong and energetic girl. Their fair complexion indicated poor circulation, considered the most important attribute for attaining good beauty and an essential indicator of good health of the organs and spine. While the reasons for this condition were multi-faceted, he blamed discriminatory practices, often based on a culture inculcated by the rich, that overly protected girls. For example, unlike boys, primary school teachers discouraged girls from free-play in their leisure time that would lead to basic coordination, poise, and the development of grace. Exercises that incorporated girls were said to have completely lacked vigor and worked to enhance only one's feet or hands.¹⁹ The author also

¹⁷ Letter from Severo Contreras to Lázaro Cárdenas, May 19, 1936, Presidentes; LCR 532.2/30, AGN.

¹⁸ "¿Conviene a Las Nina La Gimnasia Cotidiana?," *Educación Física* 1, no. 4 (1923): 21–24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

mocked the most affluent girls at federal schools because even when they wished to participate in sports they wore extravagant dresses too expensive to dirty and too restrictive in which to move. Moreover, exercises, according to one instructor, routinely gave way to clowning and gossip and wealthier girls practiced traditional etiquette that left them stiffened and suppressed of all exuberance for life.²⁰

More important than restrictive clothing and fear of mockery, educators struggled most in getting girls to attend school at all. Indeed, even girls that did attend only spent an average of six hours a day at school.²¹ The Constitution of 1917 made attendance mandatory and authorities threatened to levy stiff fines of up to \$5.20 pesos per absence, but teachers still complained of low attendance, especially among girls. Some parents mistrusted teachers and feared the corruption of their daughters or generally saw few practical benefits from attendance. Punitive threats were commonly met with penned parental excuses to administrators.²² Schools still often segregated boys from girls in the classroom, but girls' schools consistently lacked many necessities such as chalkboards, books, and benches.²³ Such realities moved experts to fear that weaknesses developed in childhood would become chronic throughout one's life, and perhaps inheritable would stymie regeneration efforts before they could even begin.²⁴

In January of 1923, the SEP opened the Escuela Elemental de Educación Física (EEEF) in the Federal District (DF) and SEP minister José Vasconcelos, José F. Peralta, and others served as first administrators. The school found a home in the old national normal school, where crews haphazardly converted large second story rooms into gymnasiums and volleyball courts. In its first enrollment period, Peralta grew concerned that there was not enough space for all of

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Smith, "Educating the Mothers of the Nation: The Project of Revolutionary Education in Yucatán," 41–43.

²³ Ibid., 41.

²⁴ "¿Conviene a Las Nina La Gimnasia Cotidiana?"

the applicants. The school, in fact, initially turned down half of its applicants and adopted stiff entrance requirements, welcoming only 150 of the most qualified applicants for lack of resources. Of the original 150 were 110 young men and 40 young women and men dominated the ranks of the professorship as well, as the school offered courses in exercise, sports, and kinesiology from Peralta, Julio L. Martin, Erich Joseph, Alberto Landa, Dr. Ranulfo Bravo, and Lamberto Álvarez Gayou. Even though it closed after graduating just one class of specialists, the school provided a blueprint for future projects.²⁵

In 1924, the Escuela Nacional de Maestros (ENM) officially accepted the premise of gender equality and formed co-education courses to create a generation of educators that were aware of the realities and needs of others.²⁶ Nevertheless, women still took exercise, sports, and callisthenic courses in the physical education school separately for many years for moral reasons. Both men and women at the school wore white, symbolizing their purity and dedication to the most altruistic sporting spirit. Although men wore tank tops, pants, and cleats for vigorous outdoor athletics, women wore a sailor's blouse with baggy pants and stiff shoes.²⁷ The women's uniforms afforded more freedom of movement than the nineteenth century ankle-length dress, but they frequently included accessories that identified participants as feminine. These included the additions of bows, flowers, wide collars, and even jewelry. When girls at other institutions were permitted to wear shorts, the length tended to hang lower than that of boys and closer to the knee.²⁸

²⁵ H. Ahumada Jr., "Inauguración de La Escuela Física," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 3 (1923): 350–52; Secretaría de Educación Pública, "Análisis crítico de la labor desarrollado"; Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 29; Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*, 63–64.

²⁶ Ahumada Jr., "Inauguración de la Escuela Física"; Secretaría de Educación Pública, "Análisis crítico de la labor desarrollado"; Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 29; Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*, 63–64.

²⁷ Ahumada Jr., "Inauguración de La Escuela Física."

²⁸ Chávez González, "Construcción de la Nación y el Género Desde el Cuerpo: La Educación Física en el México Posrevolucionario."

Even as revolutionaries celebrated the “New Woman” that the government would help develop spiritually, morally, and physically, public officials continued to specialize labor based on gender stereotypes. For many men and women revolutionaries, women’s liberation would come when she performed her revolutionary duty as spiritual leaders, protectors of innocence, and guardians of morality. Many officials reasoned that these qualities, widely considered part of women’s nature, made them inherently gifted teachers. Dr. Maximo Silva, a prominent physical educator, lauded the virtues of young women in his 1928 plead for their patriotic sacrifice for the future of the nation. For Silva, teaching was a prestigious and patriotic calling and he characterized those who answered this calling as “saviors of the precepts of hygiene” that enlightened spirits by teaching physical, moral, and civic virtues, all ingredients he deemed necessary for prosperity.²⁹ Indeed, Silva described young women teachers as,

Bands of butterflies that flutter around delightfully suspended nests of intelligence; irises of national hope; clouds that glide; beautiful like the encouragement of innocence, velvety and lustrous like the stoat that crowns the peaks of our volcanoes; delicate flowers adorned with the perfumes of their clean virtues of the purest affections; listen a moment to she who has the legitimate satisfaction of having helped drive various generations to the sublime summits of the profession of education.³⁰

Silva called on young women to stamp out the ignorance and disease that destroyed the beauty and righteousness in society. He implored them to introduce themselves to communities as role models, “goddesses of health,” that would impart a practical and healthy physical education to improve vigor, intelligence, and love between neighbors. He ended his romantic essay with “For a healthy body in the service of a healthy soul!...Alus Vivere (live for others)!”³¹

²⁹ Silva, “A La Juventud Escolar Femenina,” 58.

³⁰ A stoat is a short-tailed weasel. See Ibid.

³¹ Silva, “A La Juventud Escolar Femenina.”

Teaching gave young women new social mobility, but their participation did not go unchallenged by some conservative men that contemplated restrictions on women in the workplace to protect the family. In 1922, for example, one man lobbied the SEP to ban all female teachers from marrying, holding that married women became pregnant and that any good revolutionary mother seeking employment risked putting the child and family at risk of neglect. The protest prompted a ministry study under Dr. Rafael Santamarina, a puericulturalist and then general director of primary education. The study encouraged the SEP to increase benefits for pregnant teachers and some officials in the SEP believed that pregnant instructors and young mothers could help young girls see how to care for a child first-hand.³² Women made professional gains as teachers and were often preferred because administrators believed their motherly temperament made them perfectly suited for the environment.³³

In 1925, Peralta, now General Director of the DiEF under President Plutarco Calles, gave regular updates on the development of physical education programs for girls in the various schools, mostly around the capital, noting that progress was being made. He was among the most enthusiastic instructors of physical education at the Escuela Preparatoria, started local sporting traditions, such as the school's chants, and was one of the first promoters to organize inter-regional tournaments that included girls.³⁴ Under his watch, some domestic schools dedicated an entire Saturday to physical education and sports. He and other inspectors personally assisted in training girls for public events, such as Cinco de Mayo festivals that featured dance, aesthetic gymnastic exhibitions, and pyramids. The festivals were held at the new Estadio Nacional in front of 2,000 to 3,000 spectators with girls from the Escuela Tecnica Comercial being trained regularly and very "delicately" by physical education inspector Enrique J. Zapata at the Parque

³² Rafael Santamarina, "Profesoras Casadas en Servicio," Study (1922-1923), DPH, Caja 35557, exp. 5/27/31, AHSEP. For more information on "puericulture," see chapter 5.

³³ Smith, "Educating the Mothers of the Nation," 41-44.

³⁴ Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*, 61.

Lira in Tacubaya.³⁵ Another celebration on September 15, 1927 featured hundreds of Zapata's trained dancers and athletes dressed in, both, traditional Tehuana regalia and white athletic uniforms, respectively. The troop performed rhythmic gymnastics exhibitions to eager crowds to the backdrop of the Ignacio (El Tata Nacho) Fernández Esperon's rendition of Zapotec folkloric music in front of 90,000 people at the National Stadium.³⁶ Boys' and girls' squads also performed callisthenic exercises with an archery bow without showing fatigue. Newspapers celebrated the Escuela Técnica Comercial as the most successful school. Following the event, the girls showed enough enthusiasm to convince the school to elevate sporting programs there, especially in rhythmic calisthenics and gymnastics and they performed at several subsequent national holiday events. At the same time, Zapata helped the athletes from that school, and girls from others from the Escuela Nacional de Maestros, join the Unión Atlético de Señoritas del Distrito Federal that Zapata had himself recently formed to promote physical culture girls and young women.³⁷

The testimony of Alura Flores, a pioneer as an instructor and athlete in the early revolution, detailed the progress made in women's sport after 1921 and the significant challenges that still laid before the country. She attended the ENP from 1920 to 1924 and recalled her time there fondly. Thanks to the charisma and support of teachers like Peralta, she noted that students were encouraged to pursue their passions in life and many took up physical education. She joined the school's basketball team, named the "Cyclones," and played alongside future national sporting stars, such as Olga Moreno, María Uribe Jasso, and Fernanda Cabrera Cedillo.³⁸ For

³⁵ José F. Peralta, "Informe de las Actividades de Llevada a Cabo por la Dirección General de Educación Física Durante la Semana Comprendida del 16 a 21 de Marzo de 1925," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 3, no. 10 (1925): 130–32; Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Fue Brillante la Fiesta Escolar Ayer En El Estadio," *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 5, no. 6 (1926): 95–97.

³⁶ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Magníficos Comentarios de La Prensa a La Fiesta Escolar Celebrada En El Estadio El 15 de Septiembre," *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 5, no. 10 (1927): 198–213.

³⁷ Dirección de Educación Física, "Notas de la Dirección de Educación Física," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 4, no. 3 (1925): 92–96.

³⁸ Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*, 60.

many girls like Flores, sports participation in regional and national tournaments presented rare moments in which they could feel like and become champions.³⁹ Sports programs for all ages often made lasting impacts on their students. Flores and her “Cyclones” teammates continued to meet once a year for a game to relive the days of their youth.⁴⁰

As part of a pilot program with the DiEF, Flores was selected in 1928 with other women to study at the resuscitated Escuela Universitaria de Educación Física. At the school, students trained from one to three years and learned all common sports (such as basketball, baseball, and volleyball), philosophies on physical culture from the ancient Greeks and German gymnasts, and physiology. Each student pursued a sport in which to specialize and Flores chose basketball.⁴¹ Flores chose basketball and swimming. She later taught at the Escuela de Corte y Confeccion and as a dance and sports coach in Mexico and the US.

Flores and other coaches faced significant challenges developing sports for girls. One instructor in 1923 said that only two out of 50 girls could do a pull up or touch their toes. Speaking on organizing her first girls’ sports tournament in the capital, Flores noted that many girls completely lacked coordination and grace and had trouble understanding the rules of games, lowering confidence to the point that many interested girls hesitated to join teams in fear of embarrassment. Even when coaches were able identified the best girl players securing parental authorizations to carry out more intensive training often proved difficult to obtain. While most parents were supportive, many remained skeptical, requiring home visits from coaches who delivered sales pitches on the merits of the daily practices.⁴² In the face of so many challenges, nervous teachers avoided public exhibitions of which government officials held high hopes of progress to show off the gains of the revolution to the public. Teachers, after all, were held

³⁹ Ibid., 15, 60.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 60.

⁴¹ Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*.

⁴² Ibid., 67.

responsible for organizing, training, and bussing in children for public sporting performances in national parades and tournaments. Instructors, fearful that their students were ill-prepared, frequently asked for last minute help from the SEP. Others simply penned excuses as to why their team could not attend with the most common being that they never received an invitation and thus were left with too little time to put together an adequate contingent.⁴³



Illustration 3.1: Ball exercises at the Escuela "General Amarillas" in Mexico City. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.⁴⁴

There were just a few physical education experts in 1921 and by 1935 women represented just 59 of 215, or 27.4%, of all instructive personnel at the DiEF. This was only marginally better than the 26.6% of student enrollment at the EEF ten years earlier.⁴⁵ Slow hiring and reenrollment was likely in part to lingering stereotypes concerning women's natural faculties that some believed made them a poor fit for a job as a coach. For example, one male educator argued in *El Universal* that women instructors could not perform the job as they were overly modest, timid, and conscientious. While he acknowledged that conditions had improved, he expressed astonishment at the ignorance to basic principles of physiology and anatomy that gave

⁴³ Luis Guzmán, "Academia #1 de Enseñanza Domestica," (January 23, 1935), DPH, Caja 35556, Exp. 32, AHSEP.

⁴⁴ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Escuela de 'General Amarillas' - Clase de Cultura Física," *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 3 (1923): 245.

⁴⁵ Antonio Estopier, "Relacion del Personal de la Oficina de Educación Física que ha Rendido los Datos Solicitados por la Oficina de Estadística Escolar, Cuyas Formas se Remiten con esta Fecha," May 17, 1935, Caja 35534, DPeH, Exp. 24, no. 7-8, AHSEP.

these teachers poor judgment and put participants in danger of serious injury. Nevertheless, other physical education inspectors scoffed at this suggestion and blamed the poor quality of women's sports instruction on impatient administrators who expedited programs meant to last three years to just two or three months. Critics argued that this left girls' physical education in an embarrassing state and only rewarded the stubborn and inept.⁴⁶

Girls failed physical competency exams at higher rates than boys, but physical education was improving.⁴⁷ Women professors made due with low attendance and poor funding, guiding multiple school teams to national championships and claimed their most satisfying victories being those over male-coached teams.⁴⁸ By the late 1920s, all schools featured notable competition from girls, including domestic and reformatory schools now outfitted with standard sporting fields or open terraces for exercises. The Escuela Nacional de Enseñanza Domestica, for example, had 1,147 girls enrolled in day courses, and another 826 at night and regularly practiced Swedish gymnastics. The Escuela de Artes y Oficios boasted an enrollment of 838 students with 25 teachers. All students practiced physical education by performing exercises called flanks, stretches, cherry pickers, marches and more three times a week for an hour or two to develop alignment, posture, and the body in general.⁴⁹ By 1928, the SEP listed physical education as one of the four thematic requirements for domestic school students, alongside sewing, cooking, and chorus, although the exact hours to be dedicated to each task were left at the teacher's discretion.⁵⁰ Lessons also instructed girls on how to teach physical culture to

⁴⁶ Francisco Heckel, "La Evolucion de La Cultura Física," *El Universal*, February 27, 1928, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁴⁷ Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Escuela de Ensenanza Domestica," *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 3 (1922): 236–41.

⁵⁰ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Escuelas Nocturnas," *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1928, 180–84.

children in anticipation of motherhood. These courses included lectures on puericulture, hygiene, and nutrition.⁵¹

Competitions also received publicity in national papers. On January 1, 1928, for example, newspapermen wrote favorably about a well-attended and hard-fought basketball game at the Colegio Mexicano between team “Escuela Superior de Administracion” and the triumphant “Oaxaca.”⁵² In April of 1928, *El Universal* detailed groups of students that assembled in the picturesque canals and *chinampas* of Xochimilco to stage an inter-school rowing competition called the Primer Encuentro Inter-Escolar Femenil de Ragata. Only five teams from three schools competed in the 300 and 500 meter races, but the Escuela Nacional de Enseñanza Domestica, led by Emilia Silva, emerged triumphant in front of hundreds of spectators sitting on the banks of the canals. *El Universal* noted that, until this moment, if foreigners had not directed water sports in the capital, then they did not exist and sporting activity by the “lovely sex” had previously remained nonexistent. The squad received free lunch from a local *comedor* as a prize for their performance.⁵³

⁵¹ La Escuela Nacional de Enseñanza Domestica, “Plan de Estudios,” ed. Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 1, no. 3 (1916): 199–225.

⁵² Linesman, “Un Brillante Juego Femenil de Basket,” *El Universal*, January 2, 1928, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁵³ “El Primer Encuentro Interescolar Femenil de Regatas Se Efectuo Ayer en Xochimilco, Resultando Triunfante La Escuela ‘Enseñanza Domestica,’” *El Universal*, April 3, 1928, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

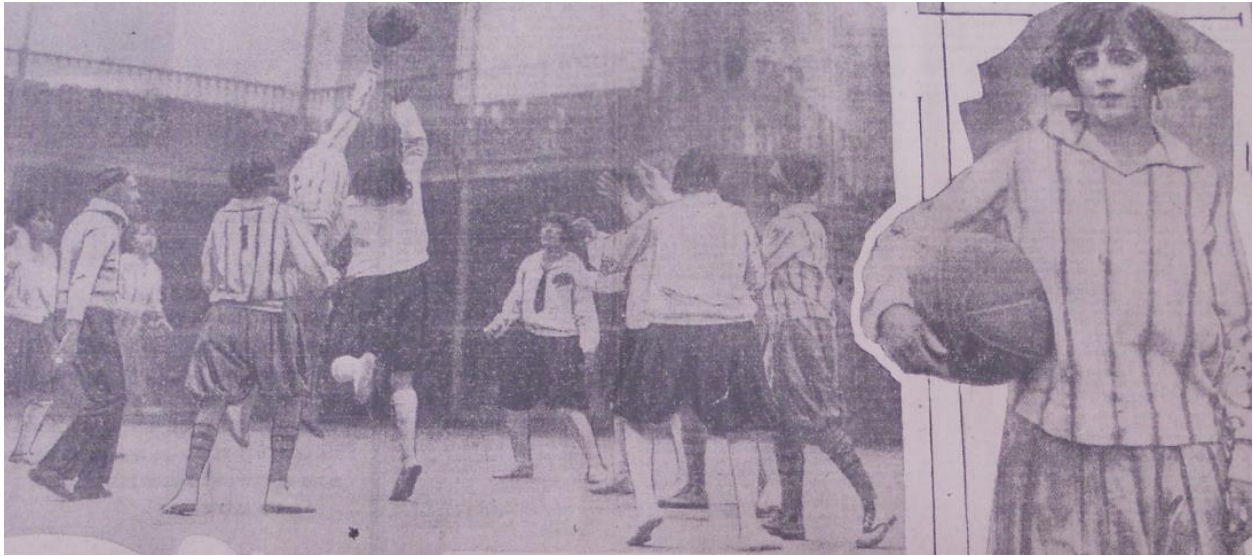


Illustration 3.2: Players from basketball team "Oaxaca." Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.⁵⁴

Sport sparked renewed interest in reformatories for delinquent children as well, especially vagrants engaged in underage sexual activity. In 1930, Manuel Gamio revived interest in the Reformatory for Women in Coyoacán when he discussed experimental cultural programs for regeneration that he intended to use as a role model for the entire nation.⁵⁵ Facilities, constructed in 1903 by engineer J.J. Mendoza Montenegro, included multiple sports fields, two courts for tennis, and also dirt and paved patios for free play in addition to a small grandstand with capacity for 600 students to watch and cheer on the participants.⁵⁶ Guadalupe Zúñiga, a psychologist and dance instructor, for example, worked with delinquent communities as a judge on the Tribunal de Menores and argued that all schools, including the Escuela de Enseñanza Domestica, could function as reform facilities. She recommended dance and sports to replace the energies of unruly and previously unsupervised children.⁵⁷

The government employed radio as much as they could to supplement face to face instruction, understanding that most girls stopped attending school after their elementary years

⁵⁴ *El Universal*, January 2, 1928.

⁵⁵ Angeles González Gamio, *Manuel Gamio: una lucha sin final* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003), 122.

⁵⁶ "Reformatorio Para Mujeres," n/d, AHDF 415.6 (073)/ 8, Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal.

⁵⁷ Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*, 35–37.

and noting the difficulties many mothers and girls faced to leave the house and find transportation. Radio programs discussed hygiene and nutrition and offered creative ways to promote healthy exercises with items around the house like rudimentary furniture, beds, and tables. *Educación Física* and *El Nacional* also published diagrams for at-home exercises that included women adorned in dresses doing simple stretches and core exercises and they avoided anything believed to contribute to the building of large muscles.⁵⁸ Nobody received more air time in girls' physical education than Concepción Caro, a professor at the Escuela Nacional de Enseñanza Domestica. In 1926, over the SEP's exclusive broadcasts, Caro delivered regular speeches to young girls on proper etiquette, use of time, and the expected duties of women. She argued that families were the foundations of societies and nations and, because they reflected each other, the woman is the government and the soul of the family in the home. According to Caro, the ideal woman should govern firmly, keeping in mind the three main goals of mothering that included developing the body, the mind, and the feelings of her children. As magistrate of the home, mothers often presided as household doctors and educators and thus should spend most of their time at home improving the family's physical health. This included using the latest

⁵⁸ "La Gimnasia en el Hogar," *Educación Física* 1, no. 3 (April 1923): 51; "Haga Ud. Gimnasia," *El Nacional*, April 18, 1936, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

principles in hygiene and promoting physical culture.⁵⁹ Indeed, for Caro, the home should constitute a site of rest, inspiration, and prosperity, not of darkness, fetidity, and illness.⁶⁰

Illustration 3.3: Girls stretching during exercise routines at school. Courtesy of the AHSEP and AGN.⁶¹



María Luisa Ross Landa, a well-known writer and dancer working on behalf of the SEP, also orchestrated exercise programs on the radio in the 1930s. She and others contributed to a lineup on the SEP's new broadcast station, Estacion C.Z.E., to bring a new method of cultural education to distant pueblos for about 30 hours a week. While cooking, hygiene, and art remained core topics of influence in programming, the first radio class to be given was a course on physical education and it continued for an hour and a half weekly.⁶² By 1933, Estacion X.F.X., Radiofonica Escolar offered a series of courses that could be taken from home in addition to filling supplemental work that would be sent to test and complete classroom exercises. Of the 13 courses offered, four were gymnastics or physical education courses, specialized for co-ed adults (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 7am), for women (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 7am), for children (Tuesday and Thursday at 10am), and for anyone with a focus on primary education. Physical education was offered daily at 7am and focused on a different type of exercise each day. Categories included exercises for the

⁵⁹ Concepción Caro, "Primera Conferencia de la Señorita Concepción Caro, Dada Por Radio," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 5, no. 6 (1927): 161–63.

⁶⁰ Guadalupe R. de Haro, "Conferencia que dara por Radio la Senora Gudalalupe R. de Haro. 'La Casa En Relacion con la Salud y el Hogar como Sitio de Descanso e Inspiracion,'" ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 5, no. 6 (1927): 170–73.

⁶¹ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Cover," *El Maestro Rural* 7, no. 9 (November 1, 1935).

⁶² Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "Artículo Publicado por 'El Universal' en su Edicion Especial Dedicada el Radio," *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 6, no. 12 (1927): 305–6.

improvement of posture (marching and circulation), respiration (stretching the lungs and oxygenating the blood), and equilibrium (for neuro-muscular control) in addition to shoulders, core, chest, back, and arms and legs routines. Two other courses were offered on domestic education and nursing at home, while four more pertained to the arts.⁶³ Teachers also used their shows to plead with communities to work with instructors in the formation of sports teams, anti-alcohol leagues, and sports tournaments.

Femininity, Health, and Muscles

El Mundo Ilustrado published stories in 1905 on women weight lifters in Europe in an attempt to change ideas about women's role in physical culture. The stories often featured a woman known as the "Vulcan" after the Roman god of fire and iron. The name proved fitting for the Bavarian as her strength described as that of three men.⁶⁴ Revolutionaries, nevertheless, thought of such women as more of a sideshow than an exemplar of ideal health or beauty. Revolutionaries wanted to reinvigorate the female body to produce strong children and find ways for women to be useful outside of the home and office.⁶⁵ But few believed that it should significantly conflict with traditional standards for beauty and femininity. In 1931, *El Nacional* published a manifesto from a Spanish woman's sports club as an exemplar program. The manifesto called for women to take up sports and advocated for women's equality. It also promoted the invigoration and perfection of the female body and spirit. Mexicans saw potential in such programs because, like their own, the Spanish club emphasized that sports should be available for everyone regardless of religion or social class. In fact, the organization laid out specific strategies to provide spaces in poor neighborhoods where residents could play for free.

⁶³ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., "La Escuela por Radio," *Memoria de la Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1928, 880–903.

⁶⁴ "El Vigor Físico y el Desarrollo Muscular," *El Mundo Ilustrado*, July 2, 1905.

⁶⁵ Juan de Eca, "El Deporte y Nuestras 'Girls,'" *El Universal Ilustrado*, June 11, 1924, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

Nevertheless, the club made sure to highlight that this effort should be undertaken by leaving out any efforts to “masculinize” women and they forbid the practice of any sport deemed violent, especially boxing and rugby.⁶⁶

De Parodi warned that women should no longer rear effeminate children, nor should girls act like “little dolls.” She estimated that women needed to be physically, mentally, and morally tough to meet the new social and economic plan of the revolution.⁶⁷ In practice, though, most sports programs restricted girls from vigorous activities after second grade due to concerns about over-exertion and believing girls were vulnerable to degenerative influences of so-called brutish boy’s games.⁶⁸ Often, girls programs, in fact, fell under jurisdiction of the Dirección de Cultura Estética (DCE), which typically taught fine arts.⁶⁹ As of 1923, this sub-department employed over 100 pianists to assist in playing for rhythmic gymnastics and exercise for students in Mexico City in addition to 25 players for the *jardines de niños* and six dance instructors.⁷⁰ The DCE carried out activities that combined gymnastics, calisthenics, dance, music and theatre, often in open-air theatres and festivals. In addition to performing plays and dances such as the “*Jarabe Mexicana*,” the girls also did synchronized exercises in front of large crowds. Between March 19 and May 28, 1922, the festivals were held every few weeks and featured near 10,000 students and workers.⁷¹

From 1926 to 1936, public health and fine arts directives collaborated on many physical education programs. In 1926, Rafael Pérez Taylor, head of the DBA, announced over the radio that his department would stage a concert in collaboration with the DiEF featuring song and

⁶⁶ “Para los Deportistas: Diez Consejos,” *El Nacional*, June 3, 1931, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁶⁷ de Parodi, “La Mujer de Lucha.”

⁶⁸ Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 42.

⁶⁹ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Reglamento Del Departamento de Bellas Artes,” *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 2 (1922): 64–66.

⁷⁰ H. Dirección de Cultura Estética, “Informe General,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 4 (1923): 335–37.

⁷¹ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Informe Que Rinde La Dirección de Cultura Estética a La Secretaría de Educación Pública,” *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 2 (1922): 209.

dance and aesthetic exercises with dumbbells by the girls of the Centro Escolar “Galacio Gómez.”⁷² On the 25 of May, 1926, Moisés Sáenz, physical education instructor and Sub-secretary of the DiEF, made rhythmic gymnastics and aesthetic physical education obligatory for girls. It remained optional for boys. Sáenz also noted that new elective classes on classical dance would also be added to the program with mandatory courses in calisthenics, massage therapy, and even kinesiology.⁷³ Soccer was notably absent from girls, and largely boys, physical education programs until the late 1930s as many officials believed it was associated with lower class vulgarity that provoked dysgenic behavior.⁷⁴ Instead, girls typically participated in more aesthetic physical development programs including rhythmic gymnastics, dance, or softer ball games with modified rules in order to protect their supposed delicate constitution.⁷⁵ Some sports clubs also incorporated hiking into their standard curricula, including the YWCA in Mexico City, which started an organization of hikers led by Lulu Soul.⁷⁶

Swimming, a sport rising in popularity, was widely considered inappropriate for girls by the more conservative public and unhygienic by the scientific community, often leaving only the most daring girls to participate. Many young swimmers were scandalized because they practiced in little clothing and in public spaces. Medical professionals further worried that menstruation in pools could pose a threat to public health.⁷⁷ Others were concerned that strenuous activity may damage organs or that menstrual blood may stain or pollute the playing surfaces. Women often

⁷² Secretaría de Educación Pública and Rafael Pérez Taylor, eds., “Invitación,” *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 5, no. 6 (1926): 121–22.

⁷³ Moisés Sáenz, “Implatación de un Curso Breve en la Escuela de Educación Física,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 5, no. 6 (1927): 127–28.

⁷⁴ Leonardo Affonso de Miranda Pereira, “O jogo dos sentidos: Os literatos e a popularização do futebol no Rio de Janeiro,” in *A história contada: capítulos de história social da literatura no Brasil*, ed. Sidney Chalhoub and Leonardo Affonso de Miranda Pereira (Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1998), 209.

⁷⁵ Silva, “A la Juventud Escolar Femenina.”

⁷⁶ M. Elena Ramírez, “M. Elena Ramírez to Jefe Depto. de Psicopedagogía e Higiene,” Report (March 9, 1928), DPH, Caja 35536, Exp. 22, AHSEP.

⁷⁷ Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*, 61–62; Chávez González, “Construcción de la Nación y el Género Desde el Cuerpo: La Educación Física en el México Posrevolucionario.”

developed a position about menstruation and sports in their youth gym classes and frequently asked for excuses to escape participation or stay home from school altogether in fear of “some slipping or bleeding.”⁷⁸ The amenorrhea that resulted from intensive training was also likely considered a sign of poor health in women in reproductive ages.

In the late 1920s, public health officials required girls and women to pass a medical exam before receiving permission to enter public swimming pools. In March of 1928, for example, M. Elena Ramírez, lacking the proper facilities at her campus, asked approval from the Departamento de Psicopedagogía e Higiene (DPH) for young YWCA girls to swim in the pool at the nearby Escuela “La Corregidora de Querétaro.” Use of the pool remained contingent on completion of sanitary medical exams conducted under the supervision of physician Dra. Antonia L. Ursúa. The group attached copies of the exams that included notes on the health of parents, including mental derangement, alcoholism, and syphilis. The exams additionally asked basic questions about the girl’s personal health history like heart illnesses and nephritis and included a section on vaccination history. The sanitary health form also included a questionnaire on the minutiae of one’s menstrual cycle and on one’s nutritional and bathroom habits.⁷⁹ Beyond health, many girls likely faced significant financial constraints. For example, linen bathing suits, mandatory for swimming in public and private pools, cost \$3.50 pesos in 1928 and \$5 pesos and up in 1935, while swim caps ran for \$1.50 pesos. An entire spring set could run up to \$18 pesos.⁸⁰

The controversy of over-masculinization of the body or over-exertion of the nerves in girls that practiced vigorous sports elicited wide-ranging opinions. One expert cited in *Educacion Fisica* argued that it was obvious that if one exercised for hours on end like a blacksmith that she

⁷⁸ Janice Delaney, Mary Jane Lupton, and Emily Toth, *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 61–62.

⁷⁹ Ramírez, “M. Elena Ramírez to Jefe Depto. de Psicopedagogía E Higiene.”

⁸⁰ Spaulding, “‘Trajes de baño’ (Advertisement),” *El Universal Ilustrado*, May 3, 1928, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

would develop rigid muscles and swell like a man. Instead, he argued, exercise for women should be more scientifically calculated. Because science had not developed such a formula, he concluded, it was best for girls to exercise cautiously. Journalists frequently referred to rigorous activities as essentially masculine, and therefore, girls that participated in them would develop compact and circular muscles incongruent with the natural female form. This would then make them unattractive to good men.⁸¹ In Brazil, experts feared that women's participation in masculine sports would transform women into lesbians, so teachers were asked to keep a watchful eye over participants to make sure they maintained their feminine nature.⁸² Physically active women faced a paradox by occupying two spaces at once. They were expected to meet the ideals of femininity, but the athletic body often associated with masculine behaviors contradicted this first ideal.⁸³

Educación Física typically rejected the idea of over-masculinization, a point that is unsurprising considering Peralta's involvement with the publication. One article outlined that nobody expected girls to be as competitive or strong as boys, but girls, no matter their current physical condition, should, in any case, practice daily vigorous exercises that become incrementally more challenging. These activities should strengthen the thoracic cavity, the forearms, and the legs under the guidance of a well-trained instructor. Instead of simplistic dance steps widely taught to girls, the writer argued that instructors should promote muscle-development so that girls too could undergo a transformation like boys did into men. In this process one learned dignified lessons and habits that were carried for a lifetime. He argued that

⁸¹ “¿Conviene a Las Nina La Gimnasia Cotidiana?”

⁸² Goellner, “As Mulheres Fortes São Aquelas que Fazem uma Raça Forte,” 14.

⁸³ Vikki Krane et al., “Living the Paradox: Female Athletes Negotiate Femininity and Muscularity,” *Sex Roles* 50, no. 5/6 (2004): 315–19.

simple daily routines that resulted in healthier organs, strengthened body, improved intelligence, and heightened happiness should all be encouraged.⁸⁴

Another piece in the journal supported vigorous exercise based on the programs under Dr. Dan Milliken of the Lupton's School for Girls in Cincinnati, Ohio. Milliken contended that a graceful act must be swift and easy and he used the observed movements of birds, squirrels, and horses to argue that celerity, certainty, and steadiness of action were only possible for creatures with strength. Therefore, developing strength is the only way to attain grace and beauty and any struggles in acquiring grace should make the rest of life easier.⁸⁵ As Milliken noted, "Muscular strength gives beauty in repose."⁸⁶

Physical educators also often cited the work of William Blaikie, credited with launching the first exercise boom in the US in the 1880s. Blaikie recommended different workout programs depending on the weaknesses of each girl and argued that workouts for women should never be restrained. After all, exercise undeniably decreased all weaknesses girls possessed, including internal problems such as poor circulation, weak organs, low energy, and asthma.⁸⁷ Blaikie, nevertheless, may have contributed negatively to stereotypes about women's natural fragility. He argued that the need for the physical invigoration of women stemmed not only from urgency to help mothers accomplish their everyday tasks at home, but women needed exercise to help control their nerves.⁸⁸ Once girls acquired habits of physical exercise, Blaikie likened exercise to a form of art by arguing that women could shape and craft their bodies however they wished if they were willing to work. He believed that no matter what imperfections women had that four

⁸⁴ "¿Conviene a Las Nina La Gimnasia Cotidiana?"

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ William Blaikie, *How to Get Strong and How to Stay So* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884), 32; "¿Conviene a Las Nina La Gimnasia Cotidiana?"

⁸⁷ Guillermo Blaikie, "Salud, Fuerza, Y Belleza Femeninas," *Educación Física* 1, no. 6 (1923): 7–9.

⁸⁸ Ibid.; Doug Bryant, "William Blaikie and Physical Fitness in Late Nineteenth Century America," *Iron Game History* 2, no. 3 (1992): 4–5.

years of training with him could produce a robust, shapely, agile, and slender body with “superb complexion” and “endowed with personal magnetism.”⁸⁹ *Educación Física* ended one section with this Blaikie quote:

Let every intelligent girl and woman in this land bear in mind that, from every point of view, a vigorous and healthy body, kept toned up by rational, systematic, daily exercise, is one of the very greatest blessings which can be had in this world; that many persons spend tens of thousands of dollars in trying to regain even a part of this blessing when once they have lost it; that the means of getting it are easily within the reach of all, who are not already broken by disease; that it is never too late to begin, and that one hour a day, properly spent, is all that is needed to secure it.⁹⁰

The journal ran another article in support of muscle-development for women and argued that women’s bodies needed strength to face innumerable daily tests associated with child-rearing and housework. He argued that, unlike men, their labor is often unpredictable and unrewarded. The monotonous work performed daily by mothers left their muscles deformed and they needed to carry children, weighing up to thirty or forty pounds, while performing other tasks.⁹¹

Some physical educators also fielded concerns from the public and from within the SEP on the notion that physical education may, in fact, even detract from girls’ intellectual development and studies. One instructor forcefully rebutted this criticism by asking how sports had negatively impacted Phillipa Fawcett, a student-athlete at Cambridge University who in 1890 became the first woman to achieve the top score in the school’s Mathematical Tripos exams. At the time, the school did not award Bachelor’s degrees to women at the institution and, because she was not a man, she was ineligible for the class’ distinguished “Senior Wrangler”

⁸⁹ Blaikie, “Salud, Fuerza, y Belleza Femeninas” by Guillermo Blaikie.”

⁹⁰ Ibid., 9; Blaikie, *How to Get Strong and How to Stay So*, 73.

⁹¹ “La Educación Física y La Mujer,” *Educación Física* 1, no. 5 (1923): 11.

award. Nevertheless, Fawcett's accomplishments garnered international attention and inspired suffrage movements for women globally.⁹²

Sport for Art and Beauty

Like other publications of the time, *Educación Física* printed photos of predominately white women in bathing suits and celebrated the supposed perfection of their thick legs, wide hips, slim waist, thin arms, and light skin.⁹³ The journal, for example featured foreign beauty queens like Harriet Hammond and Dorothy Knapp, a model and Miss America runner-up in 1922. Knapp, once known as the most beautiful woman in the world, frequently advertised the importance of a daily habit of exercise and sports for the cultivation of proportionate beauty.⁹⁴ By the middle of the 1920s most indicated beauty as a sign of good health and the goal of exercise for women.

Europeanized ideals of beauty rarely garnered support from revolutionary cultural leaders who instead celebrated the mixed-race and indigenous features unique to the country. One article in *El Universal* in 1921, for example, reported that indigenous women were already among the most beautiful in the world and should compete in international tournaments. It continued that in the most shielded country pueblos of Jalisco lived hidden beauties of Andalusian charm, but enriched with the nuances of a new race, while Oaxacan and Yucatecan women were second to none. The black eyes of the pale-skinned inhabitants reflected the Veracruzano tropical lassitude, while the women in the north featured ostentatious and robust bodies, yet possessed imponderable grace.⁹⁵ But global consumer culture had influenced fashion trends that marketed

⁹² “¿Conviene a Las Nina La Gimnasia Cotidiana?,” 23–24.

⁹³ “Las Tres Gracias,” *Educación Física* 1, no. 3 (1923): 28; “Cover,” *Educación Física* 1, no. 4 (1923).

⁹⁴ “La Belleza Obtenida por Medio de la Educación Física,” *Educación Física* 1 (February 1923): 39; Paul Gautier, “The Experience of a Famous Beauty: Dorothy Knapp,” in *The Wireless Age (Magazine)*, vol. 10 (Macroni Publishing Corporation, 1922), 15, 26.

⁹⁵ “La Mujer Mexicana en L Concurso InterNacional de Belleza,” *El Universal*, May 2, 1921, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

the thin and sleek “flapper” as sheik. These rag-time consumerists left the home unescorted, and, in their quest to define their own version of the “New Woman,” turned their back on Victorian and traditional femininity. In Mexico, the emerging consumer culture that excited young people revolved in large part around “public spectatorship” produced by new urban spaces, such as department stores, theaters, and stadiums in urban centers⁹⁶ The fad swept through Mexico City where women wearing short dresses and smoking cigarettes were referred to as the *pelonas* by newspapermen in a reference to the “bob” haircuts they wore. This “New Woman” adopted by ordinary urban girls was not the “New Woman” of the socialist, self-abnegating idealistic martyr, but instead was more typified by fashionable US and European women who sought social mobility and general excitement associated with cosmopolitan lifestyles.⁹⁷

Columnists published suggestive pieces and cartoons that attacked the honor of the *pelonas* by painting them as promiscuous and listless, while cultural leaders mocked the new trend as foreign and elitist, not suitable for a decent Mexican public. For participants, it was individualistic, fun, and dangerous. In some ways, access to the trend, largely based on a prescription of thinness, whiteness, and outfitted with chic styles, proved difficult for ordinary girls to achieve.⁹⁸ Physical educators most often discouraged this ideal, instead promoting a lifestyle and body type consistent with ideal health and hygiene prescriptions. They suggested that the trends would prove unnatural and only fleeting.⁹⁹

One educator opined, based on the beautiful women he had seen in US films, that athleticism and exercise may lead to the extinguishing of flapperism and claimed he believed it

⁹⁶ Ageeth Sluis, “BATACLANISMO! Or, How Female Deco Bodies Transformed Postrevolutionary Mexico City,” *The Americas* 66, no. 4 (2010): 469–99.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Anne Rubenstein, “The War on ‘Las Pelonas’: Modern Women and Their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924,” in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, ed. Jocelyn Olcott, Mary K. Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 63–64.

⁹⁹ Henry T. Finck, *Gift of Romantic Love and Personal Beauty: Their Development, Causal Relations, Historic and National Peculiarities* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1887).

was happening in Mexico with young girls never looking so beautiful, feminine, and fertile. He added that their agility and stunning figures showed that the “woman experiment” was succeeding in limiting over-masculinization with modified sports that promoted grace and beauty instead of muscle-building.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, beauty articles wrote that the manly and bony women with rosy cheeks, that took exotic drinks, and ate strong salsas, were vulnerable to premature aging and illnesses. When they aged, their masculine traits would make them undesirable to men. Beauty experts, nevertheless, also disparaged overweight women who they described as lazy and unhygienic, spending their days stuffing themselves with cakes and meat.¹⁰¹ The revolution had no place for either immoral group as they both threatened the stability of the nation at its foundation with poor health. Instead, women should participate in low-impact sports said to reduce women’s vulnerability to hysteria, but that also increased breast size, reduced wrinkles, and toned the muscles. Most of all, girls should play sports because they instilled habits of discipline, self-sacrifice, and loyalty, which were characteristics that all good mothers and wives should possess.

Revolutionary cultural leaders also contended with a competing, and more, athletic version of the flapper that emerged in Europe, the US, and Mexico City, inspired by the Bataclán theatre dancers. This theatre was Mexico’s version of the fusion dance performance craze started in Paris that featured tall and scantily-dressed androgynous dancers that represented a more sexual and dangerous version of the *pelona*.¹⁰² The simultaneously sexually bold, athletically toned, and fragile bataclána helped distance the *pelona* from the Victorian corset and nineteenth century aesthetics.¹⁰³ The trend permitted degrees of sexual liberation for participating girls,

¹⁰⁰ de Eca, “El Deporte Y Nuestras ‘Girls.’”

¹⁰¹ Lois Leeds, “Para comer para Conservar la Belleza,” *El Universal*, January 16, 1928, sec. 2, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁰² Sluis, “BATACLANISMO! Or, How Female Deco Bodies Transformed Postrevolutionary Mexico City,” 469–70.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 470–74.

while others found it provided more physical mobility.¹⁰⁴ Physical educators admired the athletic bodies of the bataclána performers, and many of these girls had, in fact, worked with physical educators to perfect their “Deco” bodies and their skills. On the other hand, idealistic educators and moral reformers deprecated the pejorative influences of consumerism and the liberal sexuality associated with both trends. Dancers often appropriated revolutionary rhetoric by describing their lifestyle as part of a crusade for health and hygiene to delegitimize attacks against them. After all, they exercised regularly and participated in the booming scientific cosmetics and health supplement world.¹⁰⁵

Yet young girls favored the thin styles more, as reflected by newspaper advertisements in the late 1920s. In one fashion outtake in *El Universal*, trendy women, curveless with short hair and wearing skirts, were said to have loved “sports blouses.” Here “sport” referred less to gear made for athletic competition and more to a woman’s freedom of movement and leisure time, often associated with high social status typified by wealth and whiteness. Magazine *Mujeres y Deportes* in the 1920s heralded the athletic body but dedicated more pages to detailing the daily lives of the rich and famous.¹⁰⁶

Popular beauty sections in newspapers reported on cosmopolitan fashion trends and often advocated people to exercise regularly to enhance beauty.¹⁰⁷ One running beauty section on women’s poor habits of daily exercise by Lois Leeds, perhaps the most well-known beauty columnist in multiple papers, argued that women who constantly complained about their imperfections were useless if they failed to make changes to their anti-hygienic behaviors and

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 471, 476.

¹⁰⁵ Carlos Monsiváis, *Celia Montalván* (México: Martín Casillas Editores, 1982), 26; “El Teatro Ligerio Mexicano,” *El Universal*, January 6, 1924, sec. Photos, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁰⁶ *Mujeres y Deportes: Sociales Novedades*, December 13, 1942, Esperanza Iris: caja 48, exp. 371, Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal.

¹⁰⁷ Lois Leeds, “Belleza Femenil,” *El Nacional*, January 1, 1928; Edward Shorter, *From Paralysis to Fatigue: A History of Psychosomatic Illness in the Modern Era* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993), 34; Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining La Chica Moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917-1936* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 52.

sedentary lives. Doing both, she argued, could correct physical blemishes possessed since birth. For optimum beauty, she recommended team sports for those capable, while those with disabilities should seek out swimming, golf, or horse-riding. For Leeds, doing exercise should not be like taking bitter medicine, but instead fun and exciting.¹⁰⁸ The regiments targeted improvements to the shoulders, belly, and other parts, with morning and nighttime floor exercises. They also included lifts using props such as broomsticks in place of weights, but she warned that housewives should be careful to not engorge their muscles too much when they work at home to avoid looking like men. The routine was supposed to be followed by a light morning massage of sore areas of the shoulders, arms, and back.¹⁰⁹

As Robert Kinsey and William T. Tilden squared off in a singles Davis Cup tennis match in Chapultepec Park in 1928, *El Universal* featured another run of beauty articles authored by Leeds focused on physical education topics. Despite Parisian decrees that women wear longer skirts, she noted that most girls wore a fashion in which the skirt touched the knees that left many women concerned about the appearance of their legs. She contended that one's legs must subtly decrease in size from the knee to the ankle. If the ankle is 6 ½ to 8 inches around then the calf muscle must be around 13 to 13 ½ inches around. She admitted that many girls in the country did not meet the standard, either being too thin, or, more commonly, possessing fat ankles that swelled out of one's shoes. This not only looked bad but hurts one's circulation. Yet women should not worry for one could target weight loss in the legs by eating less, soaking in Epsom salts, and doing frequent low-resistance exercises at home such as marching in place.¹¹⁰ On January 1, 1928, Leeds argued that developing good exercise habits should be everyone's

¹⁰⁸ Lois Leeds, "Las Dificultades para Adquirir el Habito del Ejercicio," *El Universal*, April 3, 1928, sec. 1, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home!: Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 137-38.

¹⁰⁹ Lois Leeds, "Brazos y Hombros Flaccidos," *El Universal*, April 11, 1928, sec. 1, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹¹⁰ Lois Leeds, "Ejercicios para las Piernas," *El Universal*, April 7, 1928, sec. 2, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

New Year's resolution because of its wide benefits for one's health and beauty. This, she contended, should naturally be coupled with better eating habits, including cutting sugar, starches, and fat. For Leeds, beauty laid first in physical health. Anything else was just a detail.¹¹¹

In targeting stomach weight loss, Leeds noted that a fat midsection, one of the most common imperfections in the female body, was mostly caused by an inadequate physical education available to girls. It could not be corrected by wearing a corset or other adjusted devices that just masked loose and flabby stomachs. The most practical activity one could do was clench the abdominal muscles at all times, whether walking or sitting, but always with good posture. The more able-bodied, she argued, should do one of a series of crunches and sit-up routines in the morning and night with the mouth open to maximize oxygen intake. If one had a large buildup of stomach fat, they should firmly rub their stomach with ice and a towel after going to the bathroom to produce a reaction of gradual combustion of fat that accumulated in the tissue.¹¹²

Physical educator Rodolfo Álvarez y V. offered similar targeted recommendations in *Arte y Sport* for better distributing weight. He prescribed that women wake up with a glass of orange juice or fruit and a small glass of tepid water to help clear out stomach mucus before strolling around a park or performing various gymnastic routines. But he also posited that women could use exercise to target and correct any of their imperfections within just a few months. For example, women with small breasts could enhance their size by doing a combination of specialized Swedish exercises and strengthening their lungs.¹¹³ He added that women could not

¹¹¹ Lois Leeds, "Resoluciones para el Año Nuevo," *El Universal*, January 1, 1928, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹¹² Lois Leeds, "Para Reducir el Abdomen," *El Universal*, April 13, 1928, sec. 2, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹¹³ Rodolfo Álvarez y V., "Cultura Física: La Belleza de La Mujer," *Arte y Sport*, December 6, 1919.

achieve positive results on exercise alone and must eat a diet that suited a woman. This meant cutting out most meats that led to bloating.¹¹⁴

Figure 3.1: Recommended diet for lasting health and beauty¹¹⁵

Breakfast	One fresh fruit	One spoonful of cereals, one spoonful of milk, pinch of sugar	Toast with butter		Hot drink	
Lunch or Dinner	Clear, light soup	Cheese sandwich	Vegetable salad		Glass of milk	Small pudding
Comida	Regular portion of meat	Potato and a vegetable (like spinach or cabbage)	Lettuce based salad with apple and raisins (or pineapple and cheese)	Small gelatin	Hot drink	Ice cream or fruit based dessert with cake

Leeds constructed a proper diet for healthy living that she believed could be followed by most women. The diet generally met vitamin requirements and likely ranged anywhere from 2,200 to 2,800 calories per day, if followed as listed. According to Leeds, a five-foot, two-inch woman should consume around 2,420 calories per day, if active, and 1,815 calories if more sedentary in order to reach an ideal weight.¹¹⁶ This diet was, in any case, likely inaccessible for ordinary women as it prescribed foods and ingredients more common in the US, rarely acknowledging national staples such as tortillas, beans, squash, corn, and more. These foods were historically considered unhealthy indigenous foods and not suited for a respectable public.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Rodolfo Álvarez y V., “Cultura Física: Gimnasia Especial Para Las Damas,” *Arte y Sport*, April 17, 1920; Álvarez y V., “Cultura Física: La Belleza de La Mujer.”

¹¹⁵ Leeds, “Para Comer para Conservar La Belleza.”

¹¹⁶ Lois Leeds, “Para Corregir la Extrema Delgadez,” *El Universal*, January 18, 1928, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Planet Taco: A Global History of Mexican Food* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiv.

Even with wide concerns over thinness and basic health columnists and health experts based in the US published on the joys of a restricted diet. Many of these articles were re-printed in the Mexican press. For example, US swimming champion Charlotte Moore had a piece on her personal beauty secrets in *El Universal*. For her, the keys to success in health and beauty for working women were to exercise daily for 30 minutes outside, work on flexibility, and watch what you eat. Indeed, she fondly recalled that her father taught her how to swim, but her mother taught her how to eat right on a diet consisting mostly of fruits, vegetables, and light soups, cutting out nearly all meats, sweets, and pastas. She admitted that she regularly suffered from hunger as a youth but learned to appreciate her mother's advice over time.¹¹⁸

Health supplements and medicines that targeted weight loss and other body modifications boomed in the late 1920s. The product "Hormotone," for example, was developed by G. W. Carnrick to combat slow metabolism and increase oxidization and the company claimed it increased mental, physical, and neurological activity because it contained five percent desiccated thyroid and pituitary extract and large amounts of iodine. The formula contained ovarian follicular hormones and promised to prevent dementia in addition to sexual neuroses, infantile uterus, and underdeveloped breasts.¹¹⁹ By 1919, the product was already under attack from watchdogs that called it "irrational" and its results completely hypothetical.¹²⁰ An advertisement in *El Mundo Ilustrado* for Vitalac, a muscle-gaining supplement, countered the fashion trend to lose weight and instead mocked trendy girls that looked like "skeletons."¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Carlota Moore, "Un Campeonato de Natacion Ganado por la Perseverancia," *El Universal*, January 15, 1928, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹¹⁹ Bonnie Evans and Edgar Jones, "Organ Extracts and the Development of Psychiatry: Hormonal Treatments at the Maudsley Hospital 1923-1938," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 48, no. 3 (June 2012): 251-76.

¹²⁰ Council on Drugs (American Medical Association, "Hormotone and Hormotone without Post-Pituitary," in *The Propaganda for Reform in Proprietary Medicines*, vol. 2 (Chicago: American Medical Association, 1922), 235.

¹²¹ "Vitalac (Advertisement)," *El Universal Grafico*, November 12, 1924, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

Other products were promoted with promises of aiding the day to day life of physically active consumers. Doctors from the Escuela de Medicina Nacional and the Parisian Faculty, such as Antonio de Garay and José D. Morales, promoted “Vino de San German,” a tonic that they believed could help the sick, the old, the sterile, and the intellectually feeble. The tonic, developed to primarily improve anemia, contained stimulants such as kola and coca and combined them with ichthyol (ammonium bituminosulfonate) and wine. It was especially recommended for recent mothers who were lactating or for pubescent girls during menstruation. None of the ingredients actually aided anemia, but in fact, likely made it worse as ichthyol is pharmacologically confirmed to contain anti-fungal properties and is an anti-inflammatory.¹²²

Leeds expressed being overtaken with the amount of emaciation among young girls in the city who made odd and irrational eating decisions even when they had choices, assuming that girls who were too fat or too skinny ignored the basic laws of science and nature. For example, she noted that many girls refused to eat dairy products or fruits because they claimed it made them feel sick. Vegetables often received similar treatment as girls refused them on the basis that it was “horse food.”¹²³ The expectations of international fashion trends, beauty experts like Leeds, and even physical educators like Álvarez helped create an unattainable, class-based, and racialized conceptions of the ideal body.¹²⁴

Ideal femininity and revolution

Women increasingly received messages on body image and femininity from globalized popular culture. This included images from the stages, comic books, newspaper ads, and in the cinema, all of which instructed women how to dress, behave, and express emotion. The

¹²² “Vino de San German (Advertisement),” *El Mundo Ilustrado*, August 27, 1905; “Nuestro Mas Fiel Amigo,” *El Pais*, October 4, 1901, Google Digital News Archive.

¹²³ Leeds, “Para Comer para Conservar la Belleza.”

¹²⁴ Jules R. Bemporad, “Self-Starvation through the Ages: Reflections on the Pre-History of Anorexia Nervosa,” *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 19, no. 3 (April 1996): 217–37.

revolutionary “New Woman” was expected to exercise, attend school, and work, all while maintaining a large part of their traditional femininity at the same time.¹²⁵

Revolutionary cultural leaders like Gamio took a strictly nationalist stance when it came to ideal femininity and framed upper class urban women, especially flappers, as a threat to family life, morality, and the future of the race by denying their maternal responsibilities. In his estimation, revolutionary women could never be contaminated by toxic North American feminism and were too instinctually loyal to their families and the nation to deny their femininity. He blamed most of society’s vices on young, white, urban girls that exercised sexual perversion, including working as prostitutes.¹²⁶ In opposition, he celebrated the mestizo that he believed proved naturally malleable and who assumed tendencies associated with indigeneity, like innocence and loyalty to family. But the mestizo’s white background also afforded them the ability to learn sophistication and better adapt to urban living. For Gamio, femininity and motherhood were essential factors for enhancing the material and intellectual development of society.¹²⁷

Such descriptions exemplified the general mistrust many revolutionaries had with city life. De Parodi described Mexico City, for example, as a suffocating environment populated with “queens of superficiality.”¹²⁸ Neither androgynous athletes nor fashionable flappers could ever meet Gamio’s expectation that they continue to abnegate as selfless mothers for the pure joy of

¹²⁵ Susan Bordo, “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault,” in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 18–19; Susan Bordo, “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity,” in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, ed. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, A Gender and Culture Reader (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 90–110; Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

¹²⁶ A. Ruiz, “‘La India Bonita’: National Beauty in Revolutionary Mexico,” *Cultural Dynamics* 14, no. 3 (November 1, 2002): 283–301.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 293–95.

¹²⁸ de Parodi, “La Mujer de Lucha.”

helping one's nation.¹²⁹ Feminists were at best "marimachos," while at worst they were mentally ill and traitorous to the revolution.¹³⁰ In the end, femininity, something considered so biologically fixed for many, could never be nailed down by any group, but its fluidity best encapsulated the promise of feminist politics.¹³¹

Often the "Malinche narrative" dominated public discourse and links were frequently drawn between women's sexuality and betrayal to common decency. Many women served as intermediaries between the church and state and continued to work actively in faith communities during the revolution.¹³² Father Juan Miguel de Muro y Cuesta, for example, promoted Catholic femininity to combat what he saw as masculine rational philosophies that deteriorated the country's cultural and religious values. This femininity stressed humility, chastity, tenderness, piety, and religious conviction, or the proper performance of traditional gender roles long-bound to religiosity.¹³³ Nevertheless, as conservative periodicals ran stories depicting women seduced by the lies of foreign communists, anti-clerical papers detailed priests raping vulnerable girls.¹³⁴ The new revolutionary man was not supposed to be so weak as to give in to carnal pleasures, yet women's bodies were still highly sexualized and considered "inciters of immorality." This perspective did not deviate far from classic Christian dispositions.¹³⁵ In 1928, the SEP expressed

¹²⁹ Muñiz, *Cuerpo, Representación y Poder*, 171–72.

¹³⁰ Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico*, 17; Cristina Rivera-Garza, "She Neither Respected nor Obeyed Anyone': Inmates and Psychiatrists Debate Gender and Class at the General Insane Asylum La Castañeda, Mexico, 1910-1930," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, no. 3–4 (2001): 672.

¹³¹ Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminisms and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan Wallach Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 16–17.

¹³² Patience A. Schell, "Of the Sublime Mission of Mothers and Families: The Union of Mexican Catholic Ladies in Revolutionary Mexico," in *The Women's Revolution in Mexico, 1910-1953*, ed. S. E. Mitchell and Patience A. Schell (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 99–104.

¹³³ Rebecca J Lester, *Jesús in Our Wombs Embodying Modernity in a Mexican Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 59, 64.

¹³⁴ Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico*, 13–15.

¹³⁵ Chávez González, "Construcción de la Nación Y El Género Desde el Cuerpo: La Educación Física en el México Posrevolucionario," 50–51; Muñiz, *Cuerpo, Representación Y Poder*.

concern about the “tragic triumvirate” that threatened to destroy society and poison the race for generations, including alcoholism, religious fanaticism, and premature sexual relationships.¹³⁶

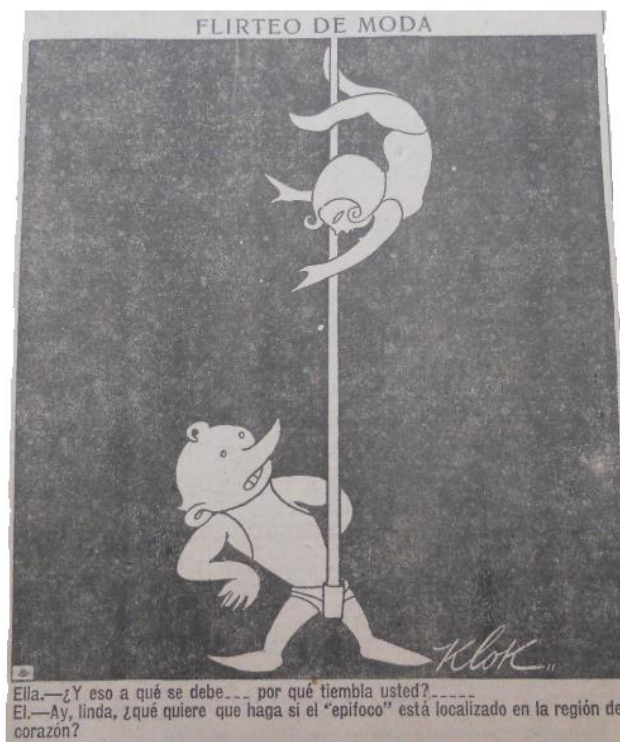


Illustration 3.4: Cartoon sexualizing women exercising (*El Universal*, 1928). Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.¹³⁷

Men mocked and sexualized female athletes frequently in public, often to shame them. Despite legitimate efforts to promote girls in sports, some male colleagues and newspapermen referred to female instructors as “princesses” in national papers and downplayed the accomplishments of women coaches and athletes by attributing them to luck. Flores, for example, blamed her early retirement as a basketball coach and physical education instructor on her desire to escape the bitterness and resentment of male colleagues and instead chose a career as a dance specialist.¹³⁸ Other male reporters avoided detailing the games altogether, instead treating tournaments as oddity or erotic entertainments. One, for example, described only his

¹³⁶ Secretaría de Educación Pública, “El Departamento y Sus Organos.”

¹³⁷ “Flirteo de Moda,” *El Universal*, March 28, 1928, sec. 1, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹³⁸ Cano and Radkau, *Ganando Espacios*, 65–66.

own trance in the presence of the beauty of the juvenile girls. Some team names, like “Besame,” or “Kiss Me,” met such expectations and other tournaments appeared to more celebrate tournament beauty queens than the athletes.¹³⁹ Another beat writer, detailing soccer matches in Veracruz, wondered how the matches could be so intense when there were so many beautiful women in the crowd.¹⁴⁰

Newspapers often did not hold back in what they considered the running joke that was women’s sports. For example, one cartoon that ran in *El Universal* in 1928 depicted a young female athlete in form-fitting clothing doing a gymnastic routine on a pole. In the cartoon, she questioned her male friend as why the pole shook, presumably unaware of the fact that she was swinging around on what was purported to be the man’s erect penis in the pole’s place. The phallic-nosed man replied that he was powerless to stop the shaking when the pole was localized in the region of his heart. The illustration reflected the general sense that women had entered crossed men’s sporting spaces and they, therefore, blamed women for any inappropriate sexual behavior by men that they may incur.¹⁴¹

Cardenista Women’s Sports

Socialist education efforts in the late-1930s emphasized action pedagogy and Lázaro Cárdenas intensified programs of all kinds. In 1936, Cárdenas proclaimed that sports development in the country was among his administration’s top goals to teach cooperativism and aid eugenic and cultural regeneration. Attention during his administration focused sports on the countryside and darker-skinned exercise role models replaced their white predecessors in periodicals. One writer for *El Maestro Rural*, in featuring such athletes, noted that through sport women had learned how to conquer the body and nature, representing the apex of modern and

¹³⁹ “Eventos En La Escuela Doctor Balmis,” *El Universal*, February 27, 1928, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴⁰ Gatito Blanco, “El Foot Ball En Vera Cruz,” *Arte y Sport*, February 14, 1920.

¹⁴¹ “Flirteo de Moda.”

timeless beauty. Rhythmic sport, calculated, graceful, and harmonious, had made women's beauty lasting and dynamic, for as the Venus emerged from sea-foam, modern and real Venuses had emerged from the *campos deportivos*, their bodies similarly sculpted like marble statues.¹⁴² Nevertheless, sport for *cardenistas* did not lead to professionalism or fame, but to a life filled with invaluable skills and lessons, including on how to win and to lose and understanding the joys of achievement.¹⁴³ The workout uniforms remained largely the same in public marching spectacles and exhibitions, but for sports like tennis, women began to wear more practical, and less prohibitive, versions, including mid-thigh high shorts, tennis shoes, and loose shirts with short sleeves. In some schools, such as the EPN, long skirts remained common.¹⁴⁴

One section in *El Nacional* captured the popularity of the sporting spirit and the rise in acceptance of female athletes in a piece meant to show the newspaper's dedication to the national sports project. In the section, physical education professor Emma Torres from the Escuela Nacional de Maestros admitted to having an obsession with sports culture since she was a young girl and believed that her work was the most moral and uplifting for the masses. *El Nacional* quoted another physical education instructor, Guidella Aussunac of the Escuela Secundaria #6, who asked colleagues and other promoters to work harder with the press to disseminate any sports news across the country. The professors both celebrated the newspaper's role in promoting sports, Torres claiming that *El Nacional* was equally dedicated to supporting the new strong woman.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Alfredo Caraza, "Dosificación del Ejercicio en el Campo," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 7, no. 9 (November 1, 1935): 18–19.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴⁴ Roberto Lara López, "La Educación Física en Las Escuelas Rurales," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 7, no. 9 (November 1, 1935): 10–12.

¹⁴⁵ "Emma," *El Nacional*, April 2, 1936, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "Gudelia," *El Nacional*, April 2, 1936, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.



Illustration 3.5: The Mexican Venus. Courtesy of the AHSEP and AGN.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Caraza, "Dosificación del Ejercicio en el Campo," 17.

By the middle of the 1930s, success in women's sports development varied. For example, journalist Basilio Vadillo Jr. described students at the EPN as athletic proselytes in whom sports had become deeply ingrained. Full of enthusiasm and health, the girls perfectly executed callisthenic exercises with coordination as a group by forming what he called a beautiful block of color and harmony. He interviewed the "smiling and blushing" and "lovely" girls after their presentation, assuring readers that, without exception, the girls hoped to prove that they could succeed in sports as much as boys.¹⁴⁷

Nevertheless, descriptions of the Second National Girls' Basketball Tournament at the Arena Mexico, a competition meant to prepare the best girls for the national team in the III Central American Games, showed that many felt they still had a long way to go. One reporter eviscerated the young athletes of the ten teams in an article on the games. While a couple of squads showed promise, like Puebla and Veracruz, teams from San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes, and Jalisco suffered from a combination of poor skills and bad conditioning in an embarrassing display.¹⁴⁸ Valdillo expressed optimism based on the improvements in speed, training discipline, and elegance in performances he witnessed in 1937 at the Estadio Nacional and "Venustiano Carranza." In them, track athletes like "La Chamaca" Cecilia de la Peña, Esther Jasso, and the "simpatica" Hilda Cabal showed enough potential that he believed they could compete for medals at the Central American Games.¹⁴⁹ *Cardenista* promoters pushed girls into more rigorous activities than previous administrations. One writer for *Educación Física* in 1936 acknowledged that, while women showed superior natural agility, it should not be tested exclusively in dance,

¹⁴⁷ Basilio Valdillo Jr., "El Deporte Femenil en la Escuela Nal. Preparatoria," *El Nacional*, April 2, 1936, sec. 3, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴⁸ Pirrimplin, "Poca Calidad en el Campeonato Femenil de Basket Nacional," *El Nacional*, April 2, 1936, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴⁹ B. Vadillo, "Nuestras Mujeres en el Atletismo," *El Nacional*, July 8, 1937, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

but also in athletic events like high-jump, shot-put, javelin, and discus where women got outside, retained high spirits, and never lost their beauty as they competed for championships.¹⁵⁰



Illustration 3.6: Young women practicing athletic events. Courtesy of Hemeroteca Nacional.¹⁵¹

Urban instructors and other sports club promoters, responsible for outfitting their schools with adequate competitors, regularly wrote to the president to request balls, bats, pamphlets, and trophies to help develop sports faster. For example, José Jesús Cetina, president of the Women's Indoor Baseball Committee in Merida, Yucatán, wrote to the president to request a trophy to hand out to teams at the primary, secondary, and professional schools for local tournaments.¹⁵² The president's office or the directive of physical education frequently denied such requests due to a lack of funding. Such was the case with a group of women representing the Juventud Legionaria Ibero Americana Mexicana Cooperadora in Colonia Ahumada in Baja California in January of 1935. Because the people of the town did not even have basic necessities, the government refused to send sports equipment.¹⁵³ But materials were distributed when available in most other cases. In May of 1936, Rosa Elena Cabiedes, director of the Escuela Hogar in Tacubaya, expressed need for help in setting up physical education courses for their girls ranging

¹⁵⁰ "La Mujer Mexicana y el Deporte," *Educación Física* 1, no. 1 (May 1936): 21.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Letter from José Jesús Cetina to Pres. Abelardo Rodríguez, March 13, 1933, ALR 332.3/140, AGN.

¹⁵³ Letter from Gaudencio González Garza to Lazaro Cardenas, January 22, 1935, LCR 532.1/3, AGN.

in ages eight to eighteen. Within a week, Dr. Salvador Ojeda, former head of a DPH, dispatched Zapata to see to it personally.¹⁵⁴

Some in the public remained fearful that the government's programs to educate women meant producing feminists that would want to "wear the pants" in the home and shirk their maternal duties. One journalist for *El Nacional* responded that educated women were not irresponsible, but were disciplined citizens and lovers of liberty.¹⁵⁵ Overall, though, many continued to share this concern. One teacher in *El Maestro Rural* argued that hikers embodied what the revolution wanted out of women playing sports. Indeed, hiking, which allowed man and woman an escape from the putridity of the city and confinement of the office and the home, tested humans in the most fundamental ways. It put them intimately in touch with the limits of their survival skills and filled their lungs with fresh air. The vigorous climbing further enhanced one's beauty especially by freshening one's lips and adding sparkle to one's eyes and color one's cheeks. It also helped cultivate beautiful children and gave husbands a woman he could learn to deeply trust in tough situations. Yet writers cautioned that women should not take to the steep slopes of Popocatepetl by themselves, but instead as partners to their husbands, just as they would in life. *El Maestro Rural* assured its readership that true hikers were not feminists, who they claimed aimed to replace men as the head of the household, but were instead dignified and endearing comrades that collaborated, worked, and met all their daily obligations elegantly.¹⁵⁶ The popularity of hiking grew in the 1930s and by the late 1940s regional tournaments incorporated it as a sport. In 1949, Graciela Cabañas summited the country's three highest

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Rosa Elena Cabiedes to Lazaro Cardenas, May 12, 1936, DPH, Caja 35550, Exp. 48, AHSEP.

¹⁵⁵ Tila Baucero, "¿Teme el Hombre a la Mujer Inteligente?," *El Nacional*, April 11, 1936, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁵⁶ Ezekiel R. Pérez, "La Mujer en el Excursionismo," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *El Maestro Rural* 8, no. 10 (May 15, 1936): 17–18.

volcanic peaks at Popocatepetl, Iztaccíhuatl, and Pico de Orizaba ranging from 17,160 to 18,491 feet.¹⁵⁷

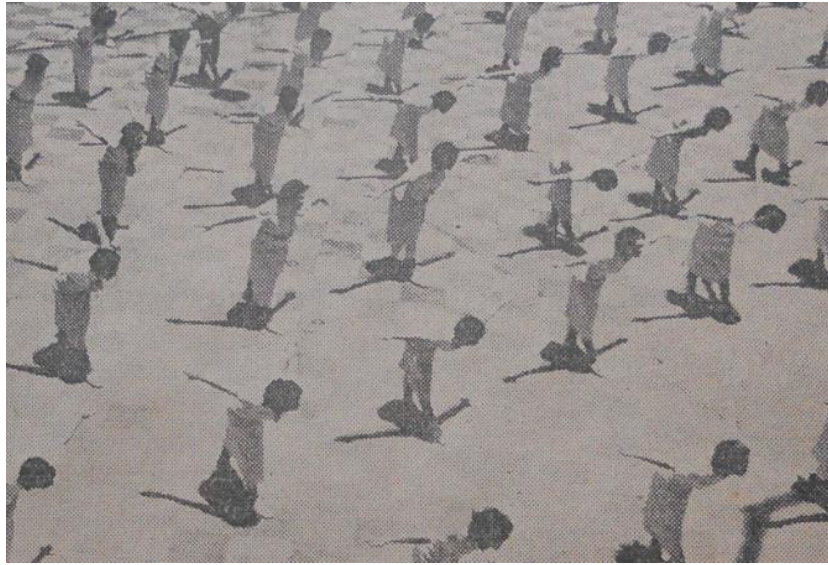


Illustration 3.7: Callisthenic exercises at the Escuela Preparatoria Nacional (El Nacional, 1936). Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.¹⁵⁸

Physical Education programs, now more than ever philosophically bound to the development of the proletariat and strong mothers, continued to teach light callisthenic exercise for girls even as spaces opened for more vigorous activities. Dance remained the medium through which the DBA and the DEF collaborated. In fact, dance programs in the 1930s, largely directed by writer, artist, and intellectual Nellie Campobello, helped legitimize national dance. It became an important part of a new revolutionary rhythmic aesthetic that incorporated native traditions.¹⁵⁹ In 1935, the Escuela Nacional de Danza underwent a series of major changes led by José Muñoz Cota. These included the awarding of professional degrees for its graduates, many of

¹⁵⁷ “Princesas de Acción Deportiva,” *El Nacional*, July 27, 1949, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁵⁸ *El Nacional*, April 2, 1936.

¹⁵⁹ Vicky Unruh, *Performing Women and Modern Literary Culture in Latin America: Intervening Acts* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 92.

whom became teachers. The school also expanded experimental studies on aboriginal dance in Mexico and created a Ballet Mexicano consisting of indigenous dances and aesthetics.¹⁶⁰

The Escuela Nacional de Danza broke into three sections that included children's, vocational, and professional departments. The children's division, for kids under twelve, consisted of five years of study in which the priority was the physical and technical development of the bodies of children. This program included bar exercises, running and floor exercises, jumping, arm and leg coordination movements, children's games, and introductory Mexican and Spanish dances. The vocational section, a three-year study, synthesized the technical dances with music theory and dance history. The professional section perfected and learned other dances, including indigenous versions. In their final year, students were obligated to carry out research on elastic, Spanish, or indigenous dance.¹⁶¹ But the decision to become a serious dancer was not to be taken lightly. One newspaperman likened the life of a ballerina studying under Campobello to that of at least six years of slavery as the dancer was allowed no leisure time and was required to give up hope for living a normal life as a mother and wife. Instead, she would learn the qualities of abnegation to the revolution through her performances.¹⁶²

As with swimming, some in the public blamed dance curricula for the transgressions of their rebellious daughters. One writer in 1935, for example, wondered why anyone actively sought reasons why girls wore clothing that looked like bathing suits around in public and placed blame on habits learned in dance courses and the sexual Teatro Lirico shows. The author also questioned why girls should learn inappropriate and sexualized dances in schools like Egyptian, "Oriental," and, the most scandalous and inappropriate, the "rag-time," which the writer made

¹⁶⁰ "Reformas en la E. de Danza," *El Nacional*, May 24, 1935, Archivo Economico, Danza, Fomento, M06329, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁶¹ "Metologia de la Danza," *El Nacional*, July 25, 1939, Archivo Economico, Danza, Fomento, M06329, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁶² Guillermo José Tapia, "La Escuela Nacional de Danza," *El Nacional*, July 17, 1944, Archivo Economico, Danza, Fomento, M06329, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

sure to note was associated with the barbarity of Africans. Nevertheless, the author conceded that while the dances may have detrimental effects on youth, one could not deny the excellence in performing the choreography that they had perfected for years.¹⁶³

In 1937, the school, under Campobello's leadership, claimed that it produced students that brought culture to the masses of women workers and fed the revolutionary cry to overcome. She held that in every movement came a harmony that elucidated one's rights, duties, and dreams for a better future. More practically, revolutionaries argued that dance was a path from which to cultivate strong bodies for the working women of the country by artistic means, while incorporating indigenous elements into national and regional types from which they often drew inspiration.¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

Women's bodies were trained everyday through sports and prescriptions of health, diet, and body type.¹⁶⁵ The state's sports programs liberated women in literal movement and provided opportunities to achieve in public and traditionally masculine spaces. Men often attempted to harness them using scientific explanations to legitimize many traditional understandings of gender and ideal femininity. Indeed, the revolution did not challenge patriarchal privilege even as it opened new opportunities for women.¹⁶⁶ But gender ideals were staged and always fluid. Athletic activity, particularly by women, slowly helped rearticulate those ideals with each action.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ "Los Bailes Esteticos," *El Universal Grafico*, December 11, 1924, sec. Hogar, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁶⁴ "Pruebas de La Escuela de La Danza," *Excelsior*, November 3, 1937, Archivo Economico, Danza, Mexico, M06320, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁶⁵ Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity"; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹⁶⁶ Stephanie J. Smith, *Gender and the Mexican Revolution: Yucatán Women and the Realities of Patriarchy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 4–5.

¹⁶⁷ Judith Butler, "Athletic Genders: Hyperbolic Instance And/Or the Overcoming of Sexual Binarism," *Stanford Humanities Review* 6, no. 2 (1998).

One physical educator suggested frustratingly, “why shouldn’t women have arms like men, like the mythical Amazons that men all agree are beautiful?”¹⁶⁸ But such sentiments often proved outliers, as most promoters waded carefully through the so-called “clumsy experiments” of women’s physical education. Many women participants remembered sports as a liberating activity, but change in sports philosophies came slowly. Indeed, some women continued to participate in physical exercise and sports to increase attractiveness and enhance their feminine beauty in pursuit of a suitable husband. Women interested in playing sports felt as if they were left with a choice. Would it be muscles or motherhood? The controversies over education for girls and women opened a public discourse over the value of women to greater revolutionary society and elucidated a process for revolutionary citizenship after 1920. In the end, the women’s exercise experiment was clumsy. But it was not because of its negative impact on the health of women or because of its over-masculinization of girls, but because the effort was disjointed, unequal, and contradictory.

¹⁶⁸ “La Educación Física Y La Mujer.”

Chapter 4

Hay que mejorar la raza: Sports, Race Science, and Public Health

Former Minister of Public Education José Vasconcelos proclaimed in his book *La raza cósmica* (1925) that, as man entered its “Aesthetic Era,” Latin America stood at the epicenter of humanity’s final stages of evolution and carried with it the hope of the world. It was here where the most intensive racial mixing had occurred and where blacks, whites, Mongols, and Indians, the world’s four racial trunks, would amalgamate and produce a fifth and final cosmic race that would construct the most enlightened and powerful civilization in history. While he acknowledged that miscegenation had only brought out the worst to this point, degenerating under centuries of poor material conditions and a suppression of the spirit, the region was now destined to lead new “inspired crossings” guided by love and instinct. This mixing, he contended, would breed out the virulent “monstrosities” that had sickened previous generations.¹

La raza cósmica was emblematic of the rising optimism in the potential for science to help direct the evolution of Latin American societies. Experts in varying sciences, including the fields of criminology, public health, and education, used race theories from the late nineteenth century to the end of World War II to seek biological solutions to guide regeneration programs meant to improve the health and racial stock of the citizenry for future generations. Most nineteenth century versions assigned value to the world’s racial types. They exalted whiteness, demeaned dark-skinned peoples, and blamed many of society’s problems on their supposed proclivity for laziness and destruction as physicians worked through their own “gaze” in a process of “medicalization.” Latin American leaders rarely rejected such sciences, but they offered alternatives. Leaders in these fields crafted more flexible theories that did not understand

¹ José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Didier Tisdell Jaén (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 9–36.

miscegenation as necessarily negative; they posited instead that one could reroute their genetic course through changes in their everyday life. Rather than relying on citizens to guide their own regeneration, medical experts, scientists, and policy-making officials in public health looked to physical education and modern sport as prime tools for crafting a regeneration program that they hoped would physically and spiritually invigorate and strengthen the national race for centuries to come.

From Herbert Spencer to *La raza cósmica*, 1880-1925

The government of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) designated public health as a matter of urgency for economic development, political stability, and national defense as it found itself in crisis. Mexico City was saddled with a reputation as one of the most unsanitary and sickly cities in the world. Between 1867 and 1877, nearly one-third of the city's population of 250,000 perished due to preventable illness such as smallpox, influenza, and other viral and bacterial infections. Officials believed that several factors had contributed to this situation. Some, for example, partly blamed the maladies on improper drainage as doctors and scientists still ascribed to miasmatic theories of disease that attributed infections to "bad air" and general putrefaction.² Leading military hygienists expounded on such theories and closely followed cutting-edge French science that still attributed the spread of virulence in part to hot and humid physical climates.³ The government launched vast public works projects to better wield control over the physical urban environment, including efforts to improve drainage and deodorize the city. But continuing high

² Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, xii–xiv; Agostoni, "Entre la Persuasión, la Compulsión y el Temor: La Vacuna Contra la Viruela en México, 1920-1940," 38–42, 156.

³ Stephen Neufeld, *The Blood Contingent: The Military and the Making of Modern Mexico, 1876-1911* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 169–74.

infant mortality rates concerned officials, sparking debates on new laws to legislate cultural practices in everyday family life they believed backwards and unscientific.⁴

Public officials in the late Porfiriato obsessed over the potential of bio-sciences to help restore order. But as these calls grew louder so did attacks against the victims of disease as prominent figures made links between hygiene, order, and general morality.⁵ Indigenous peoples lived in greater poverty than other populations and appeared to die at higher rates as well. Many officials used these figures to justify associations between indigenous populations and uncleanness and immorality. These groups were also framed as a threat to national stability.⁶ Like Porfirian psychiatrists who linked mental derangement with the poor, military hygienists, charged with studying and advising many public health efforts, increasingly blamed poor health in society on diseased genetics, overcrowding, and alcoholism. The apparent inability of the poor and indigenous to cope with the changes of modern life made them a threat to society.⁷

Experts close to Díaz like Gabino Barreda, Porfirio Parra, and José Limantour, known as the *científicos*, debated the impacts of racial degeneration on society. These men read and published studies on hereditary sciences from evolutionary biologists, sociologists, criminologists, and even zoologists from Europe and North America.⁸ Díaz's education officials, in fact, held regular debates over national pedagogical and public policy initiatives based on racial theories to help solve the purported "Indian Problem." Other scientific and trade journals also published regularly on the topic. For example, Eduardo Paz of *El boletín militar* (1899) determined that Mexico stood at a disadvantage to other nations with well-established militaries

⁴ Laura Suarez y Lopez-Guazo, "The Mexican Eugenics Society," in *The Reception of Darwinism in the Iberian World*, ed. Thomas F. Glick, Miguel Angel Puig-Samper, and Rosaura Ruiz, vol. 221 (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2001), 144.

⁵ Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress*, xii, xiv.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 38–42, 156.

⁷ Neufeld, *The Blood Contingent*, 169–74; Rivera –Garza, "'She Neither Respected nor Obeyed Anyone': Inmates and Psychiatrists Debate Gender and Class at the General Insane Asylum La Castañeda, Mexico, 1910 -1930," 668–69.

⁸ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 3.

because it lacked a large racial group typified by energy and perseverance in work. He argued that they were instead overwhelmed by degenerate pueblos whose natural character was largely one of indolence and apathy. According to the 1895 census, mestizos, “pure” indigenous, and blacks outnumbered the native and foreign-born whites that counted just 2.34 million of 10.66 million of the total population. Paz held that success in battle required attention to the development of one’s physical, intellectual, and moral faculties, an indirect reference to theories of sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Paz determined that his supposedly deprived country needed to take race sciences more serious, for he believed that understanding and acting on them was an evolutionary duty of its people.⁹

Spencer, an English sociologist, was the most referenced theorist by Porfirian positivists who found hereditary sciences useful for explaining how, in the face of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity, that so much of the indigenous and mixed race countryside struggled. Indeed, many barely survived on near-starvation diets and were apathetic to the promises of modernity, accepting their poor conditions of life.¹⁰ Spencer’s theories were often interpreted as an application to human societies of the evolutionary principles of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) in the animal kingdom. For many, his concept of “survival of the fittest” revealed a break from French sociologist August Comte (1798-1857) who held that societies evolved through three basic stages, the last being a utopian, or positive, state.¹¹ Spencer, like Comte, conceived of society as a living organism and presented his own version on the possibility of “social evolution.” Instead of each society passing through the theological, metaphysical, and positive stages in due time, many Spencerians believed only some societies could ultimately reach the

⁹ Eduardo Paz, “Estudio Militar,” *El Boletín Militar* 1 (June 23, 1899): 1–2.

¹⁰ Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*, 77; Francisco E Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 13.

¹¹ August Comte, “The Positive Philosophy,” in *The Age of Porfirio Díaz: Selected Readings*, ed. Carlos B Gil (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 45–48.

final, positive stage. This notion represented some of the underpinnings of what is now known as “Social Darwinism.” He described societies as if hermetically sealed and placed them into categories including “militant” or “industrial.” While militant societies were typified by violence and impetuosity under the government of a tyrannical despot, peace, progress, and a democracy characterized the industrial society. Over time the “wandering groups,” interpreted by many as a reference to American indigenous populations, would naturally die-off before humanity reached its true positivist state.¹²

Ideas like this easily melded with emerging biological sciences, like those of August Weismann, who is credited with the creation of the first theory of germ plasm that stressed the importance of heredity in human evolution for societal stability. Weismann characterized cultural programs and changes in the daily habits of people as patchwork fixes that died with the person. Simply put, he and others suggested that those social groups that had been economically successful must have been so because of their superior genes, while the poor were saddled with natural inferiority. Such explanations fit well into the cultural and biological denigration of indigenous peoples and Porfirian *científicos* applied them to their circumstances.¹³

The adoption of popular evolutionary sciences to help guide the development of society left many intellectuals promoting contradictory spinoff theories. Yet they all converged in their belief in the role of government in carrying out projects based on genetic and social engineering.¹⁴ For example, historian Francisco Bulnes constructed a hierarchy of the world’s human races based on purported ethnic diets. For Bulnes, history had shown that the race of wheat repeatedly dominated that of corn. He also argued that weak and barbarous races were

¹² Herbert Spencer, “Societies as Organisms,” in *The Age of Porfirio Díaz: Selected Readings*, ed. Carlos B Gil (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 49–51.

¹³ Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940,” in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham and Aline Helg (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 78.

¹⁴ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 3.

primarily differentiated by their ability to die “like flies,” lacking strength and missing the elements that one needed to kill others. These attributes, he continued, were reserved for modern men who he considered progressive, technical, and disciplined in movement and emotion.¹⁵ Many understood modern sports in the late nineteenth century as ideal providers of this type teaching as they served as a training ground for courage and leadership displayed through winning, and thus domination, within a set of rules.¹⁶

Justo Sierra, believing that racial hybrids poisoned the national race, also proposed replacing the indigenous and mixed-race population with European immigrants, as had been done in Argentina under Domingo Sarmiento (1811-1888) just decades earlier. Sierra argued that it was the only method by which society could evolve and believed that laws should work to ensure that evolution continued its natural course.¹⁷ Public health officials worked hard to forge links between race and disease and launched projects with school administrators to create a log of national physical and mental types as early as 1912. These projects, based on French evolutionary biology, used anthropometric measurements for a diagnosis.¹⁸

The *científicos* may have, nevertheless, significantly misinterpreted one of their core theorists. Spencer’s work was widely understood in racialized terms, but Spencer himself despised such applications and believed that the dissolution of the “wandering group” would come with a wider understandings of science and adaption to modern life.¹⁹ They modeled programs largely upon their understanding of Spencer as a neo-Darwinist, but Spencer criticized Darwin’s lack of attention to adaptive evolution and he believed that as organisms evolved they

¹⁵ Francisco Bulnes, “The Three Human Races,” in *The Age of Porfirio Díaz: Selected Readings*, ed. Carlos B Gil (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 39–41.

¹⁶ Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class,” 360.

¹⁷ López-Guazo, “The Mexican Eugenics Society,” 144; Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940,” 78.

¹⁸ Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., “Caracteres Físicos de Los Retardos,” *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 20, no. 1–2 (1912): 16–38.

¹⁹ Priego, “Porfirio Díaz, Positivism and ‘The Scientists,’” 135–46; Spencer, “Societies as Organisms,” 49–51.

became more complex and heterogeneous over time. In subsequent publications, while rarely speaking directly on race, the sociologist expressed belief that small changes in one's life could impact the practical use of one's organs, and thus change the genetic makeup of descendants.²⁰ He was, by no means, blind to race. He once, for example, argued that Amerindians possessed a natural "swiftness and agility" and a "balance of physical power more than gymnasts could ever give." He, nevertheless, argued that these traits had developed gradually in everyday activities.²¹ In other words, Spencer's position on evolution more closely mirrored that of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829), who argued that as organisms moved up the evolutionary ladder they became increasingly complex, but were still greatly influenced by adaptation and environment. This is precisely why education held such a central position in Spencer's catalogue. In one interview, Díaz attributed much of the lowly state of national health to a lack of exercise that he believed had ruined the digestive systems of his countrymen. This diagnosis insinuated that changes in one's daily routine could help the condition.²² Many *científicos*, to a degree, agreed with such sentiments, but these ideas were often tempered by deterministic associations between poverty, indigeneity, and immorality.

In the late nineteenth century, medicinal boards were established to lend the state control over healing. Boards more narrowly defined who would be considered an acceptable doctor to help eliminate imposters and clamped down on practices they deemed traditional, indigenous, and unscientific. The Mexican Pharmaceutical-Medical Society in early 1872 proclaimed that "charlatanism," the act of one posing as a physician or medical expert without proper licenses,

²⁰ Herbert Spencer, "Progress: Its Law and Cause," in *Seven Essays, Selected from the Works of H. Spencer* (London: Watts & Co., 1907), 7–34; Herbert Spencer, "The Inadequacy of Natural Selection Etc. Etc.," in *The Principles of Biology, Volume 1* (D. Appleton, 1898), 620–22; Peter J. Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Evolution Theories in the Decades around 1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 60–74.

²¹ Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*, 74.

²² Alec-Tweedle (Ethel), *Porfirio Díaz: Seven Times President of Mexico*, 291.

was one of the most pernicious practices known to man and vowed to stamp it out.²³ For many medical experts, alternative healers delivered backwards advice and prescribed drugs without proper medical training.²⁴ In these campaigns, midwifery and herbal medicines, used by most mestizo and indigenous populations to some degree, came under attack in what were sometimes violent campaigns against communities believed cast under the spells of “superstition.”²⁵ The government consolidated this process of medical authorization through the creation of medical review boards, professional schools, and new laws directed by the latest scientific developments. By the 1890s, physicians used professionalization and certificates to limit the activities of indigenous healers and *curanderas*. No matter their level of expertise or patterns of knowledge, healers rarely could meet the academic standards established by the medical boards. Most often licensed doctors used their positions in public agencies and connections to news sources to wage public war against alternative healing traditions and other “quacks.”²⁶ While officials found some success in purging the cities of alternative healers and false doctors, healers remained popular in rural areas because their methods were often most trusted as they better appealed to one’s soul as a spiritual and medical practice. In some places they remained popular because professional doctors could rarely be found.²⁷

As the revolutionary government looked to incorporate its masses, public officials celebrated the promise of public health and science in a renewed “war on microbes” that many

²³ David Sowell, “Quacks and Doctors: The Construction of Biomedical Authority in Mexico,” *Juniata Voices* 5 (2005): 19; Stuart A. Day, *Staging Politics in Mexico: The Road to Neoliberalism* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2004), 19.

²⁴ David Sowell, *Medicine on the Periphery: Public Health in the Yucatan, Mexico, 1870-1960* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 69.

²⁵ Sowell, “Quacks and Doctors: The Construction of Biomedical Authority in Mexico,” 15–17; Londa L Schiebinger and Claudia Swan, *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 12–13.

²⁶ Sowell, “Quacks and Doctors: The Construction of Biomedical Authority in Mexico,” 16–19.

²⁷ Sowell, “Quacks and Doctors: The Construction of Biomedical Authority in Mexico,” 20; Sowell, *Medicine on the Periphery*, 69.

believed could reverse poor health across the country.²⁸ In December of 1911, President Francisco Madero's new Sub-Secretary of Public Education Alberto J. Pani announced that medical inspectors would be circulated throughout federal schools to oversee physical education and hygiene and he awarded them the power to make curricula changes based on their observations. One year later, the Secretaría de Instrucción Pública introduced its first breakfast and lunch programs to combat malnutrition and developed plans to overcome a rampant ringworm epidemic in the countryside.²⁹ In 1917, President Venustiano Carranza (1915-1920) pushed the Constitutional Convention for a new Law of Family Relations that restricted marriages of supposedly dysgenic people to avoid the continuation of inheritable diseases and discourage the union of those determined to be physically or mentally weak.³⁰ By 1918, the Departamento de Salubridad Pública (DSP) designed ambitious health programs that promoted hygiene, exercise, and nutrition inclusive of all those deemed high risk populations such as women, children, and the poor.³¹

Military and health leaders developed exercise programs based on related ideas in corrective gymnastics learned from the French L'Ecole Joinville, applying the lessons of Maurice Boigey (1877-1952) by dosing exercises to patients to fight the spread of disease and mental and physical disabilities. This Joinville program was based heavily on the Swedish gymnastic method and was also significantly influenced by the scientific eugenics of politician Henri Paté (1878-1942) and physical educator Georges Hébert (1875-1975). Hébert believed that the bodies of modern white men had softened so much that the white race was at significant risk

²⁸ Agostoni, "Entre La Persuasión, La Compulsión Y El Temor," 151–55.

²⁹ Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, ed., "Circular Sobre Las Relaciones Que Debe Haber Entre El Inspector General de Educación Física Y Los Profesores Del Mismo Ramo," *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 19, no. 1–2 (1912): 19–20; G.L. Llergo, "Cuadro Relativo a Los Comedores Escolares," ed. Secretaría de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, *Boletín de Instrucción Pública* 19, no. 5–6 (1912): 731.

³⁰ López-Guazo, "The Mexican Eugenics Society," 144–45.

³¹ Agostoni, "Entre La Persuasión, La Compulsión Y El Temor," 151–52, 154, 157.

of decadence. He advocated for whites to take lessons from the world's indigenous peoples who he argued maintained strength, flexibility, and resistance just surviving more rugged daily lives.³² Mexican public health leaders who helped launch this “eclectic” third stage of national sport and physical culture, according to Prof. Manuel Velázquez Andrade, heavily modeled programs on these methods that situated hygiene or general prophylaxis as the primary desired outcome of participation.³³ Influences from other traditions also frequently blended into the nascent programs. This included the German method made famous by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) who was consumed by the idea of developing the perfect German, “physically prepared for life and war.”³⁴ Public health and race sciences were rarely completely separated from one another.

After the violence of revolution, the movement's leaders provided scathing criticisms of what they deemed stubborn and racist positivist sciences under Díaz, but Porfirian-era intellectuals often remained in important positions and few of even the most optimistic new leaders ever disagreed that they still faced a very real “Indian Problem.” Former Porfirian governor of Chiapas and co-founder of *El Universal*, Emilio Rabasa, wrote in his “La Evolución Histórica de México” that over three million immoral and unintelligent Indians stifled the republic from progress because of their poor spiritual and material condition and their inability or refusal to incorporate into national life.³⁵ Although he counted them equally as citizens, he justified the stratification of society based on natural racial principles and believed educating indigenous people was a waste of resources unless they were uprooted from their communities. Rabasa believed that the primitiveness of many indigenous peoples simply counteracted progress

³² Roy J Shephard, *An Illustrated History of Health and Fitness, from Pre-History to Our Post-Modern World*, 2015, 833–34.

³³ Velázquez Andrade, “La Educación Física en las Escuelas de México.”

³⁴ East, *A Historical Review and Analysis of Army Physical Readiness Training and Assessment*, 8.

³⁵ Emilio Rabasa, “El Problema Del Indio Mexicano,” *El Universal*, January 8, 1921, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

made elsewhere and he advocated for miscegenation through cultural and sexual unions.³⁶ As negative as such an interpretation of national life may have seemed, it represented a slight ideological shift from deterministic positivist race sciences to eugenics, which often afforded societies a road-map for racial improvement that did not always involve replacement populations.

British scientist Francis Galton conceived of the term “eugenics” in 1865, defining it as the use of knowledge of heredity to achieve “better breeding” in society, although such ideas were already in circulation in some form. In action, it informed social policy and governments encouraged “fit” peoples to reproduce with other “fit” peoples, while strongly discouraging those “unfit” from reproducing at all so as not to pass on their inferior traits to subsequent generations.³⁷ Eugenic sciences replaced some positivist sciences, but the logic of varying hereditary value among races continued to impact public health policy.³⁸ Even in these programs nearly all revolutionary leaders believed the “Indian Problem” was among the most urgent questions facing revolutionary society. The first plan in favor of miscegenation for national incorporation came from Andrés Molina Enríquez in his famous *Grandes problemas Nacionales* published in 1909. Enríquez stressed in it that nationalism could be realized through genetic blending, suggesting the unavoidable rise of a race of mestizos that would replace all racial types and bring harmony.³⁹ But it was after Vasconcelos’ *La raza cósmica* that *mestizaje* became the semi-official strategy for nation-building efforts as national experts sought out more optimistic eugenic theories adapted to the realities of the country.⁴⁰ Leaders throughout Latin America

³⁶ Mariana Mora, “Decolonizing Politics: Zapatista Indigenous Autonomy in an Era of Neoliberal Governance and Low Intensity Warfare” (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas, 2008), 124; Charles A Hale, *Emilio Rabasa and the Survival of Porfirian Liberalism: The Man, His Career, and His Ideas, 1856-1930* (Stanford University Press, 2008), 123–25; Suarez y López-Guazo, “The Mexican Eugenics Society,” 145.

³⁷ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 1–2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5,9.

³⁹ Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940,” 85.

⁴⁰ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 16.

lauded Vasconcelos' book at its publication, for it was considered a positive interpretation loosely based on race theories from Europe and the US that had previously afforded countries with mixed race populations little hope. While most Mexicans still could not read in 1925, many adopted its thesis as it made sense to them. *Mestizaje* was simply, "in the air."⁴¹

Vasconcelos antagonized positivists for their empirical rigidity, yet admitted that his own perspective was based largely on an intuition "nourished with facts" that required leaps of faith.⁴² He, nevertheless, did not denounce the laws of heredity proposed by Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) and believed his ideas of the "cosmic race" fit well into mainstream scientific discourse. Particularly, he did not deny that survival of the fittest determined outcomes in societies and believed that racial miscegenation had produced physical ugliness and moral repugnance among much of the region's population. In his theory, through an "astute Mendelianism," he hoped that love would guide the decision-making of degenerates and that "recessive" people would enlighten and upgrade their racial stock by marrying more attractive, ethical, and strong partners. The theory formed part of a larger nationalist concept that each racial type needed to develop its own understandings of conventional science because of each race's own purported particularities in evolution. In this way, *The Cosmic Race* did not represent an affront to mainstream scientific views on race as much as it wrinkled them to give Latin Americans more control in their own rhetorical, and sometimes violent, assault on non-white peoples.⁴³ He borrowed parts of existing racial mythologies to construct his own strategy of "racial inversion" against the backdrop of positivist determinism.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ilan Stavans, *José Vasconcelos: The Prophet of Race* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 43.

⁴² Didier Tisdell Jaén, "Introduction," in *The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition*, Johns Hopkins paperbacks ed (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xxii; Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, 8; Dirk R. Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 9–11.

⁴³ Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, 25–36.

⁴⁴ Martin S. Stabb, "Indigenism and Racism in Mexican Thought: 1857-1911," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 1, no. 4 (1959): 409–16.

Indigenista cultural programs, launched to valorize indigeneity to speed incorporation of the rural masses into revolutionary national life, worked in concert with vaccination hygiene missions to modernize and uplift rural communities. Nationalist artists, such as muralist Diego Rivera and composer Carlos Chávez, presented works that celebrated the country's ancient indigenous soul and fantasized about its industrial and prosperous future.⁴⁵

Vasconcelos, nevertheless, did not find much value in resurrecting the pre-Columbian Indian in Mexico. Indeed, he believed Indians were descendants of red-people from the lost civilization of Atlantis, suggesting that Mayan archeological sites like Palenque and Chichen Itza could have been their work. But he also argued that the living Maya and Nahuatl people were totally inferior to the Atlanteans and had degenerated for hundreds to thousands of years. He held that once a race degenerated, there was no hope of rescue and therefore the indigenous' only path forward was through the "door of modern culture," one largely dominated and typified by the world's whites who had succeeded in mechanizing the world.⁴⁶ In his book, Vasconcelos announced that he did not mean that a fifth race would violently dominate other races, but would become cultural and intelligent world leaders. They would still rely on the genius of whites who held superior ideals and whose traits would likely predominate in the Cosmic Race, minus only their supposed arrogance and materialism.⁴⁷ Later in his life, he stated his belief that the country remained in a "state of racial chaos."⁴⁸

Indigenismo programs were a double-edged sword. They provided indigenous peoples an avenue to revolutionary citizenship, but they just as easily delegitimized groups that did not conform to this romanticized and sanitized indigenous ideal. The programs gave value to pre-

⁴⁵ Malmström, *Introduction to Twentieth Century Mexican Music*, 67; Rick Anthony López, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁴⁶ Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, 8-9. 16, 31-32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁸ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 151.

Columbian indigeneity, a dead Indian past that rarely awarded value to everyday life in contemporary communities. Indeed, journalists and officials commonly spoke about indigenous people as primitive, lazy, drunk, or irrational, sometimes likening them to wild animals. By failing to attach any meaningful and sweeping social changes to most cultural projects, *indigenismo* represented another racist construction of the Indian by elite white and mixed-race political framers.⁴⁹ It was an intellectual's imagined nation; progressive, modern, and mestizo.⁵⁰ *Mestizaje* sought unity, but only after the extermination of one civilization over another.⁵¹ These programs provided the fundamental language and logic for eugenic regeneration projects that helped frame miscegenation as a process of symbiosis, one that would ultimately lead to the whitening, and thus betterment, of the national race.⁵²

Vaccinations, Temperance, and Sports, 1920-1930

Under the influence of swelling support for more positive eugenic solutions for racial inferiority and dysgenic miscegenation, some scientists and cultural leaders buttressed physical education programs to transform and save the destitute masses. Sports programs had the benefit of also animating the spirits of participants, promoting love of family and the home, and giving hope for a better life among the youth. Physical educators embraced positive eugenics and argued that sports addressed the most urgent problems facing revolutionaries. Moreover, they believed that changes were most quickly realized through the training the body because it was

⁴⁹ Alexander S. Dawson, "From Models for the Nation to Model Citizens: Indigenismo and the 'Revindication' of the Mexican Indian, 1920–40," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30, no. 2 (May 1998): 308; Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940," 87; Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 67.

⁵⁰ Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 32.

⁵¹ Guillermo Bonfil Batalla and Philip Adams Dennis, *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 62.

⁵² Lourdes Martínez-Echazabal, "O Culturalismo Dos Anos 30 No Brasil e na America Latina: Deslocamento Retorico ou Mundaça Conceitual?," in *Raça, Ciência E Sociedade*, ed. Marcos Chor Maio and Ricardo Ventura Santos (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil: Editora FIOCRUZ, 1996), 102–4, 112, 117–21.

the health of the body that ensured self-preservation, the most obvious law of nature for Spencerians. According to promoter Manuel Carpio, religion and “tuteles patronales” had destroyed all hope for the elevation of the human spirit among indigenous campesinos since colonialism, leaving them as exploited beasts and slaves steeped in sadness and ignorance. He held that such lifestyles pressed normally well-intentioned indigenous people into poor hygienic practices, apathy, and vice, especially alcoholism, all of which led to a spiritual inertia, racial degeneration, and repugnant civilization. He announced that the revolution arrived to open minds and hearts and needed citizens full of energy, strength, and confidence to overcome these obstacles. Sports developed muscles, strengthened lungs, and eliminated indolence and melancholy from the campesina family.⁵³

Figure 4.1: Results of SEP Medical-Physical Exams around DF, 1923⁵⁴

School	Students (total)	Physically Fit	Unfit
Nacional Preparatoria	2,517	761	1,756
Nacional de Agricultura	607	461	191
Comercial Doctor Mora	269	168	101
Elemental de Ed. Física	525	501	24
Superior de Comercio	700	462	238
Total	4,618	2,308	2,310

⁵³ Carpio, “Los Campesinos y la Revolución”; Carpio, “La Tristeza del Indio.”

⁵⁴ Dir. General de Ed. Física, “Resultado de Los Exámenes Medico-Físicos Practicados Por Orden de Esta Dirección,” *Educación Física*, no. 4 (May 1923): 49.

Physical education surveys taken in Mexico City in 1922 and 1923 showed that urban students fared slightly better than their rural counterparts in terms of physical aptitude, but data from the countryside was frequently lacking. One survey of schools in *Educación Física*, a magazine subsidized by President Álvaro Obregón to promote sports for the salvation of the race, showed that smaller schools considered about 70% of their populations physically fit, the most populous school, the National Preparatory School, scored just 30.2%. Public health and sporting leaders frequently panicked after receiving school medical exams in which more than a quarter of the student population suffered from illnesses afflicting eyesight, urinary tracts, skin, hearts, and the respiratory and digestive systems. Hernias, syphilis, smallpox, rheumatism, and skeletal and nervous system disorders were also commonly reported.⁵⁵ The situation was much worse in the countryside. The prevalence of disease and malnutrition led Vasconcelos to wonder whether sports programs were ethical or practical. For example, even though he acknowledged their importance for re-training physical habits essential for adaptive action-based learning methods, he wondered whether the people were simply too weak and underfed to expend energy on them. Overexertion theoretically could lead to even larger health problems. Some in the SEP also wondered whether campesinos even needed the exercise as they worked long hours in the fields.⁵⁶ School lunch programs, which went hand-in-hand with exercise, hygiene, and other health efforts, continued. In 1923, the SEP renewed these programs under the direction of Elena Torres and the Padres de Familia and made them mandatory in 1924 in all schools wherever possible.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Dir. General de Ed. Física, “Resultado de Los Exámenes Medico-Físicos Practicados Por Orden de Esta Dirección.”

⁵⁶ Lisbona Guillén, “‘Mejorar La Raza’,” 75.

⁵⁷ Elena Torres, “El Servicio de Los Desayunos Escolares,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 1, no. 4 (1923): 110–14.

The DSP and the SEP worked closely on education and public health efforts under Vasconcelos, including mass hygiene propaganda campaigns that taught the basics of nutrition, cleanliness, and heredity. Major smallpox vaccination campaigns were launched into the countryside in 1923 and 1925, but public health leaders struggled to overcome fears among rural communities that the vaccination would make people sick. Many patients did not want the stigma of being known as a carrier of the disease after inoculation, while rumors still swirled through communities that vaccination was part of a government conspiracy to poison native pueblos to seize their land. That the country maintained among the highest death rates to smallpox into the 1930s deeply frustrated government officials. Medical missionary programs, staffed with idealistic young students, sent into indigenous areas were sometimes met with violence from communities humiliated by the idea of students and nurses penetrating their flesh with needles.⁵⁸

In 1925, the SEP moved physical education jurisdiction out of the Departamento de Bellas Artes (DBA) and into the new Departamento de Psicopedagogía e Higiene (DPH). The DPH was created by Dr. Rafael Santamarina, a leading voice at the First National Congress of the Child in 1921, which hosted the first large debates on how to shape national policy on the principles of eugenics. Santamarina dedicated much of his career to studying normalcy in children, but the congress hosted forums on maternal health, immigration policy, and coercive sterilization for select dysgenic populations, a proposal that gained substantive support.⁵⁹ The DPH-directed medical inspectors also conducted studies to slow the transmission of disease, carried out anthropometric, mental, and psychological studies on children, and ensured that

⁵⁸ Agostoni, "Entre La Persuasión, La Compulsión Y El Temor," 151–57.

⁵⁹ Elena Jackson Albarrán, *Seen and Heard in Mexico: Children and Revolutionary Cultural Nationalism, The Mexican Experience* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 35–37.

schools maintained rigid hygienic conditions. The department worked to achieve the physical and mental development of the child from a biological and medical perspective.⁶⁰

In 1926 the DPH created a physical culture commission under the advisement of doctors as the primary means of studying the corporeal development of the human organism. The department hoped to change the character of physical education, directed mostly by philosophy, to something more scientific and testable. Officials hoped that, properly understood, sport could be medically applied to cure certain conditions. Doctors Salazar, Reyes, Acosta, and Castillo were chosen by Santamarina to run the commission and, by July of 1926, its doctors were employed to conduct widespread school investigations with teachers. They also gave medical examinations before inter-school sports tournaments to ensure the safety of participants.⁶¹

SEP minister Dr. J M Puig Casauranc announced to the Second Congress of Federal Educators on May 28, 1926 that one of the biggest roadblocks to developing the Indian was that a large portion of the population still believed indigenous people were the source of national problems. He blamed the prevalence of this perspective on the influence of foreign doctors and scientists who used theories of heredity to argue that indigenous people were naturally inferior, but he also blamed whites and mestizos who had long taken advantage of indigenous people. After all, he argued that the sad psychic and physical condition of indigenous people was the result of intense suffering under perpetual oppression for centuries. In turn, he celebrated the resolve of these communities and announced that they had shown themselves to possess great virtues of abnegation, sacrifice, and spirituality. He, nevertheless, argued that the salvation of the Indian would come through *mestizaje*, believing it could help tap into pre-Columbian virtues and to speed assimilation to modern life. This spiritual fusion of all the races would form a

⁶⁰ Departamento de Psicopedagogía e Higiene, "Proyecto Del Reglamento Interior Del Departamento," 1926, Caja 35481; ref. 136; exp. 17, AHSEP.

⁶¹ Departamento de Psicopedagogía e Higiene, "Acta de La Primera Junta de Medicos Escolares," January 23, 1926, Caja 35481; ref. 136; exp. 27, AHSEP.

harmonious and new national soul that would become “*la gran familia Mexicana*.” The sympathetic congress erupted in emotional applause in support of the plan.⁶²

Puig’s announcement affirming the country’s *indigenista* and mestizo path still, nevertheless, rested upon studies of social and biological degeneration. On one rural mission, for example, organized just weeks ahead of Puig’s speech, professor Carlos Basauri led a team into the Tarahumara sierras in Chihuahua to carry out ethnological research on communities to identify causes for physical degeneration, including studying vices, like alcohol and peyote use, nutrition, and environmental challenges. The group also distributed medicine and clothing and tried to convince communities to develop small industries based on the natural resources readily available. Physical educators accompanied missions like this to promote sports and active recreations to improve community health.⁶³ The Proyecto de Servicio de Mejoramiento de Comunidades Rurales, launched at the same time, included a descriptive questionnaire for teachers and inspectors detailing the everyday activities in rural communities on health, economy, culture, and domestic tasks, but focused most on childcare, sanitation, hygiene, and exercise.⁶⁴ Even after the Tarahumara represented the country in the Olympic Games in 1928, the public remained captivated by missionary reports from archaeologists and newspapers who illustrated their life as exotic and trapped in a Stone Age-like stage of evolution.⁶⁵

In terms of sports and fitness, Puig shared some of the reservations of his predecessor. He believed that weakened and malnourished students should not participate in any kind of strenuous physical activity. Even so, many health professionals supported sports because they

⁶² JM Puig Casauranc, “El Problema de La Educación de La Raza Indígena,” ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 5, no. 6 (1926): 5–17.

⁶³ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Proyecto Para El Envío de Una Mision Cultural a La Sierra de La Tarahumara,” *Boletín de La Secretaría de Educación Pública* 5, no. 4 (1926): 120–22.

⁶⁴ “Proyecto de Servicio de Mejoramiento de Comunidades Rurales,” n/d, DPH; Caja 35482; ref. 137; exp. 23, AHSEP.

⁶⁵ “Los Tarahumaras y Sus Exoticas Residencias,” *El Nacional*, March 10, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

believed that exercise could prevent or cure some ailments that commonly afflicted the population. In 1928, physical educator Rafael David wrote a running column on exercise and health in *El Universal*. He contended that good nutrition and exercise could prevent and cure rheumatism and other illnesses. Indeed, while he admitted that exercise could not help with some ailments like tuberculosis, it could help with nervous system and glandular disorders. It could also reverse the detrimental effects of gout, obesity, diabetes, asthma, kidney stones, rickets, and neurasthenia by transforming one's chemical composition and stimulating the organs. Arthritic pains could also purportedly be alleviated. Although David argued that these problems typically afflicted the sedentary city-dweller, he contended that people everywhere needed to improve their nutrition and exercise to give impulse to the progressive aspects of the evolutionary cycle.⁶⁶ Another column in 1928 outlined the hopes of physical exercise, hygienic culture, and good diet as the primary ways of preventing serious and fatal illness. Man needed to build up his strength and create a resistant body. After all, "man doesn't die, he is killed."⁶⁷

One ailment that health reformers agreed required decisive action was alcoholism, a disease that eugenicists believed was inherited by one's offspring. As governor of Sonora, Plutarco Elías Calles banned the sale, distribution, and consumption of alcohol as his first action in 1915 and, as a leading cabinet member under Obregón, he supported US prohibition efforts, including the US Volstead Act. As president a decade later, Calles hoped to expand article 117 of the constitution that afforded states the right to prohibit alcohol sales. While his efforts to increase public debate on the topic initially failed, his cabinet found more inventive ways to discourage alcohol abuse. For example, in 1925, taxes on alcohol notably jumped, especially on imports that were taxed at a 70 to 80 percent rate, and administrators authored other laws to

⁶⁶ Francisco Heckel, "Las Enfermedades de la Nutricion se Curan con los Ejercicios," trans. Rafael David, *El Universal*, May 14, 1928.

⁶⁷ "La Cultura Física en el Hombre Evita las Enfermedades," *El Universal*, April 2, 1928.

eliminate street liquors.⁶⁸ In April of 1929, legislators in Tamaulipas drafted laws to ban the retail sale of liquor within 150 meters of schools, government buildings, billiards halls, theatres, or even large paseos.⁶⁹ A year later, the Comisión de Medidas Sanitarias reminded the public that temperance remained fundamentally a component of the constitution as figures such as Francisco Mugica, member of the 1917 Constituent Congress, had called for the banning of alcohol and gambling anywhere near worker's centers.⁷⁰

Emilio Portes Gil, Calles' successor, had long advocated for temperance as well. He partially banned alcohol as governor of Tamaulipas from 1925-1928 and promised similar action as president. On April 16, 1929, Portes Gil launched his war against alcoholism in partnership with the DSP, declaring alcoholic beverages, which he said had ravaged the families of campesinos and workers and poisoned the race, one of the gravest threats to the revolution. He expressed dismay that all revolutionaries did not share his convictions, but decried the project's imperial importance as the drink allied with "all tyrannies" and enemies of goodwill that threatened to undo human dignity. In short, it sapped the race of its energy, happiness, and virtues. The president summoned the most noble and determined citizens of the republic, including those in local and state governments, agrarian communities, worker's unions, Padres de la Familia, political parties, and other organizations, to intervene, if for nothing else than to save women who suffered the most heartbreaking and pressing consequences of anyone. Within a month, Portes Gil developed an action plan that promised to prohibit the opening of any new centers of vice, promote sports clubs as a healthy substitute activity, support public anti-alcohol lectures

⁶⁸ Gretchen Pierce and Áurea Toxqui, eds., *Alcohol in Latin America: A Social and Cultural History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 68–82.

⁶⁹ "Medidas Para Restringir la Venta de Embriagantes," *El Universal*, April 19, 1929, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

⁷⁰ La Comisión de Medidas Sanitarias, "Dictamen," August 21, 1930, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP.

and cultural events, develop anti-alcohol lessons for schools, produce brochures with anti-alcohol messages, and organize women's temperance leagues.⁷¹

On May 14, 1929, Portes Gil officially created the Comité Nacional de Lucha contra el Alcoholismo (CNLCA) under the DSP to direct all anti-alcohol activities as supported in articles 73, 210, 211, and 212 of the constitution and under the revised Sanitary Code. The group also vowed to work with masonic lodges, unions, and all civil groups to ensure its success. Additionally, the CNLCA supported the building of new sports centers, organized tournaments to promote regeneration, funded new government studies on the dangers of drinking, organized anti-alcoholic student societies, and cracked down on illegal liquor sales. They also vowed to prohibit the production and sale of drinks with high alcohol content, including absinthe, whisky, and gins, and clean the streets of the several illegal moonshines widely distributed.⁷² By July, the CNLCA had a governing board featuring some of the most prominent physical educators and sporting promoters in the medical community, including Dr. Alfonso Priani, Gen. Tirso Hernández, and Dr. Alfonso Pruneda, Rafael Ramírez, and future president Adolfo Ruiz Cortines.

The CNLCA made sports a priority, believing them the fastest way for citizens to acquire hygienic habits necessary for a lifetime of strength, will power, and general good health. But they also believed that sports built character and liberated children from degeneration by teaching discipline, sacrifice, and honor. Sports training became obligatory, not just for primary schools, but also for secondary, preparatory, normal, agricultural, commercial, military, technical, and professional schools as well. New laws also required prison inmates and those

⁷¹ Letter from Emilio Portes Gil to Dr. Aquilino Villanueva, Jefe Del Depto de Salubridad Pública, April 19, 1929, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP.

⁷² Emilio Portes Gil, "Acuerdo a La Secretarías de Estado Y Departamento Dependientes Del Ejecutivo de La Union," May 14, 1929, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP; Rafael Ramírez, "Circular 59," ed. Secretaría de Educación Pública, *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1930, 24–32.

working in public jobs to take courses on physical education.⁷³ The Education and Sports commission within the CNLCA had more delegates than any other section.⁷⁴

The new project also mandated obligatory courses on puericulture, the French eugenic study of the scientific rearing of children, in their final year of primary school and throughout secondary, technical, and normal school tracks. In a related measure, the government promised construction of public restrooms, health clinics, dispensaries, and consultation centers that allowed parents to bring their young children in for anthropometric testing, including height and weight, and to gauge their physical-psychological environment. Experts at the center used results to make recommendations on how to provide a healthier environment for children. Organizers also oversaw the construction of playgrounds and other open-air spaces for physical recreation to promote coordination of the nervous system, improve circulation and respiratory strength, and to aid muscular-mental development. Exercise routines intensified as one grew older, but architects made sure to caution teachers about the overexertion of children in puberty as they were already going through drastic physical transformations that left them in a fragile state.⁷⁵

⁷³ El Comité Antialcoholico, "Proyecto de Programa de Educación Física Y de Deporte Que Presenta La Comisión Respectiva," July 29, 1929, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP; Ramírez, "Circular 59"; Comité Nacional de Lucha contra el Alcoholismo, "Lista de Sus Comisiones," n/d, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP.

⁷⁴ "Delegados de La Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra El Alcoholismo," n/d, Fondo: SP, Sec: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 1, AHSSP.

⁷⁵ El Comité Antialcoholico, "Proyecto de Programa de Educación Física Y de Deporte Que Presenta La Comisión Respectiva."

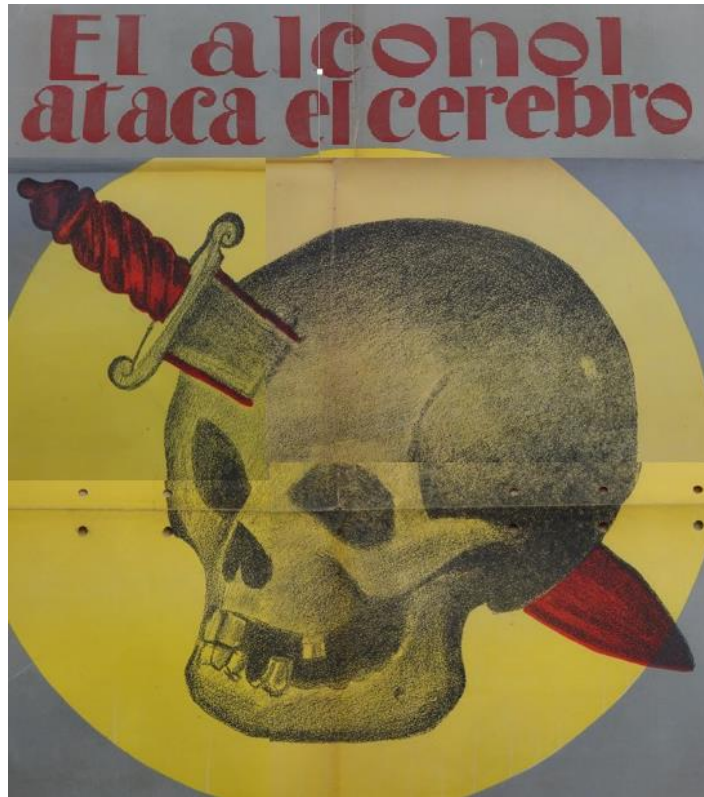


Illustration 4.1: "Alcohol attacks your brain." Courtesy of the AHSEP and AGN.⁷⁶

Portes Gil also worked with the CNLCA to launch a massive anti-alcohol sports parade for Revolutionary Day on November 20. Thousands of children marched in white uniforms, symbolizing innocence and purity, in synchronized columns and performed gymnastic routines in front of large crowds. The SEP worked with the DSP to produce signage and slogans that emphasized drinking's ability to ruin individuals and families physically, spiritually, and financially, such as the following:

Es del borracho la suerte, Locura, prisión o muerte
(Madness, prison, or death is the drunkard's luck)

Serás feliz en la vida, Si sólo agua es tu bebida
(You will be happy in life if water is your only drink)

Con el tiempo, el cantinero, Hará de ti un pordiosero
(Given time, the alcoholic will find them-self a beggar)

⁷⁶ Departamento de Psicopedagogía e Higiene, "Propaganda antialcohólica Esc. Rural Federal," 1930, Caja 35535, exp. 771/75, 173, AHSEP.

Los padres alcoholizados, Dan hijos degenerados
(Alcoholic parents give degenerate children)

Cada copa que te dan, Es robo a un hogar, del pan
(Each drink you get is robbing the house of bread)

¿Qué herencia deja el borracho? Hijos idiotas y degenerados
(What inheritance does the drunk leave? Idiot and degenerate children)

¿Qué merece el borracho? La cárcel.
(What does the drunk deserve in life? Jail.)

De cada cien locos, noventa son hijos de alcohólicos.
(Of every one-hundred lunatics, 90 are children of alcoholics)⁷⁷

Members of the organization opened to unusual ideas in their campaign to discourage alcohol use. For example, in 1929, salesman J. Poulat proposed that the state sponsor the widescale construction of yerba mate cafes to replace alcohol as the most popular “distraction drink.” He argued that social proof laid in its wide popularity in Paraguay and Argentina and related that it offered great health benefits as a stimulant that suppressed hunger and discouraged the drinking of alcohol. The proposal gained an audience with Dr. Mario Quiñones who forwarded the proposal to the DSP. Shortly after, the Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento ordered a study to examine the medical benefits of yerba mate as a medicinal alternative, believing it would promote good circulation and stimulate the nervous system, giving lower-class workers and campesinos much needed energy for exercise and work. In in a letter to DSP official Enrique Monterrubio, A. Moreira de Abreu of the Brazilian Embassy enthusiastically backed the potential investment in mate and expressed shock that the government was so ignorant of its benefits. In the end, the DSP discarded the plan due to concerns over side effects,

⁷⁷ Secretaría de Educación Pública, ed., “Sugestiones Para Letreros Y Carteles En La Manifestacion Antialcoholica Del 20 de Noviembre,” *Memoria de La Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 1930, 34–37.

including disrupted digestion and even heart complications. They concluded that the herb produced similarly positive results to that of Chinese tea that was already widely in circulation.⁷⁸

Yerba mate represented just one of many proposed cure-all solutions for poor health as a personal health craze gripped the country. Indeed, marketers plastered newspapers with advertising that peddled miracle pills, potions, elixirs, and even exercise equipment with the promise of improving strength, virility, sexual potency, reversing birth defects, and curing serious illness. Some just offered pain relief. As early as 1918, promoters touted kola, coca, and sugar based products as healthy for sportsmen because they provided energy and improved circulation.⁷⁹ In April of 1928, one New York-based company offered the “Electrolita” electrified belt that promised a natural way to increase robustness and virility “naturally” without drugs. The ad also professed that the belt, allegedly developed by scientists and doctors, could help with rheumatism, neuralgia, stomach pain, cramps, scrofula, impotence, and general weakness. It cost just \$6 pesos (roughly \$3 US).⁸⁰ Other products outfitted their brand with a sporting aesthetic. For example, Casino Extras cigarettes, who branded themselves as the official cigarette of *deportistas*, filled their advertising with images of gymnasts and other athletes, assuring audiences that their cigarettes were not only fresh but also calmed one’s nerves. Campeones Extra cigarettes branded entirely on sport and Orange Crush soda commissioned advertising that sold the product as a refreshing drink that contained nutritious calories.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Letter from Mario Quiñones to the SSP, November 11, 1929, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP; Letter from the Sec. de Agricultura y Fomento to the Comité Nacional de Lucha Contra El Alcoholismo, n/d, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP; Letter from A. Moreira de Abreu to Enrique Monterrubio, Depto. Juridico de Salubridad Pública de Mexico, July 15, 1930, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP.

⁷⁹ “La Alimentacion Y El Sport,” *Arte y Deportes*, November 8, 1918.

⁸⁰ “Poderoso Cinturón Eléctrico (Ad),” *El Universal*, April 1, 1928.

⁸¹ “Casinos Extras (Ad),” *El Universal*, April 12, 1928; “Orange-Crush,” *El Universal*, April 5, 1928.

CAMPEONES
 20 CIGARROS
 4 ENVOLTURAS
 10 CENTAVOS

El desgaste en la lucha del cable se compensa fumando "CAMPEONES" extra

"ELEGANTES" extra con boquilla de ámbar

EL BUEN TONO S.A.

CUCHE NUESTROS CONCIERTOS POR *

CASINOS
 Con uno o con ciento la jarra está fresca y tranquilos los nervios

ES RAPIDO Y AGIL CON UNO O CON CIENTO

"EL CIGARRO DE LOS DEPORTISTAS"

ELABORADOS CON TABACO SIN VEZAS FUMADO, SIN HUMEDAD EN EXCESSO Y SIN LOS CUATRO ENVOLTURAS QUE LO GUARDAN.— TAPADO EN VACIO Y PALO QUEDA ELIMINADO POR UN PROCESO PATENTADO

CASINOS
 Con uno o con ciento la jarra está fresca y tranquilos los nervios

PARA PRONTA Y NUEVA ENERGIA BEBA EL REFRESCANTE

Orange-Crush

Robina Hnos.
 De León 125 - Tel. 2-20 - Mex. 22 Jalisco

Illustration 4.2: Advertising using sports themes. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.⁸²

Public health officials grew especially sensitive when this advertising carried over into alcohol brands. In May of 1930, for example, Carta Blanca beer ran an advertisement in *El Universal* that declared its product a health drink, purportedly filled with vitamins, dextrine, and maltodextrins that provided energy and nutrition necessary to fortify one's muscles and nerves.

⁸² *El Universal*, April 5, 1928; *El Universal*, April 12, 1928.

The image and copy included doctor confirmations that a small amount of alcohol was necessary for the organic functioning of one's body and counted the beer as a perfect addition to a well-rounded and nutritious diet. A department memo showed the high level of concern at the CNLCA with similar marketing strategies by tequila and aguardiente vendors, who characterized their drinks as medicinal. In the Carta Blanca ad, CNLCA officials accused the company of violating the Sanitary Code by intentionally lying about nutritional benefits and inventing doctor recommendations.⁸³

While organizations like the CNLCA worked hard for temperance, some SEP reports showed only limited reach of early anti-alcohol programs, with 3,695 out of more than 19,000 schools participating.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, petitions over the next two decades reveal that the efforts succeeded in forging links between sports culture, health, and temperance. Gen. Abelardo Rodríguez dissolved the CNLCA after taking the presidency but helped form a new group with increased military character.⁸⁵

Mexican Eugenic Society and Regeneration, 1930-1934

Since the Porfiriato, public health officials blamed poor children's health in large part on ignorance in the home, where children were raised by superstitious midwives that lacked basic knowledge on nutrition, exercise, and basic hygiene.⁸⁶ But the revolution was child-centered and fixed the family as the metaphor of national identity.⁸⁷ As eugenics bonded to public health policy, professional action societies formed to discuss and institute change based on eugenics

⁸³ Comité Nacional de Lucha contra el Alcoholismo, "Dictamen," June 5, 1930, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP.

⁸⁴ Pierce and Toxqui, *Alcohol in Latin America*; Gretchen Kristine Pierce, "Sobering the Revolution: Mexico's Anti-Alcohol Campaigns and the Process of State-Building, 1910-1940" (PhD Dissertation, University of Arizona, 2008), 71–72.

⁸⁵ Francisco Vázquez Pérez, "Memorandum," September 20, 1932, Fondo: SP, S: SJ, lg. 18, exp. 10, AHSSP.

⁸⁶ Spencer, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*, 40–47, 231.

⁸⁷ Elena Jackson Albarrán, *Seen and Heard in Mexico: Children and Revolutionary Cultural Nationalism*, The Mexican Experience (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 32–33; Blum, *Domestic Economies*, 127.

principles. One of these groups was the Mexican Puericulture Society (SPM) that formed in 1929 to discuss sex education, birth control, sexuality, and heredity as it related to child care.⁸⁸ Dr. Rafael Carrillo, head of the eugenics section of the SPM, believed ethnologists had accomplished little in the way of identifying the world's varying races of humans, an effort he deemed essential to elucidate and address the mental, physical, and moral capacities of each race in the country.⁸⁹

SEP rural schools had already begun to function as “eugenic laboratories” as teachers measured craniums, torsos, and other biometric measurements, along with foreign psychological exams, to chart and classify the prevalence of disease and other inherited weaknesses.⁹⁰ They also sought out correlations between physical health, mental health, home life, and indications of multi-generational disabilities based on racial standards of normality. Schools, especially in poorer states, commonly had student populations in which the majority were classified by such exams as mentally or physically defective. Among those deemed defective were the blind, hunchbacks, and amputees, but also those considered “idiots” or insane. Definitions of feeble-mindedness or weakness differed greatly over time and space. For example, some departments later focused more on ailments like lice infestations, rashes, and tooth decay.⁹¹

Figure 4.2: Population Classified by Physical and Mental Defects⁹²

States	1921	1930
Aguascalientes	987	913
Baja California (Distrito Norte)	144	244
Baja California (Distrito Sur)	368	338
Campeche	440	496
Coahuila	2 073	2 817
Colima	694	404

⁸⁸ Stern, “Responsible Mothers and Normal Children,” 370; Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 56–57.

⁸⁹ López-Guazo, “The Mexican Eugenics Society,” 149–50.

⁹⁰ Stern, “Responsible Mothers and Normal Children.”

⁹¹ Guerrero, “Sus Informes de Labores.”

⁹² Secretaría de Gobierno, “Quinto Censo de Población,” Tabulados básicos, Mexico City, 1930.

Chiapas	2 202	2 667
Chihuahua	3 245	3 990
Distrito Federal	6 307	7 942
Durango	2 298	3 705
Guanajuato	5 380	6 437
Guerrero	5 874	5 064
Hidalgo	3 835	4 745
Jalisco	8 660	9 249
México	5 690	6 422
Michoacán	5 875	7 270
Morelos	882	909
Nayarit	976	1 133
Nuevo León	1 712	2 821
Oaxaca	4 929	5 981
Puebla	6 850	6 829
Querétaro	1 286	1 489
Quintana Roo	54	40
San Luis Potosí	3 104	4 022
Sinaloa	2 215	3 319
Sonora	2 144	2 454
Tabasco	586	1 194
Tamaulipas	1 579	2 048
Tlaxcala	1 436	1 289
Veracruz	6 392	7 769
Yucatán	1 951	1 711
Zacatecas	3 173	3 905
Total	93 341	109 616

Eugenicists made puericulture a cornerstone in reproductive health programs to craft an ideal, modern, healthy citizenry. Part of this effort included the creation of birthing review boards that required state approval for marriages as part of the 1926 Sanitary Code to prevent the further degeneration of the national race. Eugenic boards and hygienists were also responsible for re-scripting proper maternal behavior, first by trying to eliminate the role of the midwife in

birthing and child-rearing, but also requiring women to visit obstetricians, gynecologists, and certified nurses regularly.⁹³

In a 1932 piece in the *Revista Mexicana de Puericultura*, Carrillo claimed that there was optimism for the regeneration of the race, for indigenous people had some positive traits, including immunological advantages against select ailments. He suggested that the poor genetic situation was not only a result of bad mixing among indigenous elements of society, but also European immigrants. Indeed, instead of receiving “Edisons, Mussolinis, and Hindenburgs,” the country, he argued, had received “epileptics, alcoholics, feeble-minded or syphilitics” who had only helped the country “deviate from the mean” based on Galton’s scale of values. Carrillo proposed that border and port agents consider careful vetting of visitors and tourists based on eugenic principles.⁹⁴

One complete puericultural program skeleton, sent on behalf of Prof. Alfredo Martínez, director of the Escuela Normal Rural in Ebanos, Tamaulipas in 1933, provided special programs based on a medical and physiological understanding of students of different ages, sex, and race. The programs required faculty to be strictly versed in the latest sciences, including basic understandings of eugenic inheritance based on the ideas of Galton and Mendel, applied to both animals and people. Martínez argued that faculty should also educate students on the dangers of pernicious influences of alcohol and marijuana and other inheritable diseases like dementia and mental disability. The program recommended matrimonial certification for physical and mental exams to ensure the good health of future children, in addition to specific education on pre-and post-natal care for babies and physical and mental development for small children.⁹⁵

⁹³ Stern, “Responsible Mothers and Normal Children”; Peter Conrad, “Medicalization and Social Control,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 18 (1992): 209–232. See Johanna Schoen, *Choice & Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁹⁴ López-Guazo, “The Mexican Eugenics Society,” 149–50.

⁹⁵ Letter from Ignacio Millan to the Departamento de Enseñanza Agrícola y Rural Normal (Based on the Proposals of Prof. Alfredo Martínez), August 2, 1933, DPH, Caja 35557, exp. 10, AHSEP.

Eugenics societies formed in the early 1920s and 1930s in England, France, Japan, Soviet Union, U.S., and Nazi Germany, among others, while Mexico's first major eugenics society was the Mexican Eugenic Society (SME) formed by Dr. Alfredo Saavedra in 1931.⁹⁶ The SME boasted 130 members that constituted esteemed professionals, including doctors, biologists, politicians, and SEP administrators. The organization stood out as one of the most active eugenics societies in the western hemisphere, meeting weekly and producing several radio advertisements and journals.⁹⁷ Prominent members included Saavedra, who had published works on mongoloidism, criminology, physical culture, single-motherhood, sex education and pieces aimed at social problems. Other notable members included Félix Palavicini, co-founder of *El Universal* and sponsor of the India Bonita beauty pageant, Carrillo, former head of the Beneficencia Pública and author of 34 medical Publications, and Narciso Bassols, who sat as an honorary president. Dr. Alfonso Pruneda, rector of UNAM from 1924 to 1928 and a committed supporter of sports, also participated.⁹⁸ Saavedra envisioned a group that could scientifically take on some of the biggest social concerns of the period including mental disabilities, single motherhood, prison reform, disease, prostitution, and, of course, racial hybridity.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Stern, "Mestizofilia, Biotipología Y Eugenesia En El México Posrevolucionario: Hacia Una Historia de La Ciencia Y El Estado, 1920-1960," 369.

⁹⁷ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 55.

⁹⁸ "Bibliografías: Alfonso Pruneda," *Diccionario de La Historia de Educación En Mexico*, 2002, http://biblioweb.tic.unam.mx/diccionario/htm/biografias/bio_p/pruneda.htm (accessed March 22, 2017).

⁹⁹ Stern, "Mestizofilia, Biotipología y Eugenesia en el México Posrevolucionario," 369.

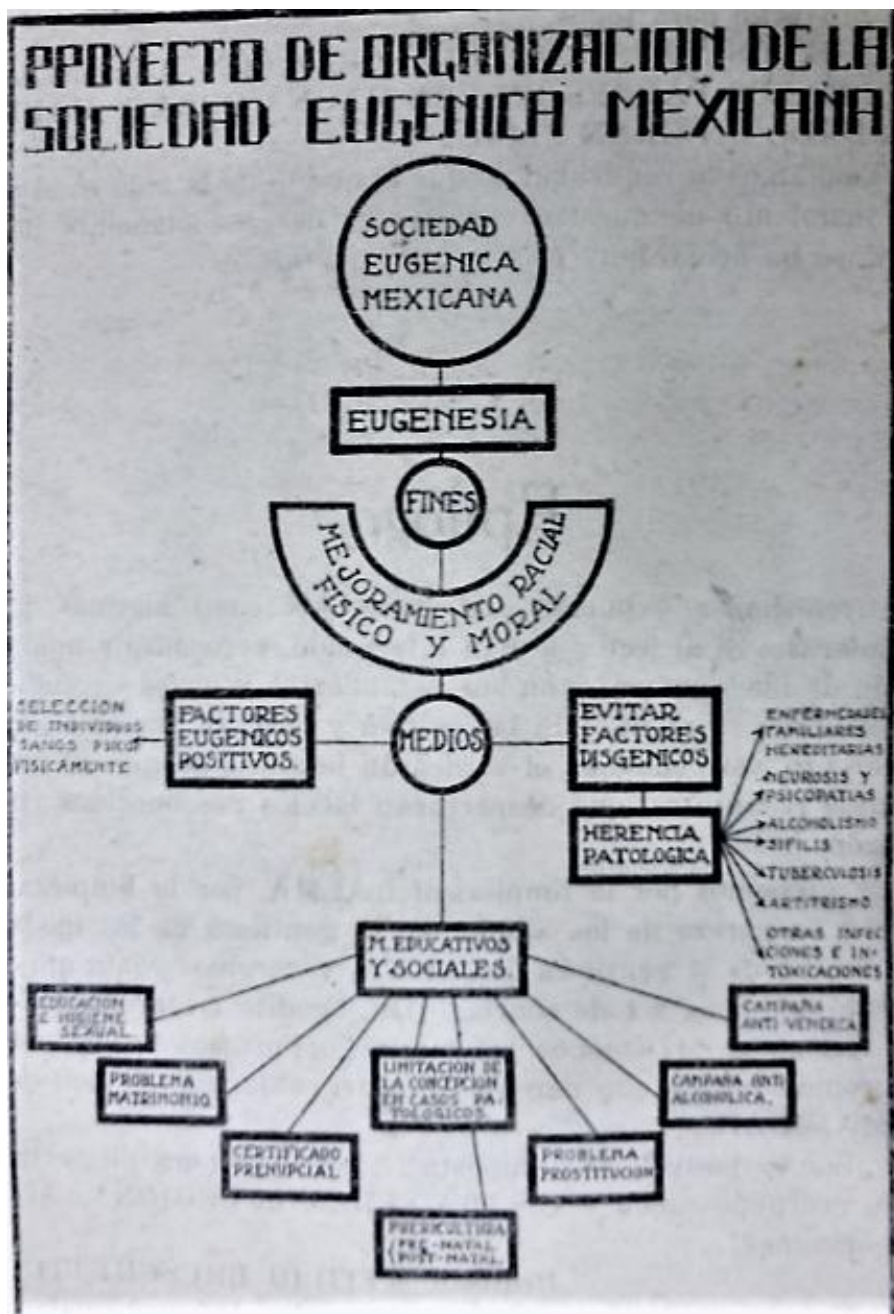


Illustration 4.3: "Project of Organization of the Mexican Eugenics Society (1931). Courtesy of Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.¹⁰⁰

The organization of the SME comprised contradictory strategies for racial improvement. As Carrillo put it, two schools of thought typically existed in national eugenics. One either ascribed to negative eugenics that found solutions only in population replacement or direct

¹⁰⁰ Sociedad Eugénica Mexicana, "Nuevas Orientaciones: La Enseñanza Sexual y la Religión Pensamientos de Médicos, Filósofos, Y Sociólogos Mundiales" (Esperanza Peña Monterrubio, 1931), 06/caja 5/foll. 49, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

elimination of dysgenic elements, or one believed in a positive, neo-Lamarckian program that believed improvements made in one's lifetime could improve one's genetic makeup beyond his or her life.¹⁰¹ Few eugenicists ever truly understood eugenics as they were originally formulated and instead borrowed contradictory concepts from positivists and eugenicists, sometimes incorporating both positive and negative eugenic strategies at the same time.¹⁰² As the SME's organization revealed, the group heavily favored action based on positive principles, but still included education on selecting the optimal marriage and sexual partners.

Some officials implemented extreme negative eugenic policies to manage the racial composition of society, including forced sterilization. Between 1907 and 1945, twenty-four US states had legalized coerced sterilization of 70,000 victims, mostly the mentally disabled, ill, or poor minorities, but it was not attempted in Mexico until 1932 on any wide scale.¹⁰³ This program, formed by anti-clerical governor of Veracruz Adalberto Tejeda was supported by the DPH and authored by economist Salvador Mendoza. Foremost, the law authorized sterilization of the mentally ill, criminals, and the diseased.¹⁰⁴ The new law also restricted alcohol purchases, abolished select cantinas, and legalized birth control in hopes that the poorer classes that "reproduced to excess" would reduce birth rates.¹⁰⁵ Some psychiatrists had studied under Dr. Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926), a German expert in racial hygiene who believed that negative cultural practices and conditions acquired in one's life, like alcoholism or syphilis, would degenerate the *Volkskörper*, or the German race for generations to come. Some of his students brought National Socialist ideas into their work in Mexico, such as Matilde Rodríguez Cabo (1902-1967) who led the Child Psychology Department at the National Asylum and advocated

¹⁰¹ Suarez y López-Guazo, "The Mexican Eugenics Society," 149–50.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰³ Stepan, 31.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 56, 131-132.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

for euthanasia of mentally or physically deficient people who were deemed to be holding back the population.¹⁰⁶

More common were perspectives like those of Alfredo del Valle, an UNAM engineer from the Escuela Nacional de Agricultura, and active SME member since 1932. Del Valle argued that health improvements could only be reached through racial and cultural assimilation with white populations.¹⁰⁷ Some, like Alfonso Herrera, saw little limit to the potential of such activity and were energized by the idea of genetically engineering society as agriculture had done with livestock. He dreamed of the day that laboratories would create “supermen.”¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, scientists and intellectuals found the study and implementation of eugenics imperative as a way to slow the spread of the “fatal trinity” of diseases, commonly associated with poor and indigenous peoples, including syphilis, tuberculosis, and alcoholism, that many believed poisoned the race for generations.¹⁰⁹ They widely believed that racial mixture could only improve Indians, while European blood would regress if blended with inferior races.¹¹⁰

One puericulturist believed that a eugenic society could be achieved through three processes. First, the preventative program, where one must recognize the importance of natural selection of already eugenic (white) people who were intelligent, physically fit, and naturally successful in life. Smart marriages between “fit” people were often advocated, especially between athletes, for the passing of strong genes. Second, the negative program, through the elimination of dysgenic peoples like the mentally “retarded,” the diseased, and the psychotic with sterilization and birth control. Third, the positive program, where social programs, exercise

¹⁰⁶ E. J. Engstrom, “On the Question of Degeneration’ by Emil Kraepelin,” *History of Psychiatry* 18, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 391–93; *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 486.

¹⁰⁷ Suárez y López Guazo, *Eugensia y Racismo en Mexico*, 105.

¹⁰⁸ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 56; Stern, “Mestizofilia, Biotipología Y Eugenesia En El México Posrevolucionario,” 78.

¹⁰⁹ Stern, “Mestizofilia, Biotipología Y Eugenesia En El México Posrevolucionario,” 379.

¹¹⁰ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 151.

and health education, especially on sex, nutrition, and hygiene, could help realize some short-term and long-term goals.¹¹¹ In addition, certain behaviors, such as sexual promiscuity, drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, and other immoral practices, were considered inherently dysgenic.¹¹²

Proposals from Alfredo del Valle for improvement of indigenous health

- **Hygiene and Medicine:** combating and prevention of contagious diseases (venereal and hereditary)
- **Engineering:** Sanitation and water provisions to improve daily life and reduce infant mortality
- **Folklore:** Orientation and stimulation of *mestizaje* in the mind, necessary for racial improvement
- **Immigration:** Laws to carefully select and restrict immigration from people of certain races and ages (preference for younger people)
- **Social hygiene:** Elimination of prostitution and alcoholism
- **Political:** Incorporation of the indigenous population into national life
- **Eugenics:** Restricted marriages
- **Education:** Scientific eugenic curriculum that promotes a moral sexual education, meant to train students to carefully select partners (physically strong, active, beautiful, healthy, and intelligent) to improve the national race

Source: Laura Suárez y López Guazo, *Eugenesia y racismo en México* (UNAM, 2005), 104-105

In February of 1933, Saavedra, authored Mexico's first "Code of Eugenics." The document outlined the purpose of marriage to build a cooperative and healthy home focused on the wellbeing of children. It also proposed that sick or physically or mentally defective parents should not procreate, should not drink, and should not seek out abortion, an action deemed

¹¹¹ Sociedad Eugénica Mexicana, "Nuevas Orientaciones: La Enseñanza Sexual y la Religión Pensamientos de Médicos, Filósofos, y Sociólogos Mundiales."

¹¹² Millan, "Letter to the Departamento de Enseñanza Agrícola y Rural Normal (Based on the Proposals of Prof. Alfredo Martínez)."

morally and biologically reprehensible.¹¹³ Moreover, the group established offices to respond to public questions and concerns related to new rules or recommendations.¹¹⁴

The SME did significant public outreach. For example, they hosted regular radio broadcasts, published eugenics, hygiene, and puericulture discoveries and debates in its regular bulletin (and later in its magazine), distributed bibliographic lists containing all publications and projects from SME members, and delivered public lectures. In a bi-weekly journal called *Eugenesia: Higiene y Cultura Física*, the group fixed sport as a central element of regeneration. The SME declared it had a permanent goal to improve the nation's race, allowing the country to experience the richness of the world of tomorrow by uplifting health and happiness in the destruction of ignorance, fanaticism, and pain.¹¹⁵ The group organized a large "Día de la Raza" event on Oct 12, 1933, an event typically meant to celebrate cultural diversity and the landing of Christopher Columbus, to celebrate science's advances in racial hygiene throughout Latin America. The event included a parade, speeches, and music at the Anfiteatro Bolivar in the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria.¹¹⁶

One article in *Eugenesia* lauded the work of sports doctors who contributed to the work of conserving and improving the health and physical aptitude corresponding to physical exercise. They gave preventative healthcare to combat both illness and physical weakness and helped develop programs based on the racial tendencies of each group. The article outlined two kinds of human races, including hunter and gatherers, or wandering nomads, and sedentary agriculturists. Nomads, it argued, could run long distances and possessed good circulation. Both racial types,

¹¹³ Alfredo Saavedra, "Codigo de Eugenesia," February 15, 1933, DPH, Caja 35505, p 112, AHSEP.

¹¹⁴ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 57.

¹¹⁵ Alfredo Saavedra, "La Obra Del Futuro," *Eugenesia: Higiene Y Cultura Física* 19 (December 31, 1932).

¹¹⁶ "El Dia de La Raza," *Eugenesia: Higiene Y Cultura Física* 2, no. 32 (October 9, 1933): 1.

nevertheless, required very different types of physical education. This fact justified the development of national sports medicine to help guide the perfect development of each.¹¹⁷

In 1934, the resolve of many SME eugenicists was tested as public health officials were forwarded information from Dr. Francisco de P. Miranda, jefe of the Seccion de Intercambio, from the Mexican Consul in Hamburg, Germany on a new sterilization law put into action. The Nazi “new laws” aimed to wipe out poor heredity by forcibly sterilizing all people with inheritable diseases, including those with alcoholism, syphilis, and tuberculosis, but also epilepsy (St. Vitus Dance), chorea, the blind, and the deaf. The new laws, which came into effect on January 1, 1934, required doctors to immediately notify authorities when a patient was determined to have one of these conditions, where a patient would face a tribunal made up of a judge, a physician, and a government officer who would decide their fate.¹¹⁸ In 1934, at the “Second Eugenics Week” in Mexico City, many national eugenicists were hesitant to endorse the laws while others outright condemned them on the grounds that much of the science remained experimental.¹¹⁹

Even as the DSP received frequent studies suggesting that infant mortality and life span was more directly attributed to poverty and social class, eugenicists still believed the studies to be flawed, not thoroughly accounting for variables that made it impossible to separate impacts of environment and heredity in one’s growth. Citing surveys carried out by the British Eugenics Society (BES) under the direction of a “Dr. Brend,” eugenicists found race to be unavoidably linked to lifespan, as blacks and especially native peoples, he believed, suffered from diseases at higher rates than did whites. In fact, the mass die-off of the American Indian to disease, and not

¹¹⁷ Carlos Astel, “La Actuacion Del Medico de Deportes,” *Eugenesia: Higiene Y Cultura Física* 22 (February 15, 1933): 6–9.

¹¹⁸ Francisco de P. Miranda, “Nuevas Leyes,” March 6, 1934, Fondo: P, S: SJ, c: 40, exp. 2, AHSSP.

¹¹⁹ Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*, 133.

to war, was used as proof of their dysgenic makeup. Others argued that advances in hygiene likely meant that whites would adapt easier to tropical diseases than the other way around.¹²⁰

In 1933, the government removed the Oficina de Educación Física from the Departamento de Bellas Artes and joined the DPH. Dr. Salvador Ojeda disparaged many aspects of physical education that still relied upon “absurd” and anti-scientific ideas. Material shortcomings were frequent.¹²¹ The selections of sports promoted by physical educators in the period revealed an increasing fusion between morality with conceptions of eugenic health. Sports that were popular in more civilized North American and Northern European countries, such as baseball, tennis, swimming, diving, gymnastics, basketball, and volleyball, were all widely promoted in federal schools and celebrated for the regenerative abilities. Other sports, though, especially blood sports, such as boxing, were widely discouraged or treated with extreme caution because of their degenerative potential and their associations with gambling, drinking, and other vices of the poor.¹²² Boxers, often from the poorest neighborhoods, developed reputations as flamboyant and lascivious philanderers, far from exemplars of self-restraint and collective sacrifice preached in most physical education programs.¹²³ Oaxaca state boxing association leader Raul Bolanos Cacho believed in the positive aspects of a well-officiated fight with good sportsmanship, but cited the ancient Grecian bout between Daxomenes and Kruegas as a lesson in caution. Great fighters were well-trained, but in a sport of such violence, the margin between greatness and disgrace was slim.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ “Estudios Tecnicos, Herencia y Establilidad Pública,” n/d, Fondo: SP, S: P, Se: S, c: 16, Exp. 14, AHSSP.

¹²¹ Salvador Ojeda, “Antecedentes Sobre Su Funcionamento, Organizacion e Imparticion de La Educación Física en La Secretaría de Educación,” 1936, DPH, Caja 35550, Exp. 96, AHSEP.

¹²² Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 42.

¹²³ Allen, “Boxing in Mexico: Masculinity, Modernity, and Nationalism, 1946-1982”; Patrick F McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 60–64.

¹²⁴ “Se Integro La Asociacion Estatal de Box,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 23, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

Like boxing, soccer was rarely recommended as it was largely considered a brutish game. The Athletic Club Pachuca was formed in 1901 by Cornish miners and later elite social clubs played in the capital until the 1920s, but little effort was made by the government to promote the sport relative to games such as baseball and basketball. One reason was that the game, which had been initially promoted on work camps as a means of controlling the leisure time of laborers, was being increasingly adopted by the poor on their own terms. Soccer, therefore, assumed the negative qualities seen in those communities that officials so disdained. This perspective was shared in other Latin American countries. In Brazil, for example, public health officials, doctors, and journalists formed the “Liga Contra o Foot-Ball” in 1919 to discourage its promotion, mocking its overall benefits considering it a brutal and barbaric game, a “microbe of corruption and imbecility” that promoted individualism and only enhanced racial and class difference among its participants and fans, rather than detract from them.¹²⁵ Hooliganism, in fact, was a deeply rooted component of the game since the sport organized in the 1870s in Great Britain.¹²⁶ In the neo-Lamarckian, positive eugenic framework, with experts considering more civilized and eugenic sports those to be practiced by the middle and upper classes of North America and Europe, the implication was clear. If one played civilized, whiter sports, one could exercise out their own racial impurities, assuming cultural and biological traits associated with whiteness over time.

The Cárdenas Years, 1934-1940

When Lázaro Cárdenas took office in 1934, confusion over sport’s jurisdiction abounded with claims from public health, military, and SEP experts, a problem that he moved to resolve quickly. The lead up to the creation of the Departamento de Educación Física (DEF) left many in

¹²⁵ Pereira, “O jogo dos sentidos: Os literatos e a popularização do futebol no Rio de Janeiro,” 207–16.

¹²⁶ Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, and John Williams, *The Roots of Football Hooliganism: An Historical and Sociological Study* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1.

the DPH anxious about the new role they were to play, if any. In a desperate attempt to show loyalty to sports, DPH chair Dr. Lauro Ortega and OEF head Salvador Ojeda formally restated their commitment to physical culture and released plans to launch major programs in September of 1935.¹²⁷ Both were candidates to take over the new DEF and Ortega, in fact, opened the 1935 Guadalajara congress with a moving speech on sports and health. But after Tirso Hernández was tabbed for the DEF job, OEF officials refocused inwardly and hoped not to lose all that the DPH had worked for in the previous ten years.

Ojeda urged officials to recognize that the survival of sports in the DPH had not been a “fortuitous accident.” He argued that their role in physical culture was essential for realizing the most important goals of physical education, including unifying the methods and science for the biological and corporeal improvement of the masses from a medical and public health point of view. Like the Russians, who had successfully shuttled physical education under their Ministry of Hygiene, Ojeda believed the revolution could make great strides by guiding the biological and psychological development of citizens with science. After all, he argued, the most important goals of physical education were not just conserving good health and promoting hygiene, but also finding ways to directly combat physical, mental, and social illnesses and sports had shown great promise in this area. He asked, why should a scientifically-guided public health program not be under the care of medical experts?¹²⁸

Eduardo Suárez of the Secretario de Hacienda y Credito Público expressed great concern for the remaking of society from a biological standpoint as the country evolved as a welfare state. He declared at a large banquet that it was not only the revolution’s task to look after the sources of wealth and equitable capital distribution, but also of man, whose development was the

¹²⁷ “Es Un Deber para Todo Gobierno Revolucionario Impulsar los Deportes,” *El Nacional*, September 7, 1935, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹²⁸ Ojeda, “Antecedentes Sobre Su Funcionamiento, Organizacion E Imparticion de La Educación Física En La Secretaría de Educación.”

most important task. In the wake of what was understood as a widely diminishing national health comparable to the supposed backwardness of southern Asia, one writer in *Oaxaca Nuevo* said that the revolution urgently had to develop man's physical constitution based on biological principles. The author blamed the problem of high infant mortality, in large part, on the supposed vegetative and ignorant state of the people who had little basic knowledge about eugenics. In this way, he believed that they perpetuated their own misery.¹²⁹

Cárdenas removed sports direction from the DPH when he created the DEF, but reserved a place for DPH sports officials. Cárdenas' new orientation of sports combined socialist and medical interpretations and was justified based on empirical evidence seen around the world. Indeed, countries had advanced in their social evolution by creating citizens that were strong in mind, body, and spirit through sports, healthy and conscientious of their role as individuals in a collective group. Cárdenas also believed that experience had taught Mexico that sports, better than anything else, combatted the plagues of alcoholism and fanaticism that ravaged the people.¹³⁰ He kept the OEF open and the DPH formally changed to the Departamento de Psicopedagogía Medico Escolar y Educación Física (DPMEEF) to encompass the full scope its new role as administrator of hygiene campaigns in the countryside. Under the new arrangement, Ortega doubled down on administration over school nutrition programs and, in 1936, a group of physical educators interested in the science of sports and hygiene formed the Sociedad Mexicana de Educación Física with the aim of advancing the discipline and regularly publishing academic studies.¹³¹ Many of these doctors also continued school inspections. In the Escuela Normal de Educación Física (ENEF), formed in 1936 after the founding of the DEF in Mexico City, young men and women learned rules and philosophies sports, but also underwent a scientific and

¹²⁹ "La Futura Casa de Maternidad," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 9, 1937.

¹³⁰ "El Departamento de Educación Física"; "Nueva Orientacion."

¹³¹ "Sociedad Mexicana de Educación Física," July 17, 1936, DPH, Caja 35506, exp. 25, AHSEP.

philosophical-technical training that included courses on biology, anatomy, hygiene, kinesiotherapy (the treatment of disease through activation, movement, and massaging of muscles), anthropometry, massage therapy, psychology, physics, chemistry, and sociology.¹³²

Cárdenas distanced himself further from the SME than his predecessors, but eugenic language and logic remained pervasive in sports programs. Such was expressed in the winning proposal by Max Tejada and Roberto Sánchez Lima at the Guadalajara congress for refashioning physical education. The document revealed the authors' belief that fortifying a culture of hygiene and eliminating backwards cultural practices would salvage what was left of the race. In addition to mandatory psychological-physical examinations, they called for the construction of schools for physical and mental correction to help students rehabilitate their disabilities with sports. The authors did not provide details on what specific weaknesses they hoped to address in this program, but the SEP used the terms to broadly define anything deemed abnormal or sub-optimal, ranging from small muscles to bowed legs and even serious developmental disabilities.¹³³ After a decade of promotion from national papers and public officials, vague notions of regeneration had blended to form a eugenic sports lexicon as petitioners to the president regularly signed off letters with promises to work for the invigoration or salvation of the "raza bronce."

The most widely distributed manual on recreation and sports culture in the countryside made explicit eugenic arguments in the proposals to mend the pedagogical holes in sports and physical culture. Luis Obregón, its author, blamed slow national sports development on a lack of imagination from leadership, which he accused of blindly applying foreign methods developed for a people of a different biological and racial origin. These countries, he assured readers, stood

¹³² "La Escuela Normal de Educación Física," *Educación Física* 1, no. 1 (May 1936): 16–17.

¹³³ Juncal, "Ponencias Al Congreso de Educación Física."

at a different evolutionary stage than did their own. Methods created for Europeans, then, were incongruent with the realities of Mexico and he argued that sports needed to stick to the eugenic and the structural physiognomic realities of the rural population. More specifically, Obregón believed that physical education should try to build upon the natural tendencies of the indigenous, such as running, jumping, hanging (as if from a branch), throwing, dancing, swimming, and free play that further enhanced participants' agility. Because the people of the *campo* possessed some docility, agility, and imagination, and because their way of life kept them constantly in movement and outside, he reasoned that they needed physical programs that less emphasized heavy muscle contraction. Instead, they should focus on gymnastics and calisthenics that strengthened the spinal column, developed the thoracic cavity, and kept excess sweat off of one's toned skin. Obregón stated that this program not only increased conditions of health and incorporated communities into the nation, but also guided participants with a "Darwinian instinct."¹³⁴

The SEP plan for rural physical education, written in March of 1936, expanded upon Obregón's sentiments and added that new instruction would move away from directed and over-systemized exercises that proved abnormal for a people that was used to more free forms of expression, likely also a reference to the long-held assumption of the impetuosity and indiscipline of indigenous peoples. These proposals aimed to:

- Conserve and improve health
- Strengthen the entire human organism for complete growth and development
- Increase organic resistance
- Form habits of activity and good health
- Refine neuro-muscular coordination
- Create physical aptitude and skills

¹³⁴ Obregón, *Recreacion Física Para Escuelas Y Comunidades Rurales*, 9.

- Prevent and correct poor posture
- Affirm the affect of rhythm and beauty
- Create the feeling of group and social conduct
- Cultivate a sporting spirit, of cooperation and honor of the game
- Satisfy student necessities for recreation and fun
- Prepare to take advantage of valuable leisure time

Recommended activities to achieve those outcomes included:

- Organized games
- Gymnastic games
- Rhythmic games
- Sports games (prioritize indigenous games, then volleyball, baseball, basketball)
- Athletic games
- Swimming
- Dances
- Free play
- Hiking
- Open-air festivals
- Tournaments and events
- Keep up sports fields
- Construct children's playgrounds and sports spaces
- Construction of sports material¹³⁵

The DEF also earnestly worked with public health experts to craft sports propaganda that strengthened bonds between patriotic morality and athletic bodies. One of these included a sports creed published in *Educación Física* that correlated good health with maximum richness in life

¹³⁵ Dirección General de Educación Primaria en los Estados y Territorios, "Programa de Educación Física Para Las Escuelas Primarias Rurales," March 1936, DPH, Caja 35534, Exp. 2, no. 77-84, AHSEP.

and weakness with ultimate vice, a condition that invited sickness that violated immutable natural laws. The creed provided seven commandments to ensure that men would be virile and women well constituted specimens of femininity. These laws for good health included:

- Access to pure air and sunlight; perfect ventilation in the home
- Foods rich in vitamins, well chewed, and taken in consistent with a normal appetite; fasting from time to time, for a day or two, when necessary
- Reasonable and regular exercise of one's entire muscular system, in work, at the gym, on the sports field or in any place
- Absolute cleanliness by means of frequent bathing; cold, for toning; warm, for cleanliness; general friction of the body with open hands, with a brush or towel, if desired
- Internal cleanliness, achieved by means of total or regular evacuation of the intestines
- Deep and restorative sleep, obtained by means of sufficient exercise and hygienic habits
- Correct mental attitude; Thinking is a powerful factor in maintaining health and can be constructive or destructive. The mind can improve us or destroy us.¹³⁶

The DPH coupled such efforts with "Reglas de Higiene Infantil" children's manuals that advised parents to make their children eat fruit, vegetables, and bread to conserve good health, wake up early to complete your school work, drink four glasses of milk and four glasses of water daily for physical development, and allow them to play games and sports outside to stretch their lungs.¹³⁷

City dailies worked with the DEF, the DSP, and the SEP to publish hygiene and sports advice articles with great frequency between 1936 and 1938 to help reshape the daily habits of one's life that led to immoral behavior and poor physical health. One article, for example, in *Oaxaca Nuevo* listed activities one must perform to become a healthy sportsman or woman. It included:

¹³⁶ "Credo Deportivo," *Educación Física* 1, no. 1 (May 1936): 24.

¹³⁷ "Reglas de Higiene Infantil," 1936, DPH, Caja 35567, Exp. 18, nu. 16-21, AHSEP.

- Discard tobacco, alcohol, stimulants, and any form of misspent life completely
- Sleep a maximum of nine hours a night
- Wake up early and do not stay up late
- Consume a sufficient amount of nutritious food
- Avoid too much meat
- Drink lots of water. You need it internally and externally in abundance
- Ventilate your room(s)
- Wear light and loose fitting, porous clothing, avoid tight belts.
- Make sure your digestive system is functioning regularly
- Maintain good posture at all times: walking, sitting, etc
- Maintain a clean mouth, especially teeth, gums, tongue, and throat.
- Breathe deeply and, from time to time, do breathing exercises
- Rid your body of poisons or infections
- Always have happiness and serenity and be full of optimism and enthusiasm¹³⁸

Masturbation and sex was also commonly discouraged for boys. Prominent Porfirian doctors had considered the practice a “disgusting and repugnant vice” that led to heart and brain dysfunction and in the 1930s some experts discouraged it on the grounds that it sapped one’s physical energy and vitality best utilized in sports.¹³⁹

Cardenista experts laid out prescriptions for proper diet and sleeping patterns, as well. Likely recognizing some of the problems of past dietary prescriptions based on foreign and expensive or otherwise unattainable diets, experts tried to take a more practical approach by urging deportistas to seek any foods that were rich in vitamins and economical. In short, they promoted foods that were cheap, tasty, filling, and healthy. Their prescriptions, nevertheless,

¹³⁸ “Funcion Higienica Del Deporte,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 14, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

¹³⁹ Katherine Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 47.

proved ambitious. The ideal diet for breakfast was a glass of orange juice, some carne asada or raw eggs, a cup of oats, corn-flakes with milk or chocolate, a glass of full and fresh milk, and rounded off with a piece of melon or papaya. The importance of breakfast was especially emphasized because it provided energy throughout one's day. Prescriptions for sleep related strict schedules depending on one's sporting activity, but advised everyone to wear loose fitting pajamas (to not disrupt circulation), one pillow stuffed with feathers or wool, and to keep everything clean and dusted to not restrict breathing. Experts also advised one to sleep with their mouth closed because leaving it open encouraged snorting and stress on the throat, while fetid objects should also be removed from the room. People should also strive to sleep alone in bed, or with no more than two in bed, if married.¹⁴⁰

The following day, another article in the same publication outlined a "Law of Good Health," propaganda from public health offices made to be as an oath to achieve a strong and healthy body for the prosperity of the nation and future generations. The law provided prescriptions such as:

- Cleanliness of the body: washing your face twice a day, washing hands before eating, and brushing teeth three times a day, wearing loose-fitting clothes, and frequently bathing
- Living space: Let in sun and air and avoid humidity, shadows, and poor ventilation. Keep trash, insects, and dust away and never live with cats, dogs, or chickens.
- The bed: Never share your bed with anyone else and keep your hands out of the sheets
- Sleep: eight hours per day is recommended for refreshment with an open window and never sleep in a room with flowers or animals. Go to bed and wake up early. Do not participate in the dangerous habit of siesta. Wait two hours after dinner before going to bed.
- Food: "He who eats quickly is slowly committing suicide." Chew your food completely and stay happy during meal times. Avoid chiles. Do not eat when you're sick and do not snack.

¹⁴⁰ "Desayune Mejor," *Educación Física* 1, no. 1 (May 1936): 24; "No Duerma Mas de Ocho Horas," *Educación Física* 1, no. 1 (May 1936): 24.

- Drinks: Two liters of pure and fresh water daily. No tea or coffee. Alcohol is forbidden as it promotes a sickness that degenerates children and reduces the dignity of the drinker.
- Sports: “A machine that sits becomes rusty.” Eliminate any sedentary habits and make exercise a core part of your existence. Practice the sports you enjoy most outside to invigorate your body and spirit.
- Poor habits: Do not use yourself up physically or morally.
- Sanitary Services: Use them to alleviate infant mortality and save your children.¹⁴¹

Such recommendations were reproduced in thousands of free state-sponsored pamphlets.

Professor Alfonso Guerrero published a plan, for example, specifically for the athlete that focused on daily activities that would uplift racial descendants through physical improvement, helping the revolution reach the range of the world’s most civilized societies. The prescriptions included similar ideas on food, sleep, and corrective exercises to fix the abnormal muscle development of tedious and monotonous work that put men and women in permanently unnatural positions.¹⁴²

In 1936, one article in *El Nacional* made definitive links to the practice of sports and the reduction of illness by helping the body build resistances, but the writer believed that improper preparation and playing the wrong sports could have a detrimental impact. Before practicing any sport, one needed to have a strong core and be familiar with Swedish gymnastic methods, for playing sport without this knowledge would be like “beginning a house with a window” and would put the athletes at risk of serious heart and lung damage. Therefore, he argued, it must be practiced carefully. The article cited three basic types of exercise. First were those that prepared the core and to build strength. Second, those that taught how to coordinate and use one’s body. Third, sports that showed off the sum of the previous two. The article recommended medical

¹⁴¹ “Ley de Buena Salud,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, April 15, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez.”

¹⁴² Alfonso Guerrero, “Programa del Deportista Mexicano,” September 24, 1935, Caja 35534; Exp. III/911.2/1, no. 70, AHSEP.

exams before participation and advised the athlete to build up slowly when intensifying workouts. Soccer was recommended because it was practiced outside and swimming and cycling were highlighted for their ability to aid lung development. The article also recommended rowing, sharing some important aspects with Swedish gymnastics, and other ball games, hiking, and racing. Boxing was considered a poor practice because it led to uneven corporeal development.¹⁴³

Many phrenologists, environmental race experts, and eugenicists in Latin America from the 1870s through the 1930s hoped to learn more about the racial tendencies of different races to understand and predict criminality, but wider understandings of the criminal changed significantly under Cárdenas. While the Nazis enacted a sterilization law for criminals in 1934, Cárdenas banned the death Penalty in 1936 and in 1938 ordered a new penitentiary law that officially considered crimes as “a biological social product” and the criminal as “a natural biological unit” susceptible to rehabilitation.¹⁴⁴ In 1935, Cárdenas worked closely with B. Tellez Rodríguez and Alejandro Lacy to transform the penitentiary from a space of vengeful castigation, *coyotaje* (mafia-like practices and corruption), and moral repugnance into a humanistic scientific reform center. Cárdenas hoped that the new prison would function based on the moral and physical uplifting of inmates who *cardenistas* held had been victimized and suffered through life in poor environments that taught them outdated and backwards customs. The three proposed that the prison become a global revolutionary model primarily through the development of vast sports programs to promote a healthy mind, build confidence through achievements in games, and provide the inmate the physical skills and discipline needed to re-

¹⁴³ “La Educación Física del Obrero Debe Ser Objeto de Cuidado,” *El Nacional*, April 5, 1936, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Mexico G08230-G08236, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁴⁴ “Reeducando a Los Dilincuentes Puede Obtenerse Su Regeneración,” *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 14, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca “Nestor Sánchez”; “Abolicion de La Pena de Muerte en Toda La República,” *El Universal*, August 5, 1936, Archivo Economico, Codigo Penal- M02320, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

integrate into the new economic order upon their release. Tellez and Lacy also formed the Club Deportivo “Raza Fuerte,” a prison boxing club.¹⁴⁵

Gen. Agustín Mustieles, Jr., director of the Penitenciaría del Distrito Federal, embraced this new orientation and worked closely with Gen. Tirso Hernández to help put the reforms into action.¹⁴⁶ Mustieles, in fact, experimented with similar programs nearly five years earlier, attracting support from Cárdenas. As early as 1931, magazines such as *Regeneración* celebrated his work that aimed to purify the spirit of the incarcerated by teaching them useful work skills, basics on hygiene and nutrition, and how to properly strengthen their bodies. Sports were widely practiced and prison teams frequently matched up against local worker unions and schools to help re-incorporate prisoners. The programs gained wide attention from President Ortiz Rubio, Enrique Zúñiga and the Camara Nacional de Comercio de la Ciudad de Mexico, General J.I. Lugo of the Secretaría de Guerra y Marina, J. Mijares, jefe of the Policía del Depto. del DF and Rafael Carrasco Puente, of the Universidad Nacional, Biblioteca Nacional de Mexico. The Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department even sent questionnaires to the institution, lauding their work as modern and exemplary and expressing hope to bring about something similar in Southern California.¹⁴⁷ Working with Hernández and Col. Juan B Vega, the Jefe of the Departamento de Educación Física del Peñal (DEFP), the triumvirate created the Club Deportivo “Regeneración,” transformed landfills into athletic fields, and organized mass community and family-friendly events on prison grounds around sporting events with the goal of making the penitentiary feel more like a cultural center integrated into the surrounding community. The press celebrated new

¹⁴⁵ Letter from B. Tellez Rodríguez to President Lázaro Cárdenas, February 14, 1935, Presidentes; LCR 532.2/11, AGN.

¹⁴⁶ “Ejemplo Digno de Imitarse,” *Regeneración*, August 1931, 58–59; A.C. Guerrero, “Las Albercas de Natacion En Mexico,” *Regeneración*, August 1931, 60.

¹⁴⁷ “La Penitenciaría Del DF Se ha Convertido en un Lugar de Regeneración,” *El Nacional*, June 5, 1931, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; Agustín Mustieles, Jr., “Palabras El Director,” *Regeneración*, August 1931; “Ejemplo Digno de Imitarse.”

sports facilities, including a swimming pool used both by inmates and the public, as works of art. Officials made it clear to the public that prisons would no longer be managed by fear or torture as it had in the past, but would embody a new humanist ideology emblematic of an ideological revolution supported by recent science.¹⁴⁸

Other prisons, such as the Penitenciaría del Estado de Puebla, took advantage of Cárdenas' national sports plan and penned him for help in purchasing sporting equipment and providing rule books.¹⁴⁹ One May Day celebration in 1937 even pitted teams from the public jails of Oaxaca City against local sports clubs from Normal Schools and students in *pelota mixteca* and basketball as part of a larger cultural festival featuring music and other events. The prison teams, reportedly, performed poorly.¹⁵⁰ *Educación Física* even noted that wardens filled inmates' time in the Carcel de Oaxaca with *pelota mixteca* to scrub psychotic and perverse thoughts from their minds.¹⁵¹

Revolutionaries directed many resources towards reformation of criminals, but the problem of malnutrition and physical weaknesses for children and workers proved the most pressing problem for revolutionaries. Many educators by the middle of the 1930s simply asked poor families if their child was physically prepared to enroll in school. In 1934, the SEP partnered with labor unions and public health figures to launch a series of cutting-edge sanitation centers known as Casas de los Niños. The centers taught the basics on physical education, nutrition, and hygiene, provided sporting recreation spaces, and offered corrective massages to help combat the pervasive physical deficiencies of young workers and students. Some students, in fact, due to what was considered extreme ignorance and malnutrition, were often required to

¹⁴⁸ "Ejemplo Digno de Imitarse"; Guerrero, "Las Albercas de Natacion En Mexico."

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Aurelio Rodríguez to President Lázaro Cárdenas, December 22, 1934, Presidentes; LCR 532.1/10, AGN.

¹⁵⁰ "Festival con Motivo del Día del Trabajo en el Carcel Pública," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 3, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez."

¹⁵¹ "Oaxaca," *Educación Física* 1, no. 1 (May 1936): 18.

attend special education boarding schools for three months that skirted lessons on arithmetic and prose in favor of teaching everyday demonstrations on cooking, exercise, and cleaning techniques overseen by the DPH. One of these was the Escuela de Recuperacion Física in Parque Lira in Tacubaya. Teachers there reported anthropometric study results back to the department in the attempt to assemble a comprehensive national database. In 1936, the DPH also launched special education programs featuring corrective physical education as a mainstay of its program under the direction of the Instituto Nacional de Psicopedagogía.

Reformers considered similar centers for workers. In December of 1935, Pedro Muñoz Ledo asked the government to admit that DPS programs for temperance and disease and crime prevention had failed and urged officials to opt into a more practical strategy for improving health. Like the after-school centers, he asked the government to establish several experimental sports centers at work sites as a useful social service that could provide comfortable and clean spaces to change clothes and bathe and give healthy environments to spend free time.¹⁵² In 1937 Cárdenas, the national congress, and labor leaders enthusiastically approved plans for the construction of recuperation centers for workers and campesinos based on proposals from the DEF's Prof. Amado Jordan and Prof. Donato Pérez García. The centers offered gymnasiums, massage, showers, and cultural activities deemed positive to workers who did not have access to hygienic or sporting spaces. The prime goal of the worker centers was to assuage chronic exhaustion and lessen the everyday burdens of "machinism" through positive distractions away from the cantina and brothel. The first centers were built in urban areas, but architects planned to expand into the countryside near factories or any other large labor operations, although specific ran short.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Pedro Muñoz Ledo, "La Educación Física como un Servicio Social," *El Nacional*, December 30, 1935.

¹⁵³ "Campos de Recuperacion Física Para Obreros y Campesinos," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, May 2, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez."

By the end of the 1930s, the influence of eugenics on policy had begun to wane as it became increasingly discredited in the international scientific community, but SEM members and other health promoters continued to support a mix of neo-Lamarckian and Mendelian eugenic solutions.¹⁵⁴ For example, in 1939, Saavedra and other SEM members still strongly supported sports as a means of changing the human species, although they argued that biological change would come slowly.¹⁵⁵ At the Primer Congreso de Prevención Social, eugenicists and criminologists maintained the importance of sterilization for delinquents and a year later a frustrated Saavedra pleaded with the public to support programs that prevented the reproduction of the feeble-minded, drug addicts, and those with broken genetics.¹⁵⁶ In 1940, the SEP published a book that outlined biometric data collected in previous years to substantiate a renewed push to create physical supermen through sports.¹⁵⁷

In 1943, a year after Nazi death camps had been first reported, a dismayed Saavedra declared that the Mexican government had ignored the immutable laws of heredity by standing idle when 23,000 were said to have serious mental deficiencies.¹⁵⁸ But the fall of the Nazism and the full revelation of their network of death camps, predicated on negative eugenics, crushed the legitimacy of the science to find practical solutions for social problems. In 1945, many still dreamed of formulating the super-man, but experts had started to look beyond social-biological engineering through body sculpting and cultural programs and focused on advancements in chemistry. One author noted that physical education was an artistic and essential work in

¹⁵⁴ *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, 486.

¹⁵⁵ "Tesis Sobre la Poblacion," *El Nacional*, January 2, 1939, Archivo Economico, Eugenesia- Estudios, H08049, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁵⁶ Suarez y López-Guazo, "The Mexican Eugenics Society," 150.

¹⁵⁷ José Gómez Robleda and Luis Argoitia, *Deportistas* (México, D.F.: Sría. de Educación Pública, Depto. de Psicopedagogía y Médico Escolar, 1940).

¹⁵⁸ "Los Problemas de La Eugenesia En Mexico," *El Universal*, June 10, 1943, Archivo Economico, Eugenesia- Estudios, H08049, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "23 Mil Ninos Mentalmente Deficientes?," *El Nacional*, January 14, 1942, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

corporeal hygiene, but there was more to the body than muscles and the next great advancements would be made in laboratories with drugs.¹⁵⁹

Conclusion

Race science evolved from phrenology of positivists to the revolutionary eugenics of the DPH and SEM experts, but medical experts often combined race science logic in contradictory ways, perhaps not fully understanding the concepts. Rural community members often simply tolerated scientific messages attached to government-staged sporting events by accepting them as the price of admission for a rare entertainment, but medical authorization had a significant impact on the everyday lives of many people. This was especially true for indigenous people that were subjected to revolutionary modernization programs aiming to destroy the elements of everyday life that officials considered backwards.

Science shows features of the Enlightenment era struggle it once had with religion over who would be the ultimate arbiter of truth by insisting on the “monologic voice characteristic of totalitarian rulers or of God,” employing religious attitudes toward the natural world it observes and its own behaviors. The scientific community reacted harshly to outsiders, reflecting a residual paranoia of the “crackpot” ignorant masses that they believed threatened to fracture reason altogether. The institution treated scientists as if they were a “chosen people,” morally superior and fit to manipulate women and “barbarians and savages” for the good of the nation.¹⁶⁰ This behavior represented a “colonization of the mind,” a process that restricted access to the production of knowledge and constructed studies made to naturalize cultural assumptions to legitimate itself as an institution.¹⁶¹ Part of this was a legitimization of inequality in society based

¹⁵⁹ “Formula Del Super-Hombre,” *El Nacional*, February 13, 1945, Deportes- Investigacion Cientifica- Mundo, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.

¹⁶⁰ Sandra G Harding, *The “Racial” economy of Science toward a Democratic Future* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 19.

¹⁶¹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 59–61.

on a racial logic. In effect, theories about politics and rights were transformed into debates over nature.¹⁶² Scientific education, in turn, worked to replace origin myths with a narrative that apologized for imbalances in power, framing them similarly as natural and permanent.¹⁶³

While the “science system” worked to exchange ideas, it was not without central direction, nor was it value-free. Indeed, scientists described something as ignorant only in its effort to misrepresent what is traditional. In this context, studies on indigenous peoples functioned as the “redesigned landscapes of ruling elites” that were frequently used to justify social control and the perpetuation of “horrendous crimes.”¹⁶⁴ Science, then, was a search for reality that was informed by western paradigms, race-based assumptions, ideologies of progress and modernization, and secularism. It was primarily an authoritative statement on how the west interpreted the “other.”¹⁶⁵ Social control worked through a process of “medicalization,” the process by which nonmedical problems were treated as such, and through the “gaze” of the physician.¹⁶⁶ Doctors inside this scientific medical system situated and classified diseases. By identifying symptoms, the body functioned as a signifier of illness, and represented living proof of a “general order of nature,” supporting myths about scientific truth in the natural world.¹⁶⁷

When the government absorbed medical science through a series of institutions and regulations, medical consciousness bound itself to the collective life of the nation and health became an indicator of individual morality.¹⁶⁸ In the nineteenth century, supposedly abnormal

¹⁶² Bernard Harris, *Race, Science, and Medicine, 1700-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 4.

¹⁶³ Aurora Levins Morales, *The Historian as Curandera* (East Lansing, MI: Juian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 1997), 1.

¹⁶⁴ Douglas Weiner, “A Death-Defying Attempt to Articulate a Coherent Definition of Environmental History,” *Environmental History* 10, no. 3 (2005): 405–9, 410–12, 414.

¹⁶⁵ David Wade Chambers and Richard Gillespie, “Locality in the History of Science: Colonial Science, Technoscience, and Indigenous Knowledge,” *Osiris* 15 (2001): 235; Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Clear Light Publishers, 2000), 59.

¹⁶⁶ Conrad, “Medicalization and Social Control,” 209.

¹⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic; an Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), 4–7.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 20, 33.

deviance such as homosexuality, alcoholism, and drug addiction were considered diseases.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, cultural practices seen as abnormal were also viewed as indicators of disease. Foreign travelers often marveled at the what they thought to be the inability of rural Mexicans to grasp and take up new technologies, believing them to be indicators of backwardness.¹⁷⁰ The important issue with medicalization rested with the power of physicians to define behaviors, people, and things, both in mind and practice.¹⁷¹ For many medical professionals, then, alienating the people from the indigenous roots became a primary objective of the revolution.¹⁷² This effort was met with passive and violent resistance as some people still lacked trust in the official medical profession and others simply finding few practical benefits for accepting it.¹⁷³

In 1930, racial categories were scrubbed from the census as the government developed its own version of the racial democracy myth. In this context, the “Indian Problem” became the “rural problem,” but eugenics societies and many of the revolution’s most idealistic cultural leaders continued to dream of a culturally and racially whitened citizenry through *mestizaje*. By the mid-1940s, Vasconcelos had become a fascist sympathizer and considered the country entrapped in state of “racial chaos.”¹⁷⁴

Revolutionary sport was launched by idealistic officials hoping to improve the lives of the masses and incorporate them into a fit and productive modern citizenry. Supporters celebrated sports benefits in solving the public health crisis, but its promotion from public health and medical experts also strengthened mechanisms for surveillance of the everyday lives of people to ensure its successful implementation.¹⁷⁵ Public health officials carried out medical

¹⁶⁹ Conrad, “Medicalization and Social Control,” 213.

¹⁷⁰ Beezley, *Judas at the Jockey Club*.

¹⁷¹ Conrad, “Medicalization and Social Control,” 215–17.

¹⁷² Bonfil Batalla, 46, 66.

¹⁷³ Manulani Aluli Meyer, “Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning,” in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (2008, n.d.), 221.

¹⁷⁴ Jaén, “Introduction,” xvii.

¹⁷⁵ Muñiz, *Cuerpo, Representación Y Poder*, 8–12; Gisela Bock, “Women’s History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate,” *Gender & History* 1, no. 1 (March 1989): 13.

sports programs to help the masses improve their quality of life and they contributed significantly to the development of cutting-edge programs and facilities. They increased the number of people exercising, provided an alternative pastime to drinking, and increased awareness of general hygiene education attached to such programs. But they were often framed in eugenic terms and were based on racist assumptions of genetic sickness. In this way, promoters believed recuperation through scientific physical education was a matter of national security and stability, but the programs aimed to de-Indianize revolutionary society further.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Stepan, 129-130.

Chapter 5

Una Antorcha De Esperanza: Olympism, Pan-Americanism, and the Survival of Community Sports, 1900-1958

As the Olympic torches departed from the north and south border states of Sonora and Chiapas for the capital on October 23, 1941, their flickering glow symbolized the dawn of a new era in revolutionary sport. Thousands of people, including celebrities and foreign dignitaries, welcomed the meeting of the fires on November 4 as President Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946) opened the two-week National Revolutionary Games in the National Stadium. The government subsidized the travel of athletes from every state to Mexico City in one of the most generous sporting investments in an Olympiad. In front of eager crowds, parades of young athletes declared their devotion to sports as a modern and scientific religion that could maintain the ideals of the revolution.¹ In the same sentiment, Ávila Camacho announced that the flame that burned through the tournament represented the struggle and hope of the revolution. Nevertheless, for many officials, the event represented the beginning of a shift in the orientation of national sports.²

Álvaro Obregón's (1920-1924) created the Mexican Olympic Committee (COM) in 1923 and since then national sports leadership hoped to use success in international tournaments one day to show off the gains of the revolution to the world. This dream appeared far off in the 1930s. While most program leaders had dedicated their limited resources to building fields, training specialists, and improving the health of the masses, the administrations that followed Ávila Camacho found less value in the idealistic social programs of the previous two decades. Instead, believing that enough gyms and fields had been constructed, and enough people were

¹ Documents Related to the Revolutionary Games in 1941, November 1941, MAC 532/29, AGN.

² Memorandum from Manuel Ávila Camacho to State Governors, November 4, 1941, Presidentes; MAC 532/29, AGN.

adequately trained to compete, they crafted plans to use sport to promote economic development. The country was in the middle of an unprecedented economic boom and the leadership of the new Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) from the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) believed that the country was ready to showcase itself as a safe, stable, and modern nation that was ready for foreign investment.

The effort resulted in a series of political dramas that nearly destroyed the national sports movement and the government's attempts to land tournaments altogether. Nevertheless, despite political rivalries, corruption, and constant funding shortages, national sports leaders completed a series of difficult tasks that won it the right to host major international sporting events in the 1950s. Their success in these events convinced the International Olympic Committee (IOC) leadership in 1963 that the country should be the first in Latin America and the developing world to host the Olympic Games.

Physical education and community sports programs struggled after 1946 as the government invested less time and money into local leagues even as it celebrated its achievements in hosting major spectacles. Educators, parents, and sports fans continued to promote sports, nevertheless, and they organized grassroots leagues and non-profit organizations. While some of these leagues were makeshift and struggled to acquire equipment, especially in rural areas, there were notable successes achieved in the rapidly growing cities. Concerned parents who left the home for work hoped that sports would direct the energies of their children into healthy and fun pastimes after school. Little League baseball, an international non-profit organization, grew rapidly in the country and the successes of its players in international tournaments served as some of the greatest achievements in national sports history.

Early Mexican Olympism, 1900-1936

The Olympic Games started in the Greek Kingdom of Elis and were hosted every four years at Olympia from 776 BCE to at least 261 CE. After that date, European movements to revive the games had failed until regaining momentum in the late nineteenth century. For example, in the 1870s Greek philanthropist Evangelos Zappas sponsored smaller Olympic tournaments through the country and ordered the restoration of the Panathinaiko Stadium in Athens for an Olympic tournament. Physical educators working under Dr. William Penny Brooke in Wenlock, England also launched an “Olympian” festival with ceremonies and competitions. Parisian-born historian and physical educator Pierre von Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, extolled the values that he believed societies adopted when participating in sporting competitions like these. Although the baron was an aristocrat, he celebrated the tradition of the Athenian gymnasium that brought together people of different backgrounds in a shared community where citizens exercised, bathed, and discussed philosophy. Indeed, he believed that lessons learned through sporting activities in this setting not only prepared societies for war, but unified disparate social classes within a society. Coubertin founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1894, partly modeled on the charter rules laid out by the Wenlock organization that he visited four years earlier, to promote Olympism throughout the world. He chose Athens as the first host of the modern Olympics in 1896 in recognition of the country’s efforts to re-launch the games and he vowed to restage the games every four years in a different city to gain wider influence.³

³ David C. Young, “Myths and Mist Surrounding the Revival of the Olympic Games: The Hidden Story,” in *Sport - The Third Millennium*, ed. Fernand Landry, Marc Landry, and Magdeleine Yerles (Sainte-Foy: Less Presses de L’Universite Laval, 1991), 107–9; David C. Young, *The Modern Olympics: A Struggle for Revival* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 14; Christopher R. Hill, *Olympic Politics* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 5–6.

The first attempted revived Olympics were characterized by disorganization and confusion. Fans and officials alike were frequently confused as to which sporting events qualified as affiliated Olympic events. To add to the confusion, athletes often changed teams in the middle of the tournaments and matches were held all over the host city, sometimes with little promotion. Mexico had representatives at some of these early tournaments. For example, a polo team competed in the Grand Prix International d'Exposition at the 1900 games in Paris, touted by its promoters as an Olympic event. The Mexican team, represented by Manuel de Escandón, Marqués de Villavieja, Eustaquio de Escandón, Pablo de Escandón, and Guillermo Hayden Wright, lost in the semi-finals, but was one of only two teams to have a single-country designation.⁴

Miguel de Béistegui accepted IOC membership on behalf of Mexico for the first time in 1901 and he held a position in the organization until 1931. At the beginning of the century, the country had no affiliated national Olympic committee (NOC), required by IOC rules for membership, nor organized public tournaments to identify its best talent.⁵ The Olympiads sponsored by the YMCA, which had mostly served the urban and elite youth of Porfirian cities, represented one of the few options for local athletic competitions. For example, Jesús de la O. of the Mexico City YMCA worked with the office of the Governor of the Federal District to organize an Olympiad in November of 1912 at the country club in Churubusco, charging a \$0.50-peso general admission and \$0.25 for children. The games permitted participation of men and boys only. The games featured three distance races and several athletic events, including the high jump and shot-put, all using American Athletic Union (AAU) rules.⁶

⁴ Horace A Laffaye, *The Evolution of Polo* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2009), 118.

⁵ Bill Mallon, *The 1904 Olympic Games: Results for All Competitors in All Events, with Commentary*, 2009, 2.

⁶ R. Williamson, "Letter to the Govenor of the Federal District," May 14, 1912, Gobierno del Distrito: Diversiones, vol. 1393, exp. 831, AHDF; Jesús de la O., "Letter to the Govenor of the Federal District," October 30, 1912, Gobierno del Distrito: Diversiones, vol. 1393, exp. 831, AHDF; "Esqueleto Oficial de Entrar Para Los Juegos Olímpicos 'Handicap,'" n.d., Gobierno del Distrito: Diversiones, vol. 1396, exp. 1064, AHDF.

Local interest in creating a national committee developed as Latin America was in the middle of an “Olympic Explosion.” Enthusiasm for sports increased in the region in the 1920s thanks to tours from Elwood S. Brown, athletic director of the American Expeditionary Force and the international wing of the YMCA, in 1920 and the IOC’s Count Henri de Baillet-Latour in 1922 and 1923.⁷ Brown’s mission originated in Brazil, where he launched a major sporting competition to celebrate the country’s centenary festivals. Following an encouraging visit, he convinced IOC leadership to partner in organizing sporting committees around the region with the YMCA at the head of the movement. The 1922 Latin American Games, also known as the South American Games or South American Championships, that he helped create were plagued by missed deadlines, budget issues, and legal hurdles but they successfully brought athletes from Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile together in Rio de Janeiro and held competitions. Mexico also sent sports promoters to the events, including journalist Alfredo B. Cuéllar who detailed the events for readers back home. Even though Baillet-Latour, in attendance as the IOC representative, returned to Europe criticizing the “primitive” character of Latin American sports, he expressed optimism that the supposed untapped potential of the region could be realized with guidance from IOC leadership in Lausanne.⁸

Baillet-Latour expanded Olympic influence in the region and identified several candidates he believed could start national Olympic committees (NOCs) in various countries, including Mexico. The committees were supposed to ensure that national sporting unions complied with IOC rules on amateurism and to help promote the Olympic movement within their own countries and abroad. In 1921, national sportsmen proposed a charter for the formation of an NOC to be headed by Carlos Rincón Gallardo, one of the founders of national polo. Baillet-

⁷ Cesar R. Torres, “The Latin American ‘Olympic Explosion’ of the 1920s: Causes and Consequences,” in *Olympism From Nationalism to Internationalism*, ed. Boria Majumdar and Sandra Collins (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 7–17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Latour confirmed his temporary appointment before hand-picking other officers to round out the new committee. President Álvaro Obregón (1920-1924) officially established the COM in 1923 by presidential decree, designating Lt. Col. Lamberto Álvarez Gayou as president, and he initially planned only symbolic representation for the 1924 Paris Games.⁹ Soon after, a contingent of disgruntled sportsmen challenged the validity of the organization. These men, made up of promoters and athletes, were unhappy that they were not consulted or included in its ranks and had grown dismayed at its lack of activity. They launched a rival committee named the Asociación Olímpica Mexicana headed by Director of Physical Education José F. Peralta that members believed would better represent national sporting interests. This rival organization gained significant support among some revolutionaries, as the group claimed it represented anti-elitist sporting interests, but their protest proved short-lived because their organization did not comply with IOC rules. To resolve the conflict, the IOC pressed the competing organizations into a compromise that blended the groups and, shortly after, Carlos B. Zetina assumed control of the revamped COM. Other founding members in the new group included sportsmen from the military and education sectors, such as Rosendo Arnáiz, Manuel Aguilar Herrera, Juan Snyder, Herminio Ahumada, Eduardo Rodríguez, Roberto Lara y López, Gen. Tirso Hernández, Alfonso Rojo de la Vega, Jesús Monjaraz, Peralta, José U. Escobar, Moisés Sáenz, Alfonso Pruneda, Álvarez Gayou, and Ignacio de la Borbolla.¹⁰

National sports leaders worked excitedly to assemble a capable Olympic delegation when the government revealed that it would, in fact, send a team to the 1924 Paris games. *El Universal* positioned itself as the face of the pro-Olympic movement at the end of 1923 by sponsoring teams, promoting fundraisers, and launching amateur leagues. They also boosted their coverage

⁹ “Relaciones Públicas,” *Boletín Comité Organizador* 1, no. 9 (January 10, 1954): 8.

¹⁰ Patiño Pineda and Olmedo Díaz, *El Galope Del Caballo En México*, 192; Torres, “The Latin American ‘Olympic Explosion’ of the 1920s: Causes and Consequences,” 7–17; Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en México en el Siglo XX*, 92.

of physical education in schools, activities in local sports clubs, and amateur competitions, including exhibitions between aviation teams, labor unions, and even the American Legion. The paper also included a weekly multi-page section from nationally renowned sports writer Fernando Manuel Campos, known as “Fray Kempis.” A lawyer by training, Campos became the voice of the sporting movement by detailing matches of all kinds around the republic and profiling the country’s top athletes.

In the end, Mexico sent just 17 delegates to Paris, including a handful of officials, with a small \$34,000-peso budget, mostly derived from private donations, to cover travel, food, and lodging for thirty days. After the delegation failed to achieve a medal, Cuellar apologized to his readers for the poor on-field performance and blamed the poor quality of training programs. He promised his readership that the national team would make improvements in the years to come.¹¹

Despite failing to win a medal, committee leaders left Paris excited for the country’s sporting future. Not only had it participated in its first Olympics, but on July 4, 1924, Cuellar and Dr. Enrique C. Aguirre drafted a renewed COM constitution. The new document, supported by the IOC and President Plutarco Calles (1924-1928), authorized the country to stage the first Central American Games in Mexico City in 1926. News of the agreement inspired celebrations among revolutionaries who saw it as a pivotal achievement in the greater effort to improve the material and spiritual condition of the people. The tournament’s organizers declared that the games would solidify the country’s position as one of the region’s preeminent sporting nations alongside Argentina and Brazil.

Calles opened the Central American Games on October 12, 1926 in the newly-built National Stadium filled with thousands of fans. The tournament featured 296 athletes from

¹¹ Máximo Evia Ramírez, *México En La Historia de Los Juegos Olímpicos*, 1. ed (México, D.F: Plaza y Valdés Editores, 2000), 17–19; Arturo Santamarina Gómez, “Mentalidad, Nacionalismo Y Estilo En El Fútbol Mexicano” (XXVII Congreso de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología, Buenos Aires, 2009), 7; Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, 101–2; *El Universal*, January 1924.

Mexico, Guatemala, and Cuba who competed in track and field, basketball, baseball, fencing, swimming, tennis, and shooting. Women participated, as well, while countries like Costa Rica and El Salvador sent observers to learn what was needed to take part in the next version.¹²

Organizers of the games staged folkloric exhibitions to entertain the foreign guests, including demonstrations of the *Jarripeo*, a non-violent and “charro-style” form of bull-fighting and riding in which the rider attempted to stay on the bull until it ceased bucking.¹³ The Central American Games congress, directed by the Mexico City organizing committee led by Monjaraz and Saenz, included delegates from Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. It met during the competitions to establish strategies for regional sports, select sports to be played, and police IOC rules to advance Olympism in the region.¹⁴ When the competitions closed on November 2, Mexico had captured 67 of 114 medals, but IOC members in attendance were more impressed with the country’s imperfect, yet surprisingly successful, staging of an event of such a large size.¹⁵

El Universal again took the lead promoting Olympic events on the eve of 1928 Games in Amsterdam to help the country’s chances, but familiar problems resurfaced. Recognizing that the country had little money to give to athletes or delegation leaders, the organizing committee hired a team of businessmen led by Lamberto Hernández to raise \$50,000 pesos. It worked frantically to raise the money in a little under four months.¹⁶ Journalist Manuel Ramírez Cárdenas braced the public for disappointment on the field. While the Mexican team was sure to perform poorly

¹² Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en México en el Siglo XX*, 103–7.

¹³ Mary Lou LeCompte, “The Hispanic Influence on the History of Rodeo, 1823-1922,” *Journal of Sport History* 12, no. 1 (1985): 24.

¹⁴ International Olympic Committee, “First Games of Central-America,” *Official Bulletin of the International Olympic Committee*, October 1926, 13–16; Torres, “The Latin American ‘Olympic Explosion’ of the 1920s: Causes and Consequences,” 16.

¹⁵ “Relaciones Públicas.”

¹⁶ “La Campaña Pro-Olimpiada,” *El Universal*, April 1, 1928.

against the world's greatest athletes, he implored the public to remain patient and continue to embrace the Olympic movement. The trip for Ramírez was a mission of learning for the country to help win favor with the IOC and to bring back European physical culture that could be used to invigorate youth at home. No matter the quality of the performance, he argued that participation provided experience to help the country establish its own performance records and construct a true regional identity for Latin American sports.¹⁷



*Illustration 5.1: Worker's Athletic Tournament (El Universal, April, 1928). Courtesy of the Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada.*¹⁸

Physical education directives, along with military and labor leaders, launched the third Encuentro Atletico Obrero Nacional in the National Stadium in April of 1928 to help identify the best athletes in the country to improve performance at the Olympic Games. Whereas just 153 athletes participated in the 1926 version of this tournament, 456 men from 30 companies competed in athletic events that included 100 to 5,000-meter races, hurdles, and hammer-toss. Physical education professors, sports writers, and trainers worked as judges of the events and

¹⁷ Manuel Ramírez Cárdenas, "Es Necesario El Envio de Atletas Mexicanos a La Olimpiada," *El Universal*, April 9, 1928.

¹⁸ "Comenzo El Encuentro Atletico Obrero," *El Universal*, April 16, 1928.

officials, for the first time, established detailed performance logs and national records to legitimize national sporting contests to the world. Tamaulipas governor Marte R. Gómez expressed some concern to AAU president Avery Brundage in private correspondence that record-keeping in Latin America could demoralize athletes when compared to the achievements of North American and European stars. Promoters had little choice but to accept that the country had to struggle before it improved.¹⁹

The COM sent 36 athletes, including two Tarahumara runners, to compete in six sports in the Amsterdam Games and sent a delegation to the 1928 winter games in St. Moritz, Switzerland. In Amsterdam, the team had notable performances from runner Mario Gómez Daza, who reach the semi-finals in the 200-meter race, and flyweight fighter Alfredo Gaona, who finished tied for fifth after reaching the quarterfinals. The highly anticipated race involving Tarahumara runners did not go as planned. After apparently failing to instruct the runners on the details of the race adequately, the runners finished 32nd and 35th in their field and tried to continue running after crossing the finish line, apparently not knowing that the race was only 42 kilometers. The, runners reportedly yelled “too short, too short” at event officials as they crossed the finish line.²⁰ In its first experience in the winter competitions, the country entered a five-man bobsled team that finished eleventh out of twenty-two entrants.²¹ The delegation failed to win a

¹⁹ Ibid.; Guttman, *From Ritual to Record the Nature of Modern Sports*, 68; Letter from Marte R Gómez to Avery Brundage,” February 12, 1946, Series 26/20/37; box 59; folder 11, Avery Brundage Collection; Letter from Marte R Gómez to Avery Brundage,” April 8, 1943, Series 26/20/37; box 59; folder 11, Avery Brundage Collection.

²⁰ Evia Ramírez, *México En La Historia de Los Juegos Olímpicos*, 17–19; Murry R. Nelson, ed., *American Sports: A History of Icons, Idols, and Ideas* (Santa Barbara, Calif: Greenwood, 2013), 292; Ferreiro Toledano, *Educacion Fisica y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, 123–24; Kendall Blanchard, *The Anthropology of Sport: An Introduction* (Westport, Conn: Bergin & Garvey, 1995), 136; Richard Grant, *God’s Middle Finger: Into the Lawless Heart of the Sierra Madre* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 212.

²¹ Evia Ramírez, *México En La Historia de Los Juegos Olímpicos*, 17–19; Nelson, *American Sports*, 292; Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Fisica y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, 123–24; Blanchard, *The Anthropology of Sport*, 136; Grant, *God’s Middle Finger*, 212.

medal in both meetings, but organizers hoped that participation in the games would help upend stereotypes of Mexicans as lazy and unhealthy.²²

A year before the 1932 games in Los Angeles, SEP Director of Physical Education and COM member Miguel Ramírez, Jr. acknowledged that poor technical training of athletes had slowed the progress of sports development. He braced the public for another underwhelming performance despite promises for larger government financial contributions to support the delegation.²³ Nevertheless, many Mexicans believed that these Olympics were especially important as Los Angeles was in the middle of a highly-publicized scandal due to wide-scale deportation raids in Mexican-American communities. The deportation orders, directed by immigration bureau head Walter Carr, saddled the city with a growing international reputation as an environment of hostile racism and relations between the US and Mexico began to deteriorate. In retaliation to the targeted raids, the Mexican government threatened to boycott all US goods and promised to deport 7,000 US businessmen living in Mexico and seize their properties.²⁴ Civic leaders in Los Angeles agreed that such a measure could have had a potentially devastating impact on local business and they hoped to alleviate tensions before the arrival of the international press. The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the Automobile Club of Southern California responded by sending Olympic Ambassador Carlos Ariza to Mexico City on a goodwill mission to improve the image of Los Angeles.

Ariza assured the public that the city did not hold any ill-will towards Mexicans, but the local press interpreted the trip as a checkup on their Olympic preparation. After meeting with high-ranking officials such as Saenz, Puig Cassaraunc, Monjaras, Álvarez Alvarez, and

²² Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 354. Many stereotypes about Mexico as lawless and backwards were developed and perpetuated by Hollywood films. See Margarita de Orellana, *Filming Pancho: how Hollywood shaped the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2009)

²³ Pioquinto, "Mexico Estara Represenado En La X Olimpiada de Los Angeles," *El Nacional*, June 30, 1931.

²⁴ Federico Juncal, "Al Fin! El Comité Olímpico Mexicano va a Trabajar," *El Nacional*, June 29, 1931; Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 79–82.

Hernández, Ariza had only a few minor recommendations and related his admiration of COM preparations to the delegation. When he returned to the US, Ariza changed his tone. In June of 1931, for example, he reported shock that the COM had not selected athletes nor established any systemized training on the eve of the games. The COM was sensitive to the criticism. Indeed, many of its members questioned the secretive and subjective selection process for athletes and wondered whether the country had any real sporting system. Embarrassed organizers shifted blame for the committee's disorganization onto the supposedly indolent Saenz who had recently left his post as the group's president.²⁵

Despite disorganization and material shortcomings, the country sent 47 athletes from track and field, boxing, cycling, equestrian sports, fencing, gymnastics, wrestling, swimming, diving, modern pentathlon, shooting, and fencing, in addition to four officials including COM president Hernández. In a landmark moment, the delegation also included women. Athletes María Uribe Jasso (javelin) and Eugenia Escodero (fencing) carried the flag into opening ceremonies and Sara Cantu and Eva González came as official observers. The COM, desperate for funding, solicited the military to help support the delegation. Military sports officials agreed on the condition that they could take over the responsibility of training the athletes. The military's priority on sports deemed that some games, such as fencing and shooting, were more important than others. But even in those events, many eligible athletes were cut from the program unless they could pay their own way.²⁶

²⁵ Juncal, "Al Fin! El Comité Olímpico Mexicano va a Trabajar"; Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 79–82.

²⁶ Antonio Lavín, *Mexico En Los Juegos Olímpicos* (México: Asociación Nacional de Periodistas, 1968), 22; Ferreiro Toledano, *Educación Física y Deporte en Mexico en el Siglo XX*, 149; Mireya Medina Villanueva and Marisol Pedraza Luevano, "Women and Sport in Mexico," in *Women and Sport in Latin America.*, ed. Rosa López de D'Amico, Tansin Benn, and Gertrud Pfister (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 150; Satow, *Confederación Deportiva Mexicana: 7 Decadas*, 30.

One heartbroken qualifier cut from the program was pugilist Francisco Cabañas, who believed his Olympic dreams were dashed when told that he had to muster the incredible sum of \$500 pesos to participate. The national champion flyweight fighter from Colonia Obrera in Mexico City had no money to his name, but received some help from close friend and fellow boxer Chucho Nájera, who had recently won his professional debut. The crowd customarily rained coins onto the ring for the victor, Nájera called on spectators to donate more, because all of the money received would go to Cabañas. Nájera's efforts fell short when he raised just \$120 pesos but Cabañas begrudgingly accepted a \$300-peso loan out of his mother's life savings at her repeated insistence to make up the difference. The fighter passed the money to Hernández, who assured him that the government would pay back the money after the games. The delegation boarded a train for the 3,000-kilometer ride to Los Angeles.²⁷

Cabañas' boxing teammates were eliminated in their first bouts, but he advanced to the quarterfinals as a surprise where he defeated South African Ivan "Tich" Duke before staging an impressive upset over Great Britain's Tommy Pardoe in the semi-finals. Crowds packed the Olympic Auditorium on August 13, 1932 to witness the scrappy Cabañas after he assured the public that he would triumph over the much larger and aggressive European champion István Énekes of Hungary. After three rounds, the fight went to decision as a disappointed Énekes returned to his corner with his head hanging to the backdrop of thunderous chants, "Mexico! Mexico!" But audience cheers turned to jeers when the judges announced the Hungarian as the champion, marking Mexico's first involvement in an international sporting scandal. Receiving a silver medal in such circumstances was disappointing for the Mexican delegation that felt it had

²⁷ Francisco Ortiz, "Un Vale Para La Eternidad," *El Universal*, January 27, 2002, sec. Deportes, <http://archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/deportes/44737.html> (accessed March 30, 2016).

been cheated, but Cabañas won the country's first medal in its young Olympic history. The feat was matched days later by shooter Gustavo Huet, who likewise earned silver at the games.²⁸

President Abelardo Rodríguez established the Confederación Deportiva Mexicana (CDM) in 1932 to aid in sports organization around the country and named Gen. Tirso Hernández as its leader.²⁹ This designation made Hernández, now head of the CDM and the COM, the country's most powerful man in sports. Initially, Hernández and other members of the COM did not plan to send athletes to the 1936 Berlin Olympics because of shortcomings in funding and poor preparation of athletes in the middle of President Lázaro Cárdenas' sporting system overhaul.³⁰ Cárdenas, for example, did not initially see the value in sending athletes abroad as slim stipends could be better used, in his estimation, in socialist regeneration programs for the masses. The financial situation became so bad that Cárdenas reached an agreement with the Secretaría de Gobernación to ban athletes from traveling abroad without special permission to do so, citing the frequency of complaints the government received about Mexican athletes leaving unpaid tabs abroad. Athletes that could prove they had ample finances were exempt from the new statute, but it further increased difficulties for most national athletes that had meager incomes.³¹

Cárdenas ultimately changed course and commissioned the military to send a small contingent of 38 athletes to Germany. The delegation performed admirably at the most controversial games on record as fears and suspicions of racially motivated corruption from the

²⁸ Ibid.; "1932 Los Angeles Summer Games," *Sports Reference- Olympic Sports*, n.d., <http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/summer/1932/> (accessed July 11, 2015).

²⁹ Letter from President Abelardo Rodríguez to Governors," July 4, 1933, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/4, AGN.

³⁰ "El I Congreso de Cultura Física En Guadalajara," *El Día*, December 31, 1935, Archivo Economico, Deportes: Programas de gobierno, Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada; "Acuerdos Del Primer Congreso de Educación Física En Guadalajara."

³¹ "No Podrían Salir Los Deportistas de Mexico Sin Permiso," *Oaxaca Nuevo*, July 1, 1937, Hemeroteca Pública de Oaxaca "Nestor Sánchez."

Nazi commission nearly incited a boycott by Latin American nations at the tournament. After the games' leadership vacated a win by the Peruvian soccer team over Austria, citing fan misconduct, Peruvian president Óscar Benavides rallied Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico to threaten to walk out of the games in solidarity until José Goebbels recognized the victory. Goebbels, head of the German organizing committee, assured the teams that FIFA had made the decision, an organization in which no Germans claimed membership. Mexico backed out of the boycott and made the most of its participation. Although fencer Captain Antonio Haro had a gold medal stripped because of equipment violations, featherweight fighter Fidel Ortiz and the polo and basketball teams took home bronze medals.³²

Pan-American Sports Competitions, 1931-1941

Civic leaders in US-Mexico border states heavily promoted sports as part of a wider Pan-American movement to improve political and economic relations between the countries. After numerous US interventions in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua in the previous four decades, US president Franklin D. Roosevelt announced a “Good Neighbor Policy” in March of 1933 to repair regional relations based on a US policy of strict non-intervention and in the spirit of hemispherical friendship. Many politicians and citizens alike shared Pan-American sentiments in some forms since 1889, but the urgency in cultivating friendship increased as the probability for war in Europe rose. While some Latin American intellectuals believed the US only hoped to use Pan-Americanism to spread US economic influence under unequal arrangements, many officials and idealistic citizens embraced Pan-Americanism and heavily promoted regional sports tournaments.³³

³² Evia Ramírez, *México En La Historia de Los Juegos Olímpicos*, 19; David Clay Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 276–78.

³³ Jorge Castañeda, “Pan Americanism and Regionalism: A Mexican View,” *International Organization* 10, no. 03 (August 1956): 376–88.

The US and Mexico had staged several friendly matches in the previous three decades, but the frequency of such activities increased in the 1930s. For example, a Mexican polo team won the Eric Pedley Perpetual Polo Trophy in Los Angeles, and, a year later, Edward Shattuck of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce asked President Rodríguez to send another team to defend their title in the name of friendship and healthy competition.³⁴ Just two years later, San Diego newspapers featured articles on Álvarez Gayou and on President Rodríguez's careers as athletes and sports promoters in the country. American football games were also staged between Mexico's National University against schools in Oklahoma and Louisiana, while the University of California, Berkeley sent a baseball team to Mexico City in 1932 on invitation from famous Mexican coach and national team coordinator Homobono Marquez. In March of 1933, Mexico sent a baseball team to Chattanooga, Tennessee and, in May of the same year, fourth grader Pedro Zúñiga from Mexicali won a 7-mile race in Los Angeles.³⁵ Athletes took up the Pan-American cause independently, as well, and included events with other Latin American countries. From 1932 to 1934, Jorge Duran of the Grupo Mexico-Argentina requested government support to purchase a compass, cufflinks, a camera, and miner's boots for his "Caminata Pro-Bandera Raza," a proposed hike from Mexico City to Buenos Aires that he hoped would build Pan-Latin Americanism and fraternity between the region's youth.³⁶

A unique proposal came from Charles H. Shreve of Los Angeles in 1936. Shreve argued in his essay titled "A Little Practical Idealism" that hate, misunderstanding, and suspicion between people of different nations was learned by children, but firmly rooted by young adulthood. Shreve hoped to circumvent this process through a series of amateur boy's and girls' basketball games in Mexican border cities, such as Nuevo Laredo, Saltillo, and Monterrey. On

³⁴ Letter from Edward Shattuck to President Abelardo Rodríguez, October 5, 1932, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/1, AGN.

³⁵ Various Documents on Sports in Mexico, 1932, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/1 to 332.3/184, AGN.

³⁶ Letter from Jorge Duran V. of the "Grupo Mexico-Argentina to President Rodríguez, October 1934, Presidentes; ALR 332.3/47-2, AGN.

the court, he argued, children of both countries intermingled and learned that they shared a common system of beliefs and interests about humanity. Meanwhile, spectators' prejudices and hearts would inevitably melt at the display of friendship and mutual respect the witnessed on the floor. He hoped the games would inspire the formation of the "International Youth Association" for the sake of peace for mankind. He hoped that after competition, children, the soldiers of future wars, would be unable to engage an enemy they knew to be as life-loving, happy, and fair as themselves.³⁷

Limited funding for sporting activities made Mexican officials hesitant to agree to many Pan-Am sporting proposals, with little money to support travel and training. For example, Cárdenas subsidized a series of long-distance bicycle races between Mexico City and both New York and Washington, DC from 1937 to 1939. One rider noted that by the time he reached Laredo he ran out of money and experienced extreme hardship returning to the capital.³⁸ But the outbreak of war in Europe strengthened the Pan-American sporting spirit for its already hardened zealots. In November of 1941, a high school American football team from El Paso, Texas traveled with their marching band and boosters to Mexico City to play against the Polytechnic School for the third time in recent years. The arrival of the estimated 500-person contingent officially opened "Pan-American Week" in the capital on November 23, featuring presentations from military bands, trips to Mesoamerican pyramid sites and Xochimilco, and a parade at the National Palace to promote inter-continental peace. Just before the start of play, three machines launched red, white, and blue and green, orange, and white confetti, while US cheerleaders and revolutionary flag girls stood together during speeches and national anthems. A low-flying plane

³⁷ Charles H. Shreve and Lauro Ortega, "Remite un Artículo Titulado 'Un Pequeno Idealismo Practico' y Expresa La Conveniencia de Organizar Series de Basquet-Bol, En Alguna Ciudades," July 1936, DPH, Caja 35549, Exp. 28, AHSEP.

³⁸ Documents Related to Bi-National Bicycle Races between Mexico and the US, 1937 to 1939, Presidentes; LCR 532/88, AGN.

dropped the game ball, emblazoned with the flags of both countries, onto the field just before play. The El Paso contingent received their *despedida* after play concluded. The ceremonies closed with the song “La Golodrina” and speeches that reflected upon the patriotism of the soldiers who stayed at the border city with Benito Juárez.³⁹

The Central American and Pan-American Games

With only smaller regional sporting festivals in existence, some in the COM discussed proposals for the establishment of western hemisphere games that incorporated North, Central, and South America in 1935. The proposals piqued the interest of Avery Brundage. In 1940, Governor Marte R. Gómez expressed interest on behalf of the country to participate in a rumored Pan-American Sporting Carnival.⁴⁰ As Europe became entrenched deeper in war, Brundage felt an opportunity had presented itself to showcase the spirit of hemispheric solidarity and friendship in support of global peace. He proclaimed, “In every country public interest in athletic sports and games is increasing rapidly, and as the knowledge of the high ideals of amateur sport becomes more general and the principles of fair play and good sportsmanship are adopted more widely, this cannot help but be a better world in which to live.”⁴¹

Brundage conceived of the First Pan-Am Games as a makeshift experiment in Latin American sport and targeted Buenos Aires as the first site for 1941 because the city already had developed infrastructure.⁴² The Mexican delegation opposed Argentina as the first host for the event, believing that its own efforts to promote sports in Latin America made them the leader of

³⁹ Documents Related to El Paso Tigers Football Team in Mexico City, November 1941, Presidentes; MAC 532/5, AGN.

⁴⁰ Letter from Marte R Gómez to Avery Brundage,” April 15, 1940, Series 26/20/37; box 59; folder 11, Avery Brundage Collection; Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World*, 40; Brewster and Brewster, “The Rank Outsider,” 751.

⁴¹ Letter from Marte R. Gomez to Avery Brundage, April 15, 1940; Michael A. Ervin, “Marte R Gómez of Tamaulipas,” in *State Governors in the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1952: Portraits in Conflict, Courage, and Corruption*, ed. Jürgen Buchenau and William H. Beezley (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 123–38.

⁴² Letter from Marte Gómez to Avery Brundage, April 15, 1940.

sports in the region. Indeed, they had proven themselves dedicated to Pan-Americanism since 1935 by helping to conceive of the idea for the games and offering to help foreign NOCs organize. Mexico had also fulfilled numerous requests from Latin American nations such as Colombia, Nicaragua, Chile, Cuba, Panama for rulebooks and sporting equipment under the presidency of Cárdenas, even as they struggled to outfit their own professors and athletes.⁴³

Upon news that El Salvador was struggling to find funding to travel and pay for basic equipment for a soccer friendly in 1936, for example, Dr. Lauro Ortega of the DiEF in the SEP found low cost shoes and equipment to donate to the club.⁴⁴ Some officials claimed that the Argentines did not believe in the idea of Pan-Americanism at all.⁴⁵ An Argentine official wrote to Gen. Ignacio Beteta, then Director of Physical Education, in August of 1941 asking the officer if the country still planned to send athletes. Beteta wrote back in the affirmative, citing the countries' legendary friendship and the importance of the task at hand.⁴⁶

Latin American delegations recognized that US and European sports leadership failed to recognize the economic difficulties placed upon their counties and considered their participation in international tournaments with caution. Between 1940 and 1947, COM officials issued a challenge to the Pan-American Games altogether when Hernández and CDM leader Prof. Juan Snyder promoted an alternative named the "Juegos de America." The proposed games would bring together champions from regional sports tournaments already in existence, such as the Bolivar Games, the South American Games, and the Central American and Caribbean Games. By only pitting the winners of each tournament against each other, they believed they could

⁴³ Letter from Humberto Díaz Vera to Dr. Lauro Ortega," March 14, 1936, DPH, Caja 35548, Exp. 22, AHSEP.

⁴⁴ Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores and Lauro Ortega, Documents on a Friendly Match between El Salvador and Mexico, August 1936, Caja 35548, Exp 25, AHSEP.

⁴⁵ Letter from Tirso Hernández and Juan Snyder to Avery Brundage, August 14, 1947, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁴⁶ Letter from Ignacio Beteta to President Manuel Avila Camacho, August 29, 1941, Presidentes; MAC 532/32, AGN.

lessen the travel burden placed upon cash-strapped Latin American countries. The proposal also called for at least 25% of all admissions to go directly to the visiting delegations, while some versions mandated that the US, an athletic superpower, would be left out competition completely.⁴⁷ They similarly launched challenges to IOC rules that banned compensation for lost wages for athletes during training as it disqualified a vast majority of Latin America's population from participating in Olympic sports training, or at least exacerbated financial hardships faced by those athletes that did compete.⁴⁸ When the IOC rejected their overtures, sporting leaders unsuccessfully lobbied for the inclusion of sports in which they felt they already excelled such as an ultra-marathon, "Indian Club Exercises," and women's basketball.⁴⁹

Gómez agreed with many of the proposals by Hernández and Snyder, assuring Brundage that Latin America was not ready to compete against the monolithic US in athletic competitions. He told Brundage that if the IOC was serious about bringing the Olympic movement to Latin America then he should hold off the Pan-Am planning, for while strong competition generally improves a team, a massacre would greatly discourage Latin American athletes and fans.⁵⁰ Brundage reluctantly held back from organizing after a series of delays and the US declaration of war in Europe and Asia, but he continued to plan ahead. By 1946, Brundage asked Gómez his thoughts on renewing the games as early as the following year. The apprehensive governor advised against it, knowing that his own athletes were ill-prepared and feeling as if a war-torn

⁴⁷ Letter from Hernández and Snyder to Brundage, August 14, 1947; Juan Snyder, "Proposal: Juegos Deportivos de America," March 4, 1940, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁴⁸ Letter from Tirso Hernández and Juan Snyder to Avery Brundage," Correspondence on compensation, September 27, 1947, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁴⁹ Letter from Tirso Hernandez to Avery Brundage, Correspondence on additional games, July 2, 1947, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection; Susan Brownell, ed., *The 1904 Anthropology Days and Olympic Games: Sport, Race, and American Imperialism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 149.

⁵⁰ Letter from Marte R Gómez to Avery Brundage, January 21, 1946, Series 26/20/37; box 59; folder 11, Avery Brundage Collection.

Europe would find the celebrations offensive. Brundage postponed the First Pan-American Games to 1951.⁵¹

The country missed out on hosting the First Pan-American Games, but it received a strong consolation prize. While the IOC planned the Buenos Aires competition, the region's leadership gathered in Mexico City for the Second Pan-American Congress of Physical Education in Mexico City from October 1 to 15, 1946. The congress continued conversations from the 1943 meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on regional sports problems and scientific solutions. They also hoped to position the Pan-American sports union as a vehicle for solidarity and friendship between Americans in wartime and in peace.⁵² As the military band introduced the sporting leaders of the country, Gen. Francisco Urquiza opened the congress by announcing that as Europe laid in disarray, the American continent pulled together united in rights, liberty, and equality. Together, with bravery and a clear mission, he said that Americans could eliminate the hunger and misery found in war-torn nations that threatened the bases of social and economic wellbeing. Sport, after all, for Urquiza, was a great equalizer and promoter of friendship, while also stimulating health and culture. He hoped that the lessons learned in the "land of the Aztecs" would return with the delegates for the sake of all the sister nations of America. As one Argentine delegate proclaimed, America was set aside for humanity by god so that man would achieve his laws of brotherhood, truthful and honorably represented by the achievements of the noble athlete that placed morality and triumph higher than politics.⁵³

The delegates engaged in a series of debates and unanimously agreed that the European-led organizations did not understand American problems, especially in terms of

⁵¹ Letter from Avery Brundage to Gen. Tirso Hernández, n/d, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection; Letter from Marte R. Gómez to Avery Brundage, February 12, 1946; Letter from Gómez to Brundage, April 8, 1943.

⁵² Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, *Memoria Oficial Del II Congreso Panamericano de Educación Física* (México, D.F: Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, 1946), 17.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 109–21.

underdevelopment and the complexities of racial mixture. The Argentine lobby condemned militarized physical education that had taken hold under wartime conditions. José Stern of Uruguay and Ernesto Espinosa Parga of Mexico agreed with them. This proved to be an awkward moment for the Mexican delegation that was largely still led by military officials. The men proclaimed it represented an outdated European path to modernity that was no longer justifiable. They argued that Americans needed to develop citizens that did not see war as an end. Instead, they should use sport to promote solidarity, build willpower, and heighten the humanist spirit to the point in which all citizens assumed a character of altruism that embraced the ideals of all people.⁵⁴

Most discussions at the congress centered on material problems in the region and Álvarez Gayou gained notoriety for his leading role in the creation of the Pan-American Institute of Physical Education, a permanent body that studied unique problems in American sports and public health.⁵⁵ Argentine delegates argued that the roots of slow development in regional sports could be located in the problem of free time as children of laborers and campesinos worked at young ages and missed recreation necessary for healthy development. Sara Cantu of Mexico argued that the country needed a recreation center for every 5,000 people in the countryside in addition to hygiene education programs, taught through entertaining media like puppet shows, to solve its most pressing health problems. Brazilians contended that emergency state interventions were required to stop the spread of bad genetics from the mixed-race “miserable classes,” using physical education as a eugenic corrective exercise.⁵⁶ At the close of the conference, the US delegation tampered enthusiasm of those hoping to develop a collective plan of action when

⁵⁴ Ibid., 190–91.

⁵⁵ CH McCloy, “Instituto Panamericano de Educación Física: CH McCloy, President of the Instituto Panamericano de Educación Física to Ministro de Higiene Y Salubridad Pública,” April 26, 1948, AHSSP, Fondo: SSA, Sec. SubSyA, C: 25, Exp. 15, AHSSP.

⁵⁶ Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, *Memoria Oficial Del II Congreso Panamericano de Educación Física*, 185-186; 232-233.

representative Frank Stafford informed the crowd that the US would never abide by any kind of binding regional charter.⁵⁷

National sports leaders and President Miguel Alemán, the first non-military officer elected president in decades, worked with Brundage shortly after the congress. In 1948, they crafted a long-term plan to host the Olympic Games and to become the first third-world and Latin American country to do so.⁵⁸ In March of 1948, soccer star Raul Cárdenas outlined a new constitution for the Confederación Deportiva Mexicana that issued new mandates for sports organization that focused on strategically placing athletes at the Central American, Pan-American, and Olympic Games. It also removed any militaristic elements as physical education returned to SEP jurisdiction after the end of World War II.⁵⁹

The decision to pursue the games met little opposition. The PRI controlled politics at virtually all levels of government and rampant cronyism in many cases left little difference between the political and business interests of the country.⁶⁰ Mexico City's 1949 bid at Lausanne, Switzerland for the 1956 Olympics garnered a surprising number of votes from the IOC, but Brundage warned the COM that their bid fell short after it came to light that some votes had been arranged through political pressure.⁶¹ Brundage, nevertheless, encouraged the Mexican committee to try again for the 1960 games and those beyond. In 1949, he toured the Valley of Mexico with Snyder, visiting archeological sites and sports complexes. He later wrote to

⁵⁷ Ibid., 357–58.

⁵⁸ "Mexico Solicitara La Organizacion de La Olimpiada," *Novedades*, March 24, 1949, sec. N-C.

⁵⁹ Raul Cárdenas, "Ley de La Confederación Deportiva Mexicana," March 19, 1948, Presidentes; MAV 532.2/4, AGN.

⁶⁰ Brewster and Brewster, "The Rank Outsider," 750–51.

⁶¹ Letter from Juan Snyder to Avery Brundage, June 28, 1949, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection.

Hernández that he was surprised with the enthusiasm that the people had for sports and with the progress in facilities construction, even in the most distant pueblos.⁶²

Snyder's correspondence with Brundage in 1949 revealed a decades-long fissure in national sports organization that nearly destroyed the country's relationship with the IOC. Snyder, worried that he was losing influence, characterized the sporting system as left in a state of political disarray for a decade. According to Snyder, problems began when Ávila Camacho hand-picked close friend Gen. Ignacio Beteta as director of Physical Education in 1940. Beteta was an experienced candidate, but he believed that as head of physical education he deserved to sit as COM president and had since plotted to circumvent the COM vote to replace Hernández by political means. In 1942, Ruben López Hinojosa, who was supported by athletes, was elected to the presidency of the CDM, yet he too wished to take the COM throne to control all sports and promptly closed voting for executive officials. In 1946, Ávila Camacho spurned all invested parties and inserted Gen. Antonio Gómez Velasco as COM president. Two years later, Alemán went over the head of the COM and inserted Beteta as president of the delegation at the London Olympics and banned Hernández from traveling to London or to Barranquilla, Colombia for the VI Central American Games.⁶³

On March 23, 1949, Alemán arranged a secret meeting at his residence to overhaul the COM and discuss a new strategy for achieving the 1960 Olympics. The guest list included Gómez, working with the COM and CDM, Beteta, Cesar Martino, Gen. Ricardo Marin Ramos, head of the DEF, López Hinojosa, and Peralta, now head of the CDM. Meanwhile, Gómez had taken residence in Rome for months studying IOC proposals and, in Snyder's estimation,

⁶² Letter from Tirso Hernández to Avery Brundage," December 30, 1949, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection; Letter from Avery Brundage to Prof. Juan Snyder, December 18, 1949, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁶³ Letter from Juan Snyder to Avery Brundage, April 2, 1949, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection.

charming IOC officials. Rumors swirled around the republic's sporting circles that Alemán hoped to replace the entire COM with a new committee headed by Gómez. Citing the support of the concerned national sporting federations, Snyder urged Brundage to ban the new COM and recognize only the original group. Brundage did shut down one of the competing COMs, but it was the former group that would not be recognized.⁶⁴ The resentful leaders of the CDM, largely devoid of political clout, spurned the COM at the 1950 Central American Games. Per IOC rules, the national sporting federations should represent each delegation at international tournaments and the CDM complained to the IOC that the COM had no legal grounds to represent the country's sporting interests there. A frustrated Brundage pressured the groups into a compromise.⁶⁵

Alemán appointed trusted allies Enrique C. Aguirre, former chief of physical education in Mexico City and known as the founder of national volleyball, and close friend Gen. José de Jesús Clark Flores, a wealthy military engineer and successful basketball coach, to high ranking posts in the re-organized COM.⁶⁶ Despite accusations of corruption, Clark, widely known as “The Seven Brains” due to his relentless work habits and uncanny multi-tasking skills, climbed to the presidency of the COM just a year later. This appointment made him president of both the CDM and COM, an outcome that Brundage favored after growing tired of Mexican sporting politics and feeling as if one leader could get things done faster.⁶⁷ This arrangement suited Brundage

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Letter from Avery Brundage to Prof. Juan Snyder, Correspondance on CDM-COM controversy, August 16, 1950, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 2, Avery Brundage Collection; Letter from Juan Snyder to Avery Brundage, August 28, 1950, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 2, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁶⁶ Roberto B. Carmona, “Biography of José de Jesús Clark Flores: ‘Man of Honor’” (PhD Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1981), 54–56; “The President of the Republic Personally Designated the Organizer Committee for the II Pan-American Games,” *II Pan American Sporting Games: News Official Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (July 1951): 2–3.

⁶⁷ Letter from Prof. Juan Snyder to Avery Brundage, January 29, 1950, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 2, Avery Brundage Collection; Carmona, “Biography of José de Jesús Clark Flores: ‘Man of Honor,’” 3.

who was known in the IOC as a “man of ruthlessly authoritarian and reactionary opinions” who treated the Olympic movement as a “personal hobby.”⁶⁸

Clark felt a responsibility as a revolutionary to develop the citizenry physically and spiritually. Indeed, he believed that Mexicans were a naturally disorganized people and he felt that mass sports participation could serve as a prescription. He argued that the only way for society to mature was to teach citizens how to win and lose, for if one never learned how to lose properly, they would remain in a childlike state. Born in Durango in 1908, Clark entered the Colegio Militar at just 13 years old and, like his father and grand-father before him, he earned a degree in engineering before entering active duty in the military. But wealth earned in construction and real estate ventures and ostentatiousness led some politicians and military officers to question his revolutionary values. Indeed, some said that he loved money, gambled in Las Vegas, dressed flamboyantly, drove flashy cars, and ate fine food. Those close to him maintained, nevertheless, that he used most of his money to help others and that remained fiercely nationalistic throughout his life.⁶⁹

He returned to the Colegio in 1939 as an instructor but was most heavily involved in sports in the 1940s. He believed in sport’s ability to teach lessons on discipline and improve participants’ health. He directed cadets mostly into boxing, fencing, swimming, gymnastics, track and field, and shooting, but was best known for his accomplishments as a basketball coach and trainer, an advisor for popular sports programs, and an architect of the modern national sporting system.⁷⁰ His positions as the head of the both the CDM and the COM made Clark the leader of national sports.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Hill, *Olympic Politics*, 56.

⁶⁹ Carmona, “Biography of José de Jesús Clark Flores: ‘Man of Honor,’” 13–15, 20, 26, 43–45.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 54–56.

Clark and Gómez worked painstakingly to clean up the CDM and prepare athletes for competitions. Indeed, in 1950 only 17 of the 33 national sports federations in the country were affiliated with the CDM. Many of the unaffiliated 16 federations operated in violation of CDM rules while others only oversaw their sport in Mexico City.⁷² With a \$20,000 peso budget that only covered administrative work, Clark gave nearly \$1 million pesos of his own money to develop programs and hoped that the government would eventually pay him back.⁷³ The increasing pressure to perform on the field put the CDM in a difficult position because years of lessened attention on physical education left the country's youth unprepared to compete. One sports fans concern exemplified the sentiments of many educators and coaches when he lamented that the youth had softened as the country was increasingly "colonized by bankers." He argued that the country needed to mimic the ethos of socialist physical education programs to restore vigor to its athletes. Indeed, since 1947, the CDM had not organized major youth tournaments and those still running featured only athletes from the capital. Specialists were left with the difficult task of rapidly preparing over four million young athletes to compete in the games.⁷⁴ Brundage offered to send coaches to assist in training, but committee leaders insisted that only Mexican coaches should prepare the athletes. Clark created of the Sports Training Institute (ICD) in 1951 to address the issue. This program called on primary school instructors to take courses on physical education and sports during their summer vacation and spend their free time volunteering to train athletes.⁷⁵ Clark also worked with military leaders to oversee the intensification of physical education wherever possible. The National Youth Games, once

⁷² Letter from Prof. Juan Snyder to Avery Brundage, September 27, 1950, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 3, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁷³ Carmona, "Biography of José de Jesús Clark Flores: 'Man of Honor,'" 45.

⁷⁴ Letter from Felipe Vázquez D. to President Miguel Alemán," May 10, 1949, Presidentes; MAV 532.2/69, AGN; Documents Related to El Paso Tigers Football Team in Mexico City; Carmona, "Biography of José de Jesús Clark Flores: 'Man of Honor,'" 51.

⁷⁵ Letter from Vázquez D. to President Miguel Alemán; Documents Related to El Paso Tigers Football Team in Mexico City; Carmona, "Biography of José de Jesús Clark Flores: 'Man of Honor,'" 51.

regular in the 1930s, were resurrected in every state and the winners were sent to national tournaments in the capital to identify the best athletes.⁷⁶ In 1952, Clark sent a report of the games to Brundage and said that young Mexican athletes exhibited the true spirit of amateurism.⁷⁷

Clark served as president of the delegation in Barranquilla and the team achieved the most medals at the tournament. More importantly, they won the bid for the VII Central American Games to be held in 1954 after a supposedly captivating presentation by physical education director Gen. Antonio Gómez Velasco.⁷⁸ Sporting leaders experienced disappointment and triumph at the First Pan-American Games a year later. The Mexican delegation won just four gold medals, and 40 overall, good for only fourth-best, while the prospect for landing the II Pan-Am Games did not appear promising at its outset. Indeed, Argentina President Juan Peron supported Chile's bid to keep the games in the Southern Cone. He recruited support behind a proposed new rule that the next host city should pay the full cost of the stay of the visiting delegations. Mexico's bid received significant support from the Uruguayan delegation, but knowing Mexico could not honor the new rule, Clark hatched a plan. While Clark vigorously argued against the merits of the new rule proposal to the committee, fellow delegate Jesús Esparza burst into the meeting by throwing silver coins around the room to distract participants. The move caused confusion among the delegates as some rushed the floor to collect the coins. After order was restored, an expedited vote was taken in favor of Mexico.⁷⁹ Sportswriter Ricardo Del Río referred to the achievement of the Pan-American Games as transcendent for the country.

⁷⁶ "State and Juvenile Games to Develop Athletes for the II Pan-Americans," *II Pan American Sporting Games: News Official Bulletin* 1 (July 1951): 8.

⁷⁷ Letter from José de Jesús Clark Flores to Avery Brundage (Juegos Juveniles)," February 3, 1954, Series No. 26/20/37; box 219; folder 7, Avery Brundage Collection; Letter from William H. Miller to Avery Brundage, November 28, 1964, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 13, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁷⁸ "Juegos Deportivos Centroamericanos Y Del Caribe," 1950 1946, Presidentes; MAV 532.2/1, AGN.

⁷⁹ Carmona, "Biography of José de Jesús Clark Flores: 'Man of Honor'"; Documents sobre Los Juegos Panamericanos, 1953 to 1956, Presidentes; ARC 532.2/30, AGN.

It was a moment that marked its progress and augmented its prestige.⁸⁰ At the 1952 IOC meetings in Helsinki, Finland, the IOC elected Brundage president and made Clark a permanent member.

Latin American delegates had complained about underrepresentation in the IOC prior to Clark's election. Indeed, the IOC had not admitted any Latin American citizens as a permanent member in decades. Further, Latin Americans complained that the IOC made travel prohibitive for their delegates by scheduling nearly all meetings in Europe. Brundage had grown close to many COM officials, even attending Gómez's daughter's wedding, and felt as if he understood the country's politics and culture more than any of his colleagues. In celebration of the Mexican bid for the Pan-American Games, Brundage, with support from a unanimous American bloc, announced that the next IOC meeting would be held in Mexico City one year ahead of the games. It would be the first IOC meeting in the western hemisphere since Los Angeles in 1932 and the first ever in Latin America.⁸¹ In the middle of the Mexican Miracle, in which GNP grew at an annual rate of five to seven percent, Brundage believed that hosting meeting would allow the IOC to see how developed the country had become.⁸²

The achievement of the Pan-American Games represented another accomplishment for Alemán and his plan to modernize the country. He hoped that the country's new development would help all citizens live their version of the American Dream, possessing a "Cadillac, a cigar, and a ticket to the bullfights." His major infrastructure and public works projects, including the paving of 11,000 miles of new highway and the construction of a hydroelectric dam, also improved conditions for tourism and investment.⁸³ He also oversaw the completion of Mexico's

⁸⁰ Ricardo Del Río, "The II Pan-American Games Will Be a Great Transcendancy for Mexico," *II Pan American Sporting Games: News Official Bulletin* 1 (July 1951): 6.

⁸¹ Letter from José de Jesús Clark Flores to RM Ritter," January 27, 1954, Series No. 26/20/37; box 219; folder 7, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁸² Brewster and Brewster, "The Rank Outsider," 754.

⁸³ Enrique Krauze and Hank Heifetz, *Mexico: Biography of Power* (New York: Harper, 1998), 543.

section of the Pan-American Highway that linked North and South America. The Pan-American Games would help show off these achievements.

The Pan-American Highway was first-planned in 1923 at the Conference of American States in Santiago, Chile to integrate American economies and promote friendly relations.⁸⁴ In 1950, the country celebrated its completion by launching an annual auto race called the Carrera Panamericana in partnership with the Asociación Nacional Automovilística and the American Automobile Association. The race, the longest and most dangerous in existence, attracted some of the most famous drivers in the world. The first contest, a nearly 2,200-mile trek from Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua to the Guatemalan border in Chiapas, began on May 5, 1950 when Chihuahua Governor Fernando Foglio Miramóntes waived the green flag. Officials hoped the race would show off the revolution's scientific and technological advances by featuring skilled drivers in powerful and cutting-edge automobiles.⁸⁵ The field of the first race included 132 drivers from stock car, Formula One, and drag racing circuits. Hershel McGriff of the US won the first race in his number 52 light Oldsmobile 88 that had cost him just \$1,900. McGriff finished ten heats in a total of 27 hours and 34 minutes and he won over \$17,000 in prize money.⁸⁶ Drivers took sponsorships from US and Mexican businesses, like Refrescos Jarritos, to help fund the journey. On what was still a very rocky road, drivers needed the money for the constant repairs along the way. For example, many said that portions of the road in Oaxaca and Chiapas were rudimentarily paved with large and unevenly crushed volcanic rock. Some pieces were said to be as big as one's fist and driving over them caused the rims of cars to fuse around the brake drums and required constant tire changes.

⁸⁴ V. Bulmer-Thomas, *The Political Economy of Central America since 1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 89.

⁸⁵ Frank Markus, "The Legends of the Great Road Races Seminar," Magazine, *Motor Trend*, (March 11, 2007), <http://blogs.motortrend.com/the-legends-of-the-great-road-races-seminar-450.html> (accessed June 4, 2016).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

As the race's popularity increased in auto-racing circles, some citizens understood it as a destructive symbol for the PRI as deaths and injuries increased. In fact, several national drivers perished in the 1951 race. Oaxaca City mayor Lorenzo Mayoral Lemus perished after losing control of his service car on a mountain pass. Pilot Carlos Panini also died when his car exploded after smashing into a rock wall in Oaxaca while attempting to hold off a young Bobby Unser. Many in the public considered “*la carrera de la muerte*” (the race of death) as barbaric, while others suggested that the idea of the race represented the party's short-sightedness in their infatuation with foreign ideas. The government canceled the race in 1954 due in large part because of safety concerns.⁸⁷

The country nearly lost its privilege to host the Pan-American Games and the IOC meetings after nearly a year passed without word on the events' details from the organizing committees. In January of 1953, a panicked Brundage threatened to move the IOC session if Clark and Gómez did not immediately provide plans, including dates, accommodations, and ideas for cultural events. In fact, it was not until January, months after Brundage asked for plans to be finalized, that Clark distributed IOC members a questionnaire asking them what they wanted to do on their visit. Clark and Gómez assured Brundage everything would get done. But Brundage, facing a skeptical IOC leadership made up by mostly European royals and plutocrats, worried that his first IOC meeting as president would be spoiled. In desperation, he contacted Clark's political rivals Álvarez Gayou and Ahumada to see if the men could provide alternate plans. They insisting that they could secured over \$250,000 pesos from the SEP coffers to fund the event, but ultimately told Brundage that arrangements could not be made in such a short time.

⁸⁷ Bobby Unser and Paul Pease, *Winners Are Driven: A Champion's Guide to Success in Business & Life* (Hoboken, N.J.: J. Wiley, 2003), 141–42; Daryl E Murphy, *Carrera Panamericana: History of the Mexican Road Race, 1950-1954* (New York: iUniverse, 2008); J. Brian Freeman, “‘La Carrera de La Muerte’: Death, Driving, and Rituals of Modernization in 1950s Mexico,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 29 (2011); Stephen Mitchell, *La Carrera Panamericana de Mexico (1950-1954): The World's Most Dangerous Race* (CineBank Productions, 2012).

Brundage had little choice but to remain patient with Clark and Gómez and the decision paid off. The IOC visitors toured pyramids, enjoyed folkloric dancing, and ate traditional foods while staying at the elegant Hotel El Prado. In front of the 35 delegates in attendance, including 18 Europeans, Brundage closed the meetings by lauding the country's dedication to amateurism and declared his confidence that Mexico's Olympic path was only beginning.⁸⁸

Clark's work earned praise with the IOC, but some COM officials grew uncomfortable with his power in national sport. Gómez, for example, became suspicious of Clark after his IOC appointment and believed holding so many high-ranking offices was inappropriate. The position, after all, made him the czar of national sport. But Clark also faced trouble within the government. In early 1953, he was abruptly fired from his position in the military by President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines as rumors spread about a possible coup. Clark had few friends to whom to turn. Although he had a flashy side, the general's demeanor was described as stern and calculated. He was a military man of few words that showed undying allegiance to his friends and disdain for those who stood in his way. He wore on colleagues in both the COM and CDM who complained that his volatile relationships within government agencies made collaborative work with him virtually impossible. Clark was apparently not even on speaking terms with officials in the SEP, the administrator of most youth sports programs. On October 23, 1953, seeing his firing as inevitable, Clark resigned from both the COM and CDM after training capable replacements. His position in the IOC allowed him to continue to help organizing for the games.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Letter from Lamberto Álvarez Gayou to Avery Brundage, January 27, 1953, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 3, Avery Brundage Collection; Letter from Lamberto Álvarez Gayou to Avery Brundage, January 21, 1953, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 3, Avery Brundage Collection; Avery Brundage, "48th Session-Mexico City, April 1953," n/d, Series 26/20/37; box 79; folder 1, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁸⁹ Carmona, "Biography of José de Jesús Clark Flores: 'Man of Honor,'" 54–58, 64; Letter from Herminio Ahumada Jr. to Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, May 29, 1954, Presidentes; ARC 532.2/30, AGN; Letter from Marte R Gómez to Avery Brundage, January 20, 1953, Series 26/20/37; box 149; folder 5, Avery Brundage Collection.

Gómez took over many of Clark's responsibilities and patched up conflicts that arose between Clarkistas and those who had been left out of sports organizations in the previous three years. The COM continued to work on organizing events and helping resolve regionally sports problems among different NOCs. Many of these problems centered upon frustrations by Latin American countries about the difficulties of complying with rule 25 and its strict definitions of amateurism. Some governments were castigated for interfering too much in NOCs. For example, just before the second Pan-American Games, Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista disbanded the country's reputable NOC and installed his own officers. He made his brother-in-law president of the Cuban Olympic Committee. The IOC felt the move was a direct challenge to its authority and called upon the COM to work on behalf of the IOC to clear up any misunderstanding. The IOC banned some of Cuba's sports federations from participating in the upcoming Central American and Caribbean Games, but others were permitted.⁹⁰

The COM offered tours that showed the construction progress of sporting facilities beginning in 1951. IOC officials and the international press were impressed with construction plans. One plan included the replacement of 18,000-seat capacity National Stadium, built for the first Central American Games. The new stadium, designed by architect Carlos Lazo and contractor Augusto Pérez Palacios, was to include a world-class, 100,000-seat capacity outdoor facility at the National University to host soccer and athletic events in the Pan-Am Games.⁹¹ Moreover, the stadium was to be outfitted with state of the art electronic scoreboards and time-keepers that would leave spectators little doubt that the arena would also be a shrine of technology, science, and modernity.⁹²

⁹⁰ Letter from Marte R. Gómez to Avery Brundage, July 3, 1953, Series 26/20/37; box 59; folder 12, Avery Brundage Collection.

⁹¹ "The II Pan-American Games Will Take Place in a Great Stadium Specially Built," *II Pan American Sporting Games: News Official Bulletin* 1 (July 1951): 4–5.

⁹² "Pizarrones," *Boletín Comité Organizador* 1, no. 9 (January 10, 1954): 2–5.

Beyond the stadium, the committee celebrated the new 12,000 square meter, \$7 million peso buildings at Centro Deportivo Chapultepec. The facility, originally constructed in 1937, featured six floors of sporting spaces including bowling alleys, basketball courts, ping pong rooms, a pool, a gym, and an indoor track. It also incorporated relaxation and social spaces, including Turkish baths and lockers, with general capacity for 15,000 athletes and seating capacity for up to 5,000 spectators for sporting events.⁹³ Organizers boasted that the new swimming pool at the University City was one of the most technologically advanced in the world. It contained training and recreation sections in addition to regulation sized Olympic lanes.⁹⁴ The committee also had teachers' apartments, the veterinary school, and the National School of Medicine converted into a new Pan-American Villa on the university grounds for lodging for visiting athletes. English language publications promised that the site would become the "crossroads of continental friendship" where the word "friendship" would be spoken ubiquitously.⁹⁵ At the urging of Gómez, Brundage invited European dignitaries like Armand Massard, Vice President of the IOC, to Mexico City introduce them to the achievements of Latin American sport.⁹⁶

On March 5, 1954, President Ruiz Cortines inaugurated the VII Central American and Caribbean Games in front of thousands in the University Stadium. As the twelve Latin American sporting delegations marched onto the field, Julio Illescas Rojas, *jefe* of the Guatemala delegation, ceremoniously passed the games' flag to Gómez as Brundage stood proudly at the president's right side. The crowd erupted in a thunderous roar to welcome Joaquín Capilla, the

⁹³ "The Large Centro Deportivo Chapultepec," *Mexico: Second Panamerican Sportive Games* 1, no. 4 (October 1, 1954): 4–5.

⁹⁴ "The Beautiful Swimming Pool at University City," *Mexico: Second Panamerican Sportive Games* 1, no. 3 (September 15, 1954): 4–5.

⁹⁵ "The Pan-American Villa Will Become the Crossroads of Continental Friendship," *Mexico: Second Panamerican Sportive Games* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 1955): 1–3; "Lodging Quarters," *Mexico: Second Panamerican Sportive Games* 1, no. 3 (September 15, 1954): 2–3.

⁹⁶ Letter from Marte R Gómez to Avery Brundage, February 11, 1954, Series No. 26/20/37; Box 219; folder 7, Avery Brundage Collection.

reigning Pan-Am champion in the three-meter springboard and five-and ten-meter platform diving, and Herminio Ahumada. Together they led their team through the “Himno Nacional.” The Mexican delegation, featuring 285 men and 73 women, hoisted the flag and marched in burgundy jackets, white shirts, grey pants, red neck ties, and brown shoes. Meanwhile, 5,000 students gathered to sing Armando González’s ‘Himno de los VII Juegos’ to celebrate the triumph in hosting the games for the first time since its inception in 1926.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ “El Señor Presidente de La República Abandara Hoy, a Las Once Horas, a La Delegacion Mexicana a Los Juegos Centroamericanos,” *El Universal*, March 4, 1954, sec. 1; “Por Primera Vez Se Enono El Himno de Los VII Juegos,” *El Universal*, March 4, 1954, sec. 1; “El Señor Presidente Inauguro Ayer Los VII Juegos Centroamericanos,” *Excelsior*, March 6, 1954.

Figure 5.1: Lyrics for the “Himno de los Séptimos Juegos Deportivos Centroamericanos y del Caribe,”

by Armando González

<i>Rá, Rá,</i>	Ra, Ra,
<i>Rá, Rá, Rá</i>	Ra, Ra, Ra
<i>Juegos Deportivos,</i>	Sporting Games
<i>Rá, Rá, Rá,</i>	Ra, Ra, Ra
<i><u>Alerta Juventud!</u></i>	Alert Youth!
<i><u>Alerta Juventud Deportista!</u></i>	Alert Sporting Youth!
<i>Es la América Latina, entusiasmo fecundo, que eleva su voz que llega al confín;</i>	It's Latin America, with fertile enthusiasm that elevates their voice reaching to its boundaries
<i>es la América joven, esperanza del mundo, es la América Latina, entusiasmo fecundo, que agrupa a sus atletas para gallarda lid</i>	It's the young America, hope of the world it's Latin America, with fertile enthusiasm that brings your athletes together for the gallant battle
<i>Centro y Caribe, vengan ya a competir en la lid de un noble Ideal, México entero les dará todo su amor de <u>nación fraternal</u></i>	Central and Caribbean have come to compete in the fight for a noble ideal All of Mexico will give you the love of a fraternal nation
<i><u>Brazos en alto, levantad el corazón en señal de amistad:</u> la de Latino América, que es luz de inmensidad...</i>	Warmest hugs, lifting the heart in a show of friendship that of Latin America, that is the immense light...
<i>Es el deporte la expresión de la salud <u>juvenil</u>, y del vigor.</i>	Sport is the expression of a healthy youth and of vigor
<i>¡Vivan los Juegos del valor, meta final del campeón y el honor!</i>	Long live the valiant Games with a final goal of championships and honor!
<i>Séptimos Juegos, se oye ya una gran voz de triunfal inquietud:</i>	The Seventh Games... one hears the great triumphal anxiousness:
<i>es la de Centro América, que es voz de juventud. ...</i>	it is that of Central America which is the voice of the youth...

The games caused anticipation and trepidation for the participants, organizers, and spectators. One writer stated that the country would prove that it was more dedicated to ideals of Olympism than most Olympic Games hosts. As a journalist from *El Universal* stressed, the Olympic Games had lost their purity as many countries staged the events solely for material gain or used the performances to disseminate propaganda. Mexico, and countries with relatively small economies compared to Western Europe and the US, they argued, must battle in the Central American Games to restore the Olympic ideals of the Baron de Coubertin. Together, the “true Americans,” united by blood and by language, would supposedly show the world that the region could embrace each other in friendship.⁹⁸ More than success on the field, though, the delegation believed it needed visitors to leave the city feeling welcome.⁹⁹

Leaders from the COM, CDM, and the Technical Commission of the Central American Games met at the Pan American Villa at the National University during the games to discuss progress on the upcoming Pan-Am competition.¹⁰⁰ Brundage felt satisfied with promises of progress and considered the Central American Games a success, even though problems arose. For example, in October of 1953, the organizing committee reported missing funds that were earmarked for construction projects and the preparation of athletes.¹⁰¹ The most notable controversy came on the event’s last day when the Colombian basketball team upset the first-place Mexicans in what was expected to be the last game before the closing ceremonies. The referees left the arena, believing the tournament over, but the loss put Mexico into a tie with Panama with the two needing to play one more game to settle the score. An over-capacity arena

⁹⁸ Gaspar O. Almanza, “El Objeto de Los Juegos Deportivos,” *El Universal*, March 4, 1954, sec. 1.

⁹⁹ “Los Juegos Centroamericanos,” *Excelsior (Clipping)*, March 6, 1954, Series No. 26/20/37; Box 219; folder 7, Avery Brundage Collection; Jeffrey Montez De Oca, “‘As Our Muscles Get Softer, Our Missile Race Becomes Harder’: Cultural Citizenship and the ‘Muscle Gap,’” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 18, no. 3 (September 2005): 145–72.

¹⁰⁰ “El C.O.M. Tratará Hoy El Congreso de Los II Juegos Panamericanos,” *Excelsior*, March 6, 1954.

¹⁰¹ “Estado de Ingresos Y Egresos Hasta El 30 de Octubre de 1953,” *Boletín Comité Organizador* 1, no. 5 (November 30, 1953): 1.

of 15,000 fans boiled over as fans demanded another match to resolve the tie. Organizers scrambled into airports, taxis, and hotels searching for capable replacements, but only found a couple of referees who did not specialize in that sport. Concerned about partiality and safety, the Panamanians refused to play and turned down offers for a later exhibition. Security had to empty the arena forcibly. Gómez told Brundage days later that the embarrassment had left him so disappointed that he could no longer help organize the Pan-American Games. It was a major setback to the organization. The IOC, nevertheless, took note that most participants left feeling as if the games were refereed with integrity.¹⁰²

In the lead-up to the Pan-Am Games, the committee again faced problems in organization, deadlines, and politics. In March of 1954, Ruiz Cortines appointed Ahumada as the new president of the organizing committee in a move praised by *deportistas* around the country. But his time in office was brief. On May 10, 1954, a frustrated Ahumada resigned from his position, citing a Clarkista plot to defame his character. Specifically, the fatigued official claimed he would no longer be of use as long as Clark sat in the IOC and berated him so much in the press. He also accused Clark's friends, including Estopier, of hatching political schemes to sabotage his work. An incensed Ruiz Cortines purged the Pan-American organizing committee leadership of elements left over from the Central American Games and replaced the leadership of the CDM and COM.¹⁰³ To complicate matters, the in-fighting in the organizations left planning for the games in shambles. In June of 1954, the committee had still not solidified a date for the contest, reassuring Brundage and other IOC members that the games would probably happen "sometime in March."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Letter from Marte R Gómez to Avery Brundage, March 24, 1954, Series 26/20/37; box 59; folder 12, Avery Brundage Collection.

¹⁰³ Herminio Ahumada Jr., "Memorandum No. 1: La Situacion de Heminio Ahumada," May 10, 1954, Presidentes; ARC 532.2/30, AGN.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Marte R Gómez to Avery Brundage, June 8, 1954, Series No. 26/20/37; Box 224; folder 9, Avery Brundage Collection.

The IOC identified ideal leaders of the Olympic movement and NOCs as independently wealthy former athletes. They believed that this type of person could more freely travel around the world and was theoretically less inclined to accept bribes. In June of 1954, PRI senator Manuel Guzmán Willis, a former track star in the first Central American Games in Mexico City in 1926, was nominated as organizing committee president for the games. Gómez praised Guzmán as a perfect candidate who was also fluent in English. Perhaps just as important, Guzmán had a close friendship with Luis Echeverría, the PRI secretary who had supported him in the senate. Echeverría was also apparently in control of finances related to the Pan-American Games.¹⁰⁵ Ruiz Cortines reinstated the now elderly Álvarez Gayou, Echeverría's cousin, to the committee after being blocked out by the "Clarkista gang." He worked as a director of technical athletic training.¹⁰⁶

Promotional artwork and medal designs for the Pan-American Games revealed the organizing committee's plan to juxtapose the traditional with the modern. For example, sculptor Lorenzo Rafael fashioned one medal depicting a battle-ready Aztec warrior dressed as a Flying Bird. Another featured a pre-Columbian ball player on the front, while the back side showed the University Stadium with the Olympic torch printed above it. Another medal displayed an indigenous Tarahumara runner carrying an Olympic torch. In one of the more widely distributed posters, a muscular and shirtless American Indian, kneeled in front of a globe in Plain's Indian headdress, is shown shooting an arrow into the distance.¹⁰⁷ These images worked to show the country's ancient sports history while announcing its entrance into modernity.¹⁰⁸ While it is

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.; Letter from Lamberto Álvarez Gayou to Avery Brundage, February 1955, Series No. 26/20/37; Box 224; folder 10, Avery Brundage Collection.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Álvarez Gayou to Avery Brundage.

¹⁰⁷ "Medalla Para Los Triunfadores," *Segundos Juegos Deportivos Panamericanos* 1, no. 12 (January 15, 1954): 3; "Awards for Participants," *Mexico: Second Panamerican Sportive Games* 1, no. 11 (January 15, 1955): 2–3; "Medallas de Premiacion Para Los Atletas," *Boletin Comité Organizador* 1, no. 6 (December 10, 1953): 1.

¹⁰⁸ Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World*.

unclear how this vote was carried out, organizers purportedly left the selection of the official motto of the Pan-American Games to the people of the US, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Haiti. Among the finalists, the Latin “Sempre Unidos” won over the second place “Honor, Vigor, Virtue.”¹⁰⁹

Ruiz Cortines set ticket prices of tournament events low to ensure that all social classes could attend. Admissions for the inauguration on March 12 cost between \$3 or \$90 pesos for luxury seats, but track and field ranged from \$1 peso to \$3 pesos, basketball and baseball between \$3 and \$5 pesos, soccer \$1 to \$3, and several other events were free.¹¹⁰ The schedule featured sixteen sports, including three in which women participated. By the end of 1954, the organizing committee remained optimistic of the completion of the many of its facilities for the games that they hoped would transform the city’s landscape. The schedule called for soccer matches and the track and field meets to be held at the University Stadium, while baseball would be played at Parque Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social, Parque Delta, Parque PEMEX, and the Parque Instituto Nacional de la Juventud Mexicana. Meanwhile, basketball tournaments would be held at the Arena Lutteroth, the Centro Deportivo Chapultepec, the National Auditorium, and the Military College. Boxers would fight in the Arena Coliseo and Cycling events would take place at the new velodrome. Rowers, meanwhile, would take to Xochimilco’s picturesque and tranquil canals between the chinampas, or ancient floating gardens, in what was once the vast Lake Texcoco. The University City’s new world-class swimming pool would hold all other aquatic events.¹¹¹

Less than a month before the proposed start of the Pan-Am Games, Álvarez Gayou sent a letter to Brundage bracing him for the worst. The country had made progress in construction, but

¹⁰⁹ “Pan-American Emblem Materials,” to 1953 1951, Series 26/20/37; box 224; folder 6.

¹¹⁰ “Facilidades Al Público Para Que Presencie Las Competencias,” *II Juegos PanAmericanos: Mexico*, n/d, 4.

¹¹¹ “Playing Fields,” *Mexico: Second Panamerican Sportive Games* 1, no. 4 (October 1, 1954): 3.

a shortage in money meant that the facilities would be finished only in a “certain way.” Specifically, construction crews completed the playing surfaces for basketball at the National Auditorium, but it still lacked lockers and bathing facilities. Without time or money to finish, it would be a construction site during the games with exposed iron supports and an unfinished façade. The new Olympic pool and the stadium at the National University still lacked adequate bathing and locker spaces. The private sports arena, meant to host boxing and wrestling, would not be finished at all, forcing these events to a myriad of smaller and less convenient venues around the vast city. A disappointed Brundage claimed to understand the challenges the country faced, but must have recalled his friend Gomez’s reflection on the state of Mexican sports.¹¹² Gomez said, “We don’t have plenty of money, but we have plenty of interest.”¹¹³

Ceremonies opened with excitement as thousands welcomed the 22 nations and 2,583 participating athletes into the University Stadium on March 12, 1955. Considering the relative lack of publicity, this turn out pleasantly surprised IOC officials. Brundage characterized the ceremony and the games that followed as beautiful and chaotic at the same time. For example, Brundage noted the frequency of English language speeches that few in the crowd understood, described the music as monotonous, criticized poor camera shots for television broadcasts, and was shocked that at the end of the ceremony the various delegations broke off into all direction and eventually blended in with the spectators.¹¹⁴ The disorganization did not discourage many local journalists and organizers. One delegate announced that the enthusiasm for the games showed that even in the Cold War the people of America could unite under the banner of

¹¹² Letter from Lamberto Álvarez Gayou to Avery Brundage.

¹¹³ Letter from Marte R. Gómez to Avery Brundage.

¹¹⁴ Avery Brundage, Written notes on Pan-American Games, March 1955, Series 26/20/37; box 224; folder 9, Avery Brundage Collection.

fraternity and harmony. For him, it was with hard work, hope, sacrifice that the sacred Pan-American flame would continue to burn, holding within it the ideals of a humanist spirit.¹¹⁵

The tournament showed off famous athletes from around the region, especially from the US. These included gold-medal winning Olympian swimmers Frank McKinney and William Yorzyk and 1950 US Open tennis champion Art Larsen.¹¹⁶ Even with disappointing showings in sports like baseball, where they placed fourth, Mexico won gold medals in most competitions in which they were favored, including triumphs by Antonio Haro, in individual fencing, and Joaquín Capilla, with two golds in three-meter springboard and ten-meter platform diving. The Mexicans also won three gold medals, one silver, and two bronze in five equestrian events under the captainship of Gen. Humberto Mariles and the skill of Roberto Viñals. They pulled upsets by winning gold and silver in the 200-meter butterfly swim. They ended the games with 58 overall medals, third-most in the tournament behind Argentina and the powerful US team. The outcome led one organizer to declare that the games proved that athletes from around the American continents were as strong as any in the world.¹¹⁷ Most importantly, athletes and fans left noting the country's hospitality, even when things did not go as planned. For example, one US shooter contended that when public transit was a problem ordinary citizens regularly offered athletes rides in their own cars.¹¹⁸

Closing ceremonies began with a sky full of balloons as 110,000 screaming fans celebrated the gold medal achieved by the skilled horsemen led by Mariles. Brundage left deeply impressed by the staging of the games despite the problems organizers faced and believed the spectacle would prove indelible for Mexican fans. He contended that the performances of many

¹¹⁵ Manuel Roy, "Palabras a La Comité Deportivo Panamericano: Comisión Permanente," March 1955, Series No. 26/20/37; Box 224; folder 7, Avery Brundage Collection.

¹¹⁶ Avery Brundage, Notes on Pan-Am Paper-Pad, n/d, Series No. 26/20/37; Box 224; folder 10, Avery Brundage Collection.

¹¹⁷ Steven Olderr, *The Pan American Games: A Statistical History, 1951-1999*, 2009.

¹¹⁸ Brundage, "Brundage Written Thoughts on Pan-American Games."

athletes, some breaking world records, provided evidence that the 7,000-foot altitude of Mexico City did not have as significant an impact on athletic performance as expected. He also claimed that it had proven to have virtually no impact on physical health, even though many athletes complained of low energy and collapsed during competition. Some of the facilities sat half completed, yet those available amazed spectators. Perhaps most important of all, Brundage announced that the event organizers complied more strictly with IOC regulations than any tournament he had witnessed and credited the outcome to the strong sports leadership under Gómez, Clark, and Guzmán, the hospitality of the people, and sports development that began decades earlier.¹¹⁹ Somehow, through all of the difficulties with political rivalries, money shortages, and corruption, the country accomplished a feat that twenty years prior seemed impossible. Their efforts were rewarded with the IOC's gift of the Olympic Cup in 1955 in honor of the country's work in promoting the ideals of amateurism.¹²⁰

Community and Youth Sports after 1946

As the government shifted its attention away from public money for physical education after World War II in its bidding to host international events, popular demand for sports leagues remained. Children in Mexico City played street-soccer, *el beis de mano*, and a form of American touch-football known as *tochito* as few organized sports leagues existed.¹²¹ In opposition to rougher sports like boxing, that increased in popularity in poor working-class neighborhoods like Tepito,¹²² many educators and parents continued their effort through the 1950s and 1960s to find sports capable of providing wholesome distractions for children and

¹¹⁹ Avery Brundage, "Brundage Short-Hand Notes on the Second Pan-Am Games," n/d, Series 26/20/37; box 224; folder 12, Avery Brundage Collection.

¹²⁰ Letter from Avery Brundage to Marte Gómez, September 16, 1955, Series 26/20/37; box 224; Folder 12, Avery Brundage Collection.

¹²¹ Agustín, *Tragicomedia mexicana. 1, 1*, 38.

¹²² See Allen, "Boxing in Mexico: Masculinity, Modernity, and Nationalism, 1946-1982."

workers. Some sports leagues that once depended on government subsidies fell into disarray, but grassroots organizations filled the void in others.

The center of sports organization returned to the cities after World War II as the country's demographics changed. Indeed, new factory work opportunities in the cities combined with land shortages in the countryside motivated a massive wave of rural to urban migration between 1950 and 1970. The country's population grew from 26 to 49 million people due to rising life expectancy and lower infant mortality. Meanwhile, Mexico City's population swelled from 3.1 million to 8.6 million, producing a chaotic environment in which the government struggled to meet demands for public services and security. Parents faced significant challenges as they left the home for the factory in an increasingly industrialized economy. Popular films like "*Los Olvidados*" (1952) reflected the concern of citizens who felt as if unsupervised children spent much of their free time living out the messages of rock n' roll *desmadre* or participating in one of the city's *pandillas*. Many parents hoped that sports could still provide a positive pastime for children that helped build character and teach important civic values. Getting access to those leagues proved difficult.¹²³ One program that grew very popular was Little League Baseball and from its organization unfolded one of the country's great international triumphs. Its "seed" was a gregarious and quirky plant scientist from Menlo, California named John Niederhauser.

Niederhauser (1916-2005) studied in Leningrad, Soviet Union in 1935 after scratching a post-high school itch to travel. He chose his destination spontaneously, finding the fares to the country simply more valuable for the miles versus other European destinations. A fortuitous meeting with world renowned geneticist Nikolai Vavilov at an agricultural museum exhibit set a new course for the curious student. He landed a job as one of the first tractor-driving instructors

¹²³ Loaeza, "Modernización Autoritaria a la Sombra de la Superpotencia, 1944-1968," 665; The term "desmadre" literally means the "unmothering" of someone. It was a slang word in Mexico used to describe social chaos. The term was used frequently to describe children that like Rock n' Roll music. See Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

in the region while studying at the esteemed Timiryazev All-Union Academy for Agricultural Sciences in Moscow under Vavilov's tutelage. Joséf Stalin cut funding for Vavilov's groundbreaking germ-plasm and potato breeding projects and had Vavilov killed in 1943 as part of his assault on intellectuals. Niederhauser, nevertheless, carried his experiences from the academy into Cornell University before bringing them into Mexico as a Rockefeller Foundation scientist in 1946.¹²⁴

The Mexican Agricultural Project (MAP) began in 1943 as part of an international effort to modernize agriculture sustainably in developing countries.¹²⁵ A young wheat scientist in the program named Norman Borlaug described the crop, for example, as unchanged since the conquest with its condition "withered" and decimated by a plague of "stem rust" fungus that had caused problems the previous three years. The Rockefeller program worked in partnership with the government and provided research stations in Ciudad Obregón and Chapingo to help find solutions to the world's looming food crisis.¹²⁶

Niederhauser initially accepted an assignment to study corn, wheat, and beans in the Toluca Valley, but found the soils and climate ideal conditions for potato growth. In fact, some potatoes originated there and the tuber sold well at local markets, even though few farmers grew them in the region.¹²⁷ His first attempts to cultivate them ended in frustration with a crop decimated by the fungus *Phytophthora infestans* that invited late blight, the airborne disease that incited the notorious Irish potato famine of the 1840s.¹²⁸ Farmers ridiculed him because of his

¹²⁴ John de Graaf, *Hot Potatoes*, DVD (Bullfrog Films, 2001).

¹²⁵ Paul D. Peterson, "Improving Potato Production in Mexico: John S. Niederhauser and Rockefeller Foundation-Sponsored Research during the 1950s and 1960s," *Rockefeller Archive Center*, 2008, <http://www.rockarch.org/Publications/resrep/pdf/peterson.pdf>. (accessed March 7, 2013).

¹²⁶ E.J. Kahn Jr., "The Staffs of Life: III-Fiat Panis," *The New Yorker*, December 17, 1984, 92.

¹²⁷ College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Arizona, "14. In Memoriam: John S. Niederhauser," *Information for News Media*, August 19, 2005, <http://cals.arizona.edu/media/archives/5.31.html>; de Graaf, *Hot Potatoes*.

¹²⁸ Peterson, "Improving Potato Production in Mexico: John S. Niederhauser and Rockefeller Foundation-Sponsored Research during the 1950s and 1960s."

apparent ignorance of local agriculture due to his zeal for the crop. Soon after, Niederhauser made the greatest contribution of his scientific career by stumbling upon wild blight-resistant potatoes on a hike in the surrounding mountains. The discovery permitted the development of horizontal cross-breeding programs with tastier varieties and allowed him to trace the historical origin of all late blight in the world to the valley at which he studied.¹²⁹

Locals tabbed the resulting hybrids as “Niederhauser’s Daughters” and joked that he baptized and named each one. Still, he often found it difficult to convince local farmers and consumers. Indeed, the scientist found that the new varieties and all non-*criollo* potatoes were widely regarded as low-quality.¹³⁰ Borlaug remembered that farmers did not trust the scientists’ “foreign gospel” and his own wheat presentations initially drew only handfuls of the poorest farmers that likely came just for the free beer and barbeque.¹³¹ Further, in 1954 the notoriously impetuous General Gilberto Flores Muñoz, Minister of Agriculture, attempted to deport the project team, believing them to be “traitors working secretly for the glory of gringos.”¹³² Borlaug’s friendship with Rodolfo Calles, the eldest son of the *Jefe Máximo* and former governor of Sonora, saved the program and eventually the MAP gained legitimacy and popular support. They helped usher in the “Green Revolution” through the 1960s.¹³³

The monumental achievements of MAP scientists eventually received international acclaim, but Niederhauser believed that locals recognized him more often for introducing Little League Baseball.¹³⁴ The prevalence of sandlot games indicated baseball’s local popularity but

¹²⁹ Potato Museum, “Potato People: Dr. John Niederhauser,” *Potato Museum*, n/d, http://potatomuseum.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21:artfame&catid=21:catpotpourri&Itemid=25. (accessed March 13, 2013).

¹³⁰ de Graaf, *Hot Potatoes*.

¹³¹ Kahn Jr., “The Staffs of Life: III-Fiat Panis,” 92–93.

¹³² Noel Vietmeyer, *Borlaug: Wheat Whisperer, 1944-1959* (Lorton, Virginia: Bracing Books, 2009). 203.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 206–7; Adrian Bantjes, “The Regional Dynamics of Anti-Clericalism and Defanaticization in Revolutionary Mexico,” in *Faith and Impiety in Revolutionary Mexico*, ed. Matthew Butler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 116; Peterson, “Improving Potato Production in Mexico: John S. Niederhauser and Rockefeller Foundation-Sponsored Research during the 1950s and 1960s.”

¹³⁴ de Graaf, *Hot Potatoes*.

youths were said to have little to do but “roam the streets” with a lack of organized leagues¹³⁵ Niederhauser, with six sons and a daughter, hoped to channel his children into more constructive and monitored activities and was drawn to Little League. The organization began in 1939 and it pledged to promote teamwork, responsibility, sacrifice, fair play, responsibility, and instill confidence.¹³⁶ Further, supporters believed the league could provide a forum for quality family time. The organization counted just twelve leagues in 1946, all in the United States, but by 1954 it had 3,300 franchises, including two in the Canal Zone in Panama.¹³⁷

The organization’s officials had long-hoped to expand its international operations and eagerly distributed rulebooks and advice to Niederhauser who, with the help of Borlaug, who also had a son, established the country’s first Little League in Mexico City on November 7, 1954.¹³⁸ The Liga Azteca’s first season challenged Niederhauser who struggled to find financing and space to play. The American School, founded in 1888 by foreign industrialists to prepare students for graduate work in the US,¹³⁹ volunteered their athletic fields and the well-connected scientists convinced reluctant American corporations operating in the capital, such as Sears Roebuck, Colgate-Palmolive, and Proctor and Gamble, to donate money to pay for uniforms and basic equipment.¹⁴⁰ The league featured four clubs including the Leones, Lobos, Tigres, and the Aguilas, coached by Niederhauser and Borlaug, but avoided major publicity efforts, seeing the league as an experiment.¹⁴¹ Indeed, the teams were initially full of the sons of American businessmen and Borlaug feared that organized youth baseball would not grow in a country that

¹³⁵ Ann Niederhauser, 54.

¹³⁶ Ann Niederhauser, “Ann’s Story” (Unpublished biography, n/d), 94, Niederhauser Personal Papers.

¹³⁷ “Little League Chronology,” *Little League Online*, accessed November 20, 2011, <http://www.littleleague.org>.

¹³⁸ Vietmeyer, 211-212; La Liga Maya, 2011, http://www.ligamayaac.com/Ligas_Pequeñas.htm (accessed Nov. 15, 2011).

¹³⁹ “History,” *American School Foundation, A.C.*, accessed November 20, 2011, <http://www.asf.edu.mx/Institucional/AboutASF/History.html> (accessed March 11, 2012).

¹⁴⁰ Vietmeyer, *Borlaug: Wheat Whisperer, 1944-1959*, 206–15; Carlos Niederhauser, November 18, 2011.

¹⁴¹ John Niederhauser, “(Niederhauser Document W/O Date),” *Food Museum*, accessed November 18, 2011, <http://www.foodmuseum.com>.

was so necessitous. Further, Borlaug's battle with Flores Muñoz to keep the MAP open left some participants concerned that their efforts in Little League could have been misconstrued as goofing off.¹⁴² The loathsome quality of play led to long games and high scores,¹⁴³ but by the end of the first season the play had markedly improved and the league underwent a major facelift.

Unlike the agricultural programs that faced of resistance from farmers and administrators alike, Little League faced little opposition. Local newspapers *Excelsior* and *The News* published scores and updates as they arrived. In 1956, the league expanded to fourteen teams and over half of the players were Mexican. By the third season the number jumped to 95% and most of the players lived in poor neighborhoods. Games became major community social events that consistently packed neighbors into the small grandstands. Crowds danced, sang, and berated umpires in English and Spanish.¹⁴⁴ The players' mothers volunteered at the soda and hot dog booths to fundraise for cleats and other equipment. Niederhauser's wife, Ann, related that one of the mothers expressed gratitude to the couple because Little League had pulled her husband from the cantina on Saturdays when games were played.¹⁴⁵ For "Chilangringos," or children of US Americans born in Mexico City, and Mexicans alike, Little League was a "social phenomenon" that, in the opinion of its local organizers, provided rare opportunities for poor kids to become champions.¹⁴⁶ Niederhauser's and Borlaug's dedication was never questioned. Borlaug, for example, drove 500 miles roundtrip at night every weekend from his research station to the ballfields to coach his *Aguilas* even after his son no longer played on the team.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Vietmeyer, *Borlaug: Wheat Whisperer, 1944-1959*, 212.

¹⁴³ Niederhauser, "(Niederhauser Document W/O Date)."

¹⁴⁴ Robert Niederhauser, November 19, 2011; Niederhauser, "(Niederhauser Document W/O Date)."

¹⁴⁵ Niederhauser, "Ann's Story," 55.

¹⁴⁶ Vietmeyer, *Borlaug: Wheat Whisperer, 1944-1959*, 255; Niederhauser, "(Niederhauser Document W/O Date)."

¹⁴⁷ Vietmeyer, *Borlaug: Wheat Whisperer, 1944-1959*, 222–23.

Little League encouraged fusions between nationalist rituals and baseball. In 1955, the Little League Pledge was written to provide leagues a pledge similar to the US Pledge of Allegiance, but without direct references to the US. Players recited it before every game and tournament. It followed: “I trust in God, I love my country, and will respect its laws; I will play fair, and strive to win, but win or lose, I will always do my best.” When the pledge was not available in Mexico, teams sang the national anthem and carried the national flag.

In the US, the government’s support of Little League reflected a Cold War “body race” in which they were engaged to prepare their citizens for potential conflict.¹⁴⁸ US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the creator of National Little League Week, described sports as a “set of strategies and tactics that create productive yet manageable citizens of a cultural-capitalist state.”¹⁴⁹ Later, under the Kennedy-Wilkinson Plan, public schools were given a series of standardized physical goals for students to reach that exposed the “weaklings” and gave them extra attention.¹⁵⁰ Niederhauser never associated sport with politics and wanted the league to become purely an expression of *mexicanidad*.

The man known as “Mr. Potato” related that Little League “began like a dream” and with Borlaug, Rosendo Alonzo, Lowell Gleason, and John Holler, he created the country’s first Little League office soon after starting the Mexico City league.¹⁵¹ He served as its *de facto* president and became a liaison between grassroots organizers and Little League headquarters after assuming the position as Latin American Ambassador. Those interested in starting a league in the country contacted Niederhauser, who in turn sent materials and worked with them to secure financing and affiliation. The scientist also traveled to Little League headquarters in

¹⁴⁸ Montez de Oca, “As Our Muscles Get Softer, Our Missile Race Becomes Harder,” 126.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁵¹ “Origen de Las Ligas Pequeñas de Béisbol,” *La Liga Maya*, 2011, http://www.ligamayaac.com/Ligas_Pequeñas.htm; “Nacimiento de La Liga Maya, 1955-2005,” *La Liga Maya*, 2011, <http://www.ligamayaac.com/Historia.htm> (accessed October 25, 2011).

Williamsport, Pennsylvania and frequently hosted Little League officials in Mexico City. He helped create three more leagues in the capital by 1956, including the Liga Tolteca, Liga Metropolitana, and the Liga Maya.¹⁵² The Liga Maya's teams took names of corporate sponsors and blended them with those of American indigenous groups, such as the Alfrombras Mohawk Olmecas, Woolworth Huastecos, Monsanto Tarascos, and Coca Cola Comanches. They acquired playing space from the worker athletic fields at the ER Squibb & Sons de Mexico factory. Like the Liga Azteca, the Liga Maya's first coaches were American businessmen from companies such as Anderson Clayton Cotton Company, Sears de Mexico, Chevrolet, Hewlett-Packard. Rolf Larsen from the US Embassy also participated. But the league became more Mexican within a few years.¹⁵³ Niederhauser took his agricultural work to Europe, Asia, and other parts of Latin America in 1960, but he maintained his Little League positions until 1969 despite admitting that he could barely keep up with the organization's rapid expansion.¹⁵⁴

Children from an industrial slum outside of Monterrey exemplified the quick success of the programs nationally. Although Monterrey was already an enthusiastic sports community, young children had few options for organized sports after school in 1956. This prompted Harold "Lucky" Haskins, a college physical education teacher, to reach out to Niederhauser in 1956. With financial backing from the local American Legion, they established the first Little League in the city.¹⁵⁵ The boys initially played in abandoned fields of rocks and broken glass with homemade gloves and balls. Less than two years after the league's formation these players

¹⁵² "Nacimiento de La Liga Maya, 1955-2005"; Vietmeyer, *Borlaug: Wheat Whisperer, 1944-1959*, 247.

¹⁵³ "Origen de Las Ligas Pequeñas de Béisbol."

¹⁵⁴ Vietmeyer, *Borlaug: Wheat Whisperer, 1944-1959*, 247.

¹⁵⁵ María Torre, "Little League Takes Over," *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, June 13, 1960; "Harold "Lucky" Haskins," *Breves Ensayos*, January 25, 2011, <http://www.brevesensayos.com/2011/01/harold-lucky-haskins.html> (accessed October 2, 2011); Salón de la Fama del Béisbol Profesional de Mexico, "Boletín Electronico #59: Exposición Ligas Pequeñas," *Salón de La Fama Del Béisbol Profesional de Mexico*, May 30, 2007, <http://www.salondelafama.com.mx/salondelafama/boletin/boletid.asp?i=61&tit=Bolet%EDn+Electr%F3nico+%235> (accessed November 28, 2001); Niederhauser, interview.

competed in an international tournament in McAllen, Texas.¹⁵⁶ The Industrial Little League All-Stars hitchhiked to some tournaments and often relied on hand-outs to eat. Nevertheless, the team charged into Williamsport for the world title match and “los pequeños gigantes,” as they were widely known, became the first team outside of the US to win the Little League World Series.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

On the heels of the successes in international tournaments, former SEP Minister Jaime Torres Bodet, acting as President of the COM commission that bid for the 1960 Olympics, announced that Mexico City was in a prime position to land the games. Indeed, the country had participated in every Olympics since 1924 and had proven they could handle hosting large events. Brundage, looking to make his mark as new president of the IOC, saw Mexico as an ideal country to host the first Olympics outside of the developed world. Mexico City mayor Ernesto Uruchurtu and President Ruiz Cortines had submitted two bids previously, in Rome in 1949 and Helsinki in 1951, but Torres Bodet argued now was the country’s time to achieve as a young but enterprising and courageous nation.¹⁵⁸

Between October 16 to 20, 1963 in Baden Baden, Germany, the country realized the pinnacle of its nearly half-century long quest to host the Olympic Games. On the eve of the vote the country was still considered an underdog candidate to the US and French proposals, although recent political instability gave them a clear edge over Argentina. In their short, but poignant,

¹⁵⁶ Jim Morrison, “The Little League World Series’ Only Perfect Game,” *Smithsonian*, April 6, 2010, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/The-Little-League-World-Series-Only-Perfect-Game.html?c=y&page=1>. (accessed November 20, 2011).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*; Lance Van Auken and Robin Van Auken, *Play Ball!: The Story of Little League Baseball* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 201.

¹⁵⁸ Jaime Torres Bodet, “Speech Addressed by Mr. Jaime Torres Bodet, Ambassador of Mexico in France, as President of the Mexican Commission Appointed to Submit to the International Olympic Committee the Candidacy of Mexico City as the Site of the Olympic Games of 1960,” June 15, 1955, Series 26/20/37; box 207; folder 5, Avery Brundage Collection.

pitch, the committee's organizers detailed the country's experience in organizing tournaments, their strict adherence to amateurism and the Olympic spirit, and their reputation as a country of the future during an economic boom. They had also successfully courted Brundage and many other IOC members in previous visits. When final votes were counted, the country received 30 of 58 votes, more than doubling Detroit's second place count of 14.¹⁵⁹

Some have argued that the achievement of the Olympic Games prompted the government to improve its image,¹⁶⁰ but, in fact, the reverse was true. The achievement of the Olympics did not happen by chance, nor was the effort carried out by political outsiders. The achievements of the 1950s and early 1960s were the culmination of a decades-long effort to host the games to demonstrate that the revolution had modernized, pacified, and provided its people a healthy and meaningful way of life. After 1946, the country's leadership built upon foundations established in the physical education programs of the 1920s and 1930s and shifted their focus to change its image from backwards, intolerant, and violent to one typified by order, peace, and open-mindedness.¹⁶¹ The achievement of the Central American, Pan-American, and Olympic Games were the government's announcement to the world that the country had modernized and was open for business.

¹⁵⁹ Brewster and Brewster, "The Rank Outsider," 748.

¹⁶⁰ Rachel Kram Villarreal, "Gladiolas for the Children of Sánchez: Ernesto P. Uruchurtu's Mexico City, 1950-1968," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona, 2008, 171.

¹⁶¹ Loeza, "Modernización Autoritaria a la Sombra de la Superpotencia, 1944-1968," 653.

Conclusion

Three years after Marte Gómez accepted the Olympic Cup from the IOC, the government reinvested in sports training and physical education in hopes for a strong performance at the 1968 Olympics. The construction of the Ciudad Deportivo in Magdalena Mixhuca in Mexico City in 1958 was one example of these efforts. The facility housed 27 baseball fields, 54 soccer pitches, 51 courts for basketball and volleyball, and more, in addition hosting the future national physical education normal school.¹ One year later the government-sponsored physical education journal *Tlaxtli* published its first issue and ran an editorial stressing the need to resurrect sports to develop ideal citizens. The author argued that Mexicans, the people of the *raza bronce* who carried the blood of the tiger and eagle warriors of the ancient ball game, could develop strong character and attain spiritual fulfillment through sports competition like their ancestors. The writer admitted that training capable athletes would be a challenge, but the country would be rewarded with a generation of honest and hard-working citizens capable of leading in the future.²

After the Pan-American Games, sports officials joined international sporting unions and continued to lobby to host international tournaments. Mexico City, for example, hosted the Second International Diamond Belt Boxing Tournament at the National Auditorium in August of 1958. Promoter Al Neff, on behalf of the US State Department, believed that the city was a better host than Seattle, the site of the first competition, and asked President Adolfo López Mateos if city could host the third tournament previously slated for Havana. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, creator of the Diamond Gloves competition in 1956 to promote friendship among competing nations, purportedly viewed Mexico as a world leader for the promotion of peace through sports. The Pan-American Union and US-based airlines partnered during the third

¹ Villarreal, "Gladiolas for the Children of Sánchez: Ernesto P. Uruchurtu's Mexico City, 1950-1968," 161-68.

² "Editorial," *Tlaxtli: Revista Especializada de Educación Física*, no. 1 (June 1959): 1.

tournament in hopes that tourists would come to see the fights and other tourist attractions in the country.³ The Diamond Belt organizers, with the urging of López Mateos, transformed into the World Boxing Council (WBC) on February 14, 1963, a move that united the disparate boxing federations from around the globe into a single group. Mexicans Ramón G. Velázquez, José Sulaiman Chagnon, and Mauricio Sulaiman Saldivar eventually served as WBC presidents. Mexico City won the right to host the 1970 FIFA World Cup as well.

A number of athletes rose to prominence in the late-1950s as well. In 1959, for instance, the Federation of Physical Culture sent teacher Eduardo “Eddie” Sylvestre of Tijuana to Montreal, Canada to compete in the first International Federation of Body Builders (IFBB) Mr. Universe competition. Sylvestre won over Tom Sansone, the AAU’s celebrated Mr. America who was known as the “world’s most muscular man.”⁴ Sylvestre later earned a PhD and worked as one of the world’s most successful body-builders and trainers.

In spite of these accomplishments, IOC officials were anxious on the eve of the 1968 Olympic Games. In the middle of the Cold War and a counter-culture youth movement, some officials feared that politics would take center stage at the games. Indeed, some of the most indelible moments from the games were events and controversies that occurred off the field. The massacre of protestors at Tlatelolco in the months preceding the opening ceremonies damage the public’s trust in the government for decades. Controversies over the eligibility of apartheid South Africa to participate in the competitions also garnered significant attention leading up to the tournament and the medal ceremony protests for civil rights by US of runners Tommie Smith

³ “Al Neff to Crown Mexican Beauty Queen at Amateur Boxing Event,” *The Jewish Transcript*, July 28, 1958; Letter from Al Neff to Adolfo López Mateos, January 7, 1961, Presidentes; ALM 532/7, AGN; Brewster and Brewster, “The Rank Outsider,” 751.

⁴ Letter from Mario Guzman and Armando Luna, Fed. Fisico Culturistica Republica Mexicana, to President Lopez Mateos, January 7, 1959, Presidentes; ALM 532/1, AGN; John D. Fair, *Mr. America: The Tragic History of a Bodybuilding Icon*, Terry and Jan Todd Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 141; Randy Roach, *Muscle, Smoke and Mirrors* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011), 122.

and John Carlos on the podium divided many in the US. While their efforts were overshadowed, on the field, the country performed well by achieving nine medals. Flyweight fighter Ricardo Delgado, featherweight Antonio Roldán, and swimmer Felipe Muñoz each won gold medals. The delegation also won medals in diving, fencing, and athletics and its soccer and basketball teams performed well too. The soccer team won two of three matches in group play and beat Spain in tournament play before losing the bronze medal match to Japan at the new Estadio Azteca in front of 105,000 fans.

The achievement of the games appeared improbable for the IOC in 1941, but the country put in significant work to change the opinion of officials over the next two decades. In order to host the Olympics, the IOC required a country to have three basic components. First, it had to have political and economic stability. Second, it needed to be seen by the outside community as capable of hosting the games. Third, its people needed to have significant interest in sports and the country needed appropriate sports infrastructure to host major competitions.⁵ The successful hosting of the Central American and Pan-American Games confirmed the second point for many in the IOC and Brundage vouched for the first and last points based on his many visits to Mexico over his career. Indeed, Brundage befriended many in the COM and grew to love Mexico so much that some in the IOC suspicious that he had grown too close to “Popocatepetl.”⁶

None of the achievements of international tournaments would have been possible without the painstaking efforts of men and women officials, officers, teachers, and doctors to promote sports in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Each of these groups understood the country’s problems differently and provided solutions based on what they believed the revolutionary government could and should achieve. They often worked together to realize their

⁵ Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World*, 11.

⁶ Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, *Representing the Nation: Sport and Spectacle in Post-Revolutionary Mexico*. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 45–46.

collective goals, but each group also had moments of frustration due to confusion over jurisdiction or the lack of material support necessary to carry out its vision in full.

The military's plan for physical education had roots in the Porfiriato, but its orientation changed during the revolution with its own shifting demographics. Military men believed that the country could progress, but it first needed to match the efforts of militaries around the developed world. They aimed to militarize education to provide a basic training that could help instill discipline in the unruly countryside, masculinize young men they believed had feminized because of modern culture, and strengthen bodies to help defend the nation in case of foreign invasion. As the country struggled to find experts to fill its demands with expanded sports education, presidents, all of whom served in high-ranking positions in the military, looked to these officers to organize nascent programs. They failed to enact obligatory militarized education, outside of the emergency of wartime, due to the concerns of a still traumatized public that worried that such programs would stoke violence. The officers, nevertheless, worked as administrators of early revolutionary physical education that they believed was a surrogate practice to soldiering.

Education leaders made the formation of a cohesive and inclusive revolutionary nation under a mestizo aesthetic, comprised of capable and enlightened citizens, its primary objective. SEP minister José Vasconcelos worked with department officials to launch cultural education missions into the countryside to uplift the spiritual and material conditions of everyday life and reverse cultural backwardness. This plan, resting upon the goal for cultural and racial *mestizaje*, aimed to uproot communities from their traditions and supposed superstition and replace them with Hispanic culture and science. Unlike literacy and inoculation missions that were met with significant resistance, communities often embraced sports programs as rare entertainments. They provided points of connection between the state and the communities and between rival pueblos

that were previously difficult to establish. The popularity of state-sponsored sporting events in rural communities prompted some cultural leaders to dream that sports could become the “religion of the all of the pueblos of tomorrow.”⁷

Sports’ orientation shifted under President Lázaro Cárdenas’ Plan Sexenal that aimed to uplift the conditions of everyday life among the extreme poor. This plan promoted optimism and empathy for workers and campesinos and education was imparted with a socialist perspective that lifting blame from indigenous peoples for their own purported dismal state. Sports also fit neatly into new action pedagogies that teachers embraced as practical forms of education. Instructors gave lessons on teamwork and sacrifice, kept workers away from the cantina and brothel, and improved and strengthened the body. They also helped alleviate some of the physical and mental exhaustion workers experienced after a long day at work. Some *cardenista* sportsmen attempted to wipe all references to individualism from the national sports lexicon to promote teamwork and camaraderie.

The government established its first vertical sporting system with the launch of the CDM in 1933. The organization seized control over the varying sporting groups in the country to help distribute aid. They also partnered with national newspapers to track sports development. Affiliated communities gained a direct access to the official party to request aid for material improvements and basic equipment. Affiliation also provided opportunities for talented athletes to get noticed in local tournaments and possibly advance in national and international tournaments. Affiliation, though, also meant that communities lost some control over local interpretations of games and membership was required to play in state-sponsored tournaments. Teachers were expected to serve on these missions. They not only worked to federalize local sports leagues, but they were also responsible for training the athletes. In most cases, these

⁷ Magro, “Todo Un Exito Constituyo El Festival Deportivo de Ayer.”

instructors faced significant obstacles to providing even basic education due to material shortcomings.

Not all women wanted to become revolutionary “lions,” but many wanted to break free from some of the most cumbersome obligations imposed upon them in the home. Sports programs improved the health of participants, but many of the programs’ architects considered these programs only experimental. Indeed, the mostly male leadership offered contradictory opinions over women’s physical education due to concerns that too much rigorous activity would overly masculinize women and damage their nerves. Men frequently mocked, sexualized, and belittled women athletes, which discouraged many women from participation even if they could obtain permission from their parents to do so. Those who did play experienced the thrill of performing in a public and traditionally masculine space that was not previously possible. One woman related that proving male colleagues wrong on the field was among her greatest satisfactions as an athlete and coach. Yet women were still expected to fulfill their revolutionary duty as enlightened and selfless mothers. The ideal revolutionary athlete-mother was schooled in modern hygiene and puericulture, strong enough to handle the daily rigors in child-rearing, and morally righteous enough to serve as an exemplar of the household. Debates over ideal bodies and behaviors of women in the face of these programs exposed disagreement on what constituted feminine decency.

The government also invested heavily in sports to create scientific and bio-medical solutions to improve the country’s desperate public health situation. SEP and DSP doctors developed exercise regiments to prevent disease and crafted corrective exercise routines used to treat and cure specific illness. Experts frequently conflated physical health with morality and many considered sports culture a natural enemy of alcoholism and other vices. But public health experts often issued diagnoses based upon assumptions of racial backwardness. Many prominent

medical figures understood the country as living in a state of racial chaos and promoted policies to eliminate dysgenic populations through sterilization and other methods of birth control.

Others, supported by neo-Lamarckian eugenic science, argued that sports could reverse the most backwards elements of one's genetics. Some, in fact, reasoned that playing sports was the quickest way to bring about these changes. The state promoted civilized sports and hoped that participants would assume traits associated with whiteness to improve the race for generations that followed.

Sports promoters worked with revolutionary presidents from 1920 to craft a long-term plan to succeed in the Olympics and organize international tournaments. Participating in these tournaments not only helped countries question stereotypes of Mexicans as lazy and backwards, but could also procure international friendship that promoters believed strengthened economic partnerships. After World War II, the official party supported this sports direction and developed long-term plans to host major international tournaments to show off the gains in revolution during economic miracle. Indeed, these promoters hoped to showcase the country as a model of peace, stability, and friendship. Even as the government dedicated less resources to physical education and community sports programs, family and community leaders organized grassroots leagues to keep children engaged in healthy pastimes.

Competing visions over national sporting culture reflected the competing perspectives of the revolution. Most experts across departments agreed that the country's backwardness was rooted in the supposedly undisciplined, sick, superstitious campesino countryside. Revolutionary officials employed sports to help improve the lives of the poorest elements of society, but carried their biases with them as they developed projects. The goal of developing a generation of disciplined, moral, athletic citizens would never be realized as they were often left in a state of improvisation with frequent shortcomings in funding and experts. By the end of World War II,

officials came to understand those goals as overly ambitious. Communities, nevertheless, embraced sports programs as they did few other revolutionary campaigns, even though they often ignored the scientific messages attached to the programs with which they did not understand or agree. Ultimately, the federal government had little ability to control sports practice or interpretations outside of the management of its federalized sports posts, especially in programs in distant states and pueblos. Sport is like a musical performance. A musical score exists, but the score is left to the interpretations by its varying elements.⁸

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, translated by Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 163.

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