In Defense of La Raza
The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929 to 1936
Francisco E. Balderrama
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About the Author . . .

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En Memoria de Tata

FRANCISCO BALDERRAMA TERRAZAS
Patient Teacher
Loving Grandfather
and
Member of the
Los Angeles Mexican Community
During the Great Depression
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A Word
From the Author

The Great Depression of the 1930s meant a decade of despair and frustration for all sectors of American society. Like other ethnic minorities serving as laborers for industry and agriculture, Mexican nationals and American citizens of Mexican descent were especially hard-hit. They faced not only unemployment, but also legal obstacles and prejudice which further restricted their opportunity to work. Mexican nationals were categorically denied assistance because of a "citizens only" policy, while Mexican Americans were also frequently refused help by public officials who did not recognize their citizenship. Because Mexicans and Mexican Americans maintained strong ties with Mexico, they turned to the local Mexican consulates which responded with an unprecedented campaign in defense of la raza or mexicanos—Mexican nationals and American citizens of Mexican descent. They continued their intensive activities until 1936 when the New Deal and the advent of World War II led mexicanos to look elsewhere for help.

Of the fifty-two Mexican consulates in the United States, the Los Angeles office's jurisdiction included the largest concentration of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United
States—some 170,000 persons or 16.4 percent of their total population in the nation. Such a heavy responsibility underscores the importance of that consulate in any study of the Mexican Consular Service's response to the Depression crisis. An investigation of the Los Angeles consulate also provides insights into the makeup and structure of the colonia mexicana as the community was known at the time. Moreover, such an analysis represents the first book devoted to study of any consular service's work in behalf of its nationals in the United States, a neglected aspect of diplomatic history.

Although other historians have uncovered the presence and activities of the Mexican Consular Service, the consuls have been viewed only peripherally to larger issues, rarely as a major theme. This study defines and assesses the major activities of the consulate and the nature of the relationship between the consul and the colonia mexicana in Los Angeles. That relationship was one in which the consuls often assumed leadership for the entire community—Mexican nationals as well as American citizens of Mexican descent. Though their authority was occasionally challenged and their leadership sometimes indecisive and ineffectual, they became the figures around whom most members of la raza rallied.

During the Depression's early years the consulate played a role of unusual significance, sometimes in areas far removed from the economy. When unemployment reached crisis proportions in 1931 and 1932, consular officers worked vigorously to help jobless Mexicans and Mexican Americans secure repatriation and relief. During the same years, the consuls also defended la raza parents who objected when their children were turned away from the public schools and segregated in separate facilities. From 1934 to 1935, consular attention was deflected by Mexico's church-state conflict. Its repercussions, felt north of the border, threatened to disrupt the special relationship between the consulate and colonia. For an even longer period, from 1933 to 1936, consular officials intervened—sometimes successfully and at other times ineffectively—in labor strikes.

These important themes were uncovered from materials in the archives of Mexico's secretary of foreign relations and in
the diplomatic and labor branches of the U.S. National Archives. Key sources also included American, Mexican, and colonia newspapers and interviews with consuls and veteran residents of the colonia mexicana and Anglo community.

This assessment of consular-colonia relations in Los Angeles provides an international dimension to the history of a local Chicano community. The study also reveals new findings about mexicano organizations, inter-colonia relations, la raza working class development, and colonia interaction with the Catholic church, educational institutions, and local, state, and national governments. These topics are important to Chicano historians and this study, it is hoped, is a contribution to their ongoing work. Most importantly, this study was undertaken so the Chicano community may better understand its past—a history too often ignored and distorted.

Acknowledgments

While there are many obligations behind this project that are impossible to acknowledge adequately here, I would first like to thank Professor Norris C. Hundley for reading and criticizing the manuscript. His editorial expertise helped me make my ideas clearer to the reader. Professor Juan Gómez-Quinones also provided generous support and assistance. Mil gracias to a special friend, Professor Raymond Rodriguez, who provided valuable criticism from his own research on the colonia mexicana during the Great Depression. Professors Irving G. Hendrick, Abraham Hoffman, Ricardo Romo, James Wilkie, George Flynn, and Charles Wollenberg also read various parts of the manuscript. Their suggestions, ideas, and time are sincerely appreciated. However, any errors in fact or shortcomings in interpretation are solely my responsibility.

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wish to acknowledge the support of the doctoral advancement program at UCLA and the Ford Foundation.

I am also grateful to the querida compañera de mi vida—my wife Cristina and her parents and sisters for their special interest and kind encouragement. My greatest debt is to my parents and the entire Balderrama family for financial help and moral support throughout my studies and career.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Francisco Balderrama Terrazas, because his appreciation for the study of history, dedication to writing, and concern for la raza inspired me to write it. Words can never adequately express my deep appreciation for his guidance and love.

To the University of Arizona Press, my thanks for publishing this work.

Francisco E. Balderrama
CHAPTER ONE

On the Eve
Of the Depression

THOUGH THE STOCK MARKET CRASH marked the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, the disaster struck with a vengeance in 1931 when unemployment in the United States reached eight million, double what it had been a year earlier. Even those workers who managed to retain their jobs felt the impact of the Depression as weekly wages and working hours declined—from $28.50 for 48 hours a week in 1929, to $25.74 for 44 in 1930, and $22.64 for 40 in 1931. Los Angeles County reflected the national crisis. A 1932 survey of 296 manufacturing establishments in the county revealed a decline of 29 percent in employment and 38 percent in wages from 1926. President Herbert Hoover responded by pleading for voluntary cooperation and by creating the President’s Emergency Committee on Employment.

Mexicans and Mexican Americans in southern California, collectively known as México de afuera, la raza, or colonia mexicana during much of the early twentieth century, battled to survive. Many la raza families in Los Angeles overcame
starvation by collecting rotten fruits and vegetables discarded by produce markets or by harvesting wild spinach in suburban fields. If colonia residents managed “to eat beans and only beans,” they regarded themselves as especially fortunate. Many families not only lacked food but also shelter because they were unable to pay rent or mortgages. Other Mexicans and Mexican Americans lived in substandard housing where “sleeping on cold cement floors with old newspapers and overcoats” was common. The colonia mexicana not only fought the economic crisis but also prejudice. Discrimination against la raza in southern California was already widespread in public places such as theaters, restaurants, bars, swimming pools, and schools. Nevertheless, the Depression reinforced discrimination, especially in the workplace. Many workers learned that “from tomorrow on, there is no work for Mexicans,” because their jobs were reserved for Anglo Americans.

Rafael de la Colina, appointed Mexican Consul in Los Angeles in 1931, sensed the impending crisis. The new consul also realized that the large number of Mexican residents living in Los Angeles made his office “one of the most important consulates of our country.” In the pages of *La Opinión* he immediately publicized his commitment to help the colonia mexicana and directly appealed for support to the Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas, a loosely knit organization of various mutual benefit, recreational, social, and political societies. The confederación had been established in 1925 at the suggestion of an earlier consul, Rafael Aveleyra, who wanted to unite all colonia organizations in the Los Angeles area under a single banner. Though Colina did not outline specific tasks for the confederación, he urged it and la raza’s “working class...[to] remain united in confronting the colonia’s problems.”

Colina and his staff were considered good choices to combat the crisis. Superiors regarded the new consuls as “diligent, courteous with the public, and able to speak English well.” Vice consuls Joel Quiñones and Ricardo Hill had an excellent knowledge of English, and Vice Consul Juan Richer and the consulate’s nine secretaries were thought to be highly competent.
Establishing a Consulate

The Los Angeles consulate represented a government whose people had founded and settled Los Angeles. Nevertheless, the Mexican government had neglected the Mexican population in Los Angeles after its northwestern lands were lost to the United States in 1848 in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Establishing a Consulate

In 1885 Mexico once again turned its attention to Los Angeles when it acknowledged the city's economic potential by investigating the possibility of establishing a consulate there. Mauricio Wollheim, a Mexican government emissary, reported favorably on the area's geographic setting, mild climate, and commercial and agricultural potential. He predicted that Los Angeles, then a rapidly growing community of some ten thousand residents, would become the major urban center between San Francisco and Tucson, and he urged immediate establishment of a consulate to serve "the large number of Mexican residents in Los Angeles County." Wollheim's observation was correct. The Mexican population in Los Angeles numbered 1,310 persons or 21 percent of the total population, while another 3,750 lived in outlying areas and accounted for nearly 25 percent of the residents. But Wollheim was as impressed with the problems of these people as with their numbers. Injustices against Mexican nationals were commonplace, he noted, and they needed the "prompt and efficient protection" of a consular agent.

Frederico A. Gamboa, a long-time member of the foreign ministry staff in Mexico City, objected to Wollheim's recommendation. Los Angeles merchants were not engaged in major trade operations with Mexico, he argued, and their few needs could be handled by the San Diego consulate. He did not mention the injustices which had attracted Wollheim's attention. Rather, he was far more concerned with commercial considerations than with the protection of nationals.

Before Gamboa's critique began circulating in the Secretariat of Foreign Relations, Los Angeles colonia residents began pressing for a consulate. In the forefront of the campaign was La Crónica, a Los Angeles Spanish-language newspaper
edited by community activist Eulegio de Celis, who emphasized the mistreatment of Mexicans and the failure of the San Diego consulate to provide adequate help. “There was a consul in San Diego some time ago,” he noted sarcastically, “but if there is one now, he has not given any signs of life.” Celis urged residents of southern California to petition Mexico for a study of their problem and establishment of a consulate.

A month later, in September 1885, an editorial in the Tucson newspaper, El Fronterizo de Tucson, endorsed La Crónica's call for a Mexican consulate in Los Angeles. The newspaper also discussed the plight of Mexicans in Ventura, California, who were being repatriated after losing their jobs to Chinese workers willing to work for lower wages.

Mexican consuls in Arizona sent copies of the La Crónica and El Fronterizo editorials to the secretary of foreign relations and emphasized the need for consular assistance for some thirty-thousand Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the colonias of Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Kern, Inyo, and San Luis Obispo counties. The presence of the large colonia mexicana in Los Angeles, noted Consul Tomás Valdespino Figueroa of Tombstone, Arizona, was enough to justify the establishment of a consulate there even if commercial considerations did not warrant it. The colonia press, the recommendation of consuls in the United States, and the Wollheim report had the desired effect. In the fall of 1885 the secretary of foreign relations established a consulate in Los Angeles.

The Great Immigration

After 1885 the Mexican population of southern California grew dramatically. Guillermo Andrade, an early Mexican consul, observed that “it is truly notable the large numbers of Mexicans arriving daily in Los Angeles.” Andrade's remark was made in 1900, but it would apply even more in succeeding years. United States and Mexican records reveal that almost a million immigrants arrived between 1910 and 1930, but even this must be regarded as a low estimate since scholars generally
agree that many more Mexicans entered the United States illegally.\(^1\)

By the beginning of the Great Depression, the Los Angeles consulate conservatively estimated that at least 170,000 persons or some 16.4 percent of the total la raza population in the United States resided within the consulate's jurisdiction—the counties of Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Orange. Among the fifty-two Mexican consulates in the United States, the Los Angeles office was responsible for the largest number of Mexicans and Mexican Americans—22,000 more than in El Paso and nearly 72,000 more than in San Antonio, the consular districts with the second and third largest concentrations.\(^1\)

The colonia mexicana's inhabitants were not concentrated in one area within the vast Los Angeles consular district. Many lived downtown near the plaza in a section popularly known as Sonora Town. With the influx of Mexicans and Mexican Americans to Los Angeles the population of Sonora Town had increased sharply, and housing had become more congested and expensive. To escape the crowded conditions and high rents, many la raza residents moved beyond the city limits, establishing colonias in the east Los Angeles suburbs of Belvedere and Maravilla Park. La raza farm workers also settled near the fields where they worked in the rural agricultural areas in and around Los Angeles County.\(^1\)

Most Mexicans and Mexican Americans, whether urban, suburban, or rural dwellers, were members of the working class, an observation made during the Depression by sociologists Emory Bogardus and Manuel Gamio.\(^2\) Historian Ricardo Romo has used marriage records and city directories to construct a profile of the Mexican population in Los Angeles between 1918 and 1928. Romo's analysis not only confirms the working class character of the southern California colonia on the eve of the Depression, but it also demonstrates a lack of upward occupational mobility among first, second, and third generation Mexicans.\(^2\) In a study of the southern California community of Santa Barbara, Albert Camarillo has also found that la raza "remained as a poor, predominantly unskilled and
semiskilled working class...throughout the first thirty years of the twentieth century.”

These findings are supported by an analysis of previously overlooked consular service *matrícula*, or registration records. Although only a small number of the thousands of Mexican nationals in southern California registered with the consulate (their unfamiliarity with American society caused many to fear that registration might lead to deportation), an insight into the social structure of the Los Angeles colonia mexicana at the time of the Depression can be obtained from these records. Of the 611 persons registered at the Los Angeles consulate in 1930, farm workers, day laborers, and other unskilled workers formed the largest category, numbering 463 or 78 percent. Electricians, carpenters, skilled laborers, clerks, merchants, and low-level management personnel made up the second largest group, totaling 128 or 21 percent. Doctors, teachers, and other professionals, including musicians, actors, and artists, composed the smallest segment, numbering only 10, or less than 1 percent of those who registered.

**Consular Duties**

The Mexican Consular Service’s obligation to serve the large *la raza* working class in Los Angeles and in other colonias had been clearly defined in the 1923 and 1934 editions of the *Ley orgánica del cuerpo consular mexicano* and *Reglamento de la ley orgánica del servicio consular mexicano*. These regulations obligated Mexican consular officers to protect the “prestige, moral and material progress of the Republic”; “encourage navies”; perform “the functions of a civil judge”; and serve as a “notary” whose acts would have the same legal authority in the United States as in Mexico. But the most demanding duty for Mexican consuls in the United States was “to protect the interests and rights of Mexican nationals.” Consuls assisted their compatriots by organizing conferences on the host country’s laws, intervening in civil disputes and criminal cases, investigating deaths, reviewing work contracts, helping workers obtain
compensation for industrial accidents, and informing the colonia of companies not fulfilling their contracts.*

In carrying out their duties consuls were required to follow a policy of nonintervention in the politics and internal affairs of the host country. When charges were leveled against Mexican consuls, the complaints were usually sent to the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C. or to the diplomatic branch of the foreign service in Mexico City. When the consuls believed their rights or those of their compatriots were being violated, they forwarded their protests to their embassy in Washington which decided whether to present the U.S. State Department with an official petition or make informal inquiries.²⁷

Whether consuls dealt directly with local authorities or with the United States government through the Mexican Embassy, they could intervene only in behalf of Mexican nationals. The 1928 Havana Convention as well as Mexico's 1923 and 1934 consular regulations forbade consuls to assist persons who were citizens of the host country. But these official directives overlooked the difficulty in differentiating between Mexican nationals and Americans of Mexican descent. Neither consular agents nor colonia residents drew strict distinctions between Mexicans and Mexican Americans, because strong cultural, linguistic, and familial ties bound the groups.²⁹ The dual citizenship status of many individuals further blurred the distinction. Children of Mexican nationals born in the United States received U.S. citizenship *jus soli*, as a result of their place of birth irrespective of their parents' nationality.† The Mexican

* The United States acknowledged the rights and duties of Mexican consular agents when it signed the Havana Consular Convention of 1928. The convention's definition of a consul's duties did not impose any new obligations or responsibilities not already stipulated in Mexico's laws and regulations. Nevertheless, the Havana Convention was important in providing guidelines for consular relations.

† According to the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." This provision was interpreted in the case of United States vs. Wong Kim Ark, 169 U.S. 649 (1898) to confer citizenship upon the children of alien parents.
Constitution, as well as the Mexican Nationality and Naturalization Act of 1934, granted citizenship *jus sanguinis*—that is, the nationality of the children was that of their parents regardless of the children's birthplace. The Mexican Consular Service often invoked the latter interpretation of citizenship when extending assistance to members of the colonia mexicana.

Consular work, however, was ordinarily done only in behalf of Mexican nationals, who made up a sizeable part of the colonia mexicana. The Los Angeles consulate estimated that about half the district's colonia mexicana were Mexican nationals. This percentage was substantial because, unlike other immigrants, the majority of Mexican nationals retained their Mexican citizenship regardless of their length of residence in the United States. The U.S. census of 1910, for example, reported the presence of 102,009 adult foreign-born Mexican males (Mexican females were not surveyed), but only 10,932 or 10.7 percent of them had become naturalized citizens, whereas 45.6 percent of other foreign-born nationals had done so. The 1920 census recorded an even lower percentage of naturalized citizens. Only 6,363 or 3.3 percent of 189,974 male and female foreign-born Mexican nationals had pledged American citizenship as compared to 47.8 percent for other foreign-born nationals. Although the naturalization rate was slightly higher in 1930, when 17,624 or 5.5 percent of the 319,697 foreign-born Mexicans were reported as American citizens, the percentage was still considerably lower than the 49.7 percent reported for other immigrant groups. The practice of retaining Mexican citizenship continued throughout the Depression. In 1940 only 47,000 or 13.8 percent of the foreign-born Mexican population of 343,560 had become U.S. citizens, while 64.6 percent of other aliens had done so.

Contemporary observers attributed the retention of Mexican citizenship to the Mexican's fear of Anglo-American society and the desire for Mexican consular protection. "The Mexican can still depend on a Mexican consul for aid when he experiences difficulty," explained sociologist Emory Bogardus in 1934, "but when he becomes a citizen of the United States his assistance is lost." Los Angeles consul Colina offered another reason for the Mexican immigrant's low naturalization rate.
Mexican immigrants, he explained in 1932, are similar to the “American capitalist or his employee who for exclusively eco­nomic reasons leave their country without any intention of adopting the citizenship of the country where they intend to make their temporary abode.” A veteran colonia resident, Eduardo Negrete, suspects that misinformation, such as the rumor that “one had to step on the Mexican flag while declaring the oath of U.S. citizenship,” and Mexican patriotism also discouraged filing for American citizenship. Many individuals, such as Emilio Martínez, a forty-year resident of southern California, are still reluctant to apply for citizenship because “consuls can at least do something!”

While Mexican laws and international agreements empowered consuls to assist Mexican nationals, few guidelines existed about how they were to provide that assistance; the lack of detailed regulations gave the consuls wide latitude in implementing policy. The Depression’s devastating impacts further expanded consular prerogatives in determining policy. Prompt action was often needed; the severe socioeconomic crises frequently did not allow time to consult superiors in Mexico City or Washington, D.C.

The consulate’s attorneys, who were U.S. citizens and members of the state bar association, also played an important role in assisting consuls in their work on behalf of the colonia. They prepared legal briefs, assessed the impact of American laws or proposed legislation on the colonia and Mexico, defended Mexican nationals who lacked funds, submitted petitions for pardons or paroles for Mexicanos serving jail sentences, reviewed requests of victims of criminal offenses, and presented claims from industrial accidents to appropriate authorities. These attorneys were usually employed only in the consulate general offices in El Paso, New Orleans, San Francisco, New York, and San Antonio. Although Los Angeles was not included, southern California’s large Mexican population and the ensuing demands upon that consular office had necessitated the appointment of an attorney since the 1920s.

The Comisión Honorífica Mexicana, or Mexican Honorary Commission, joined the attorneys in furnishing important assistance to the consuls. Thirty-nine branches of the comisión
served as the eyes and ears of the consulate in Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties. Lucas Lucio, comisión organizer for Orange County, believed the society played a critical role as an avenue of communication between the scattered colonias and the consulate office in downtown Los Angeles. The overriding importance of the comisión was its position as the consulate's "official representative" to the colonia mexicana and the Anglo society. Comisión members aided Mexicans with their complaints and claims; visited Mexicans in jails, hospitals, schools, factories, and fields; assisted the consulate in registering Mexican nationals; initiated and sponsored educational conferences to commemorate Mexican holidays; and kept the consulate informed about all comisión activities. In carrying out these functions during the Depression, comisión presidents Lucas Lucio, Ramón Curiel, Catarino Cruz, and Celso Medina usually received enthusiastic support from colonia residents.

Although the comisión and the attorneys provided important assistance to the Los Angeles consulate, the consuls alone planned and implemented the strategy designed to help la raza during the Depression. The first major crisis was the deportation-repatriation threat.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE


4. Interviews with Pascual Rivas, Tustin, California, 30 March 1976; Dr. Camilo Servin, Los Angeles, California, 5 March 1976; and José Solórzano, Montebello, California, 11 March 1976: La Opinión, 8 February, 1931.

5. Interview with Evelyn Velarde Benson, Los Angeles, California, 8 April 1976.


8. *La Opinión*, 13 September 1930; Solórzano interview.


10. Mauricio Wollheim to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 31 August 1865, in ASRE 30-18-40.


12. Frederico Gamboa to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 3 November 1885, in ASRE, 30-18-40.


15. J. Díaz Prieto to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 8 September 1885, and Tomás Valdespino Figueroa to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 21 September 1885, in ASRE, 30-18-40.


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Eve of the Depression

States (Chicago, 1931), Quantitative Estimate of Sources and Distribution of Mexican Immigrants (México, D.F., 1930).


24. Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Ley orgánica del cuerpo consular mexicano y reglamento de la ley orgánica del servicio consular mexicano (México, D.F., 1923) and Ley orgánica del cuerpo consular mexicano y reglamento de la ley orgánica del servicio consular mexicano (México, D.F., 1934); Consular Agents Convention Between the United States of America and Other American Republics (Washington, D.C., 1932).


29. Interviews with José Solórzano, Montebello, California, 11 March 1976; Reynaldo Carreón, Los Angeles, California, 9 March 1976; Martínez and Lucio interviews.

30. Ley de nacionalidad y naturalización 5 January 1934, Art., 1 in El Diario oficial, 29 January 1934.


34. Rafael de la Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 17 February 1932, in ASRE, IV-657-76; *La Opinión*, 15 February 1932.

35. Negrete interview.

36. Martínez interview.

37. Correspondence between the Los Angeles consulate, the Secretary of Foreign Relations, and various attorneys is in ASRE, IV-175-28 and IV-175-32; interview with Attorney David Marcus, Los Angeles, California, 25 November 1976. For a discussion of the consulate attorneys and a proposal to extend their work, see: Ernesto Hidalgo, *La Protección de mexicanos en los Estados Unidos: defensorías de oficio, anexas a los consulados—un proyecto* (México, D.F., 1940).

38. Lucio interview.


40. Interviews with Ramón Curiel, El Modena, California, 25 March 1976; Catarino Cruz, Orange, California, 23 March 1967; and Celso Medina, El Modena, California, 12 April 1976; Lucio interview.
CHAPTER TWO

The Deportation-Repatriation Campaign Against La Raza

The relationship between the Los Angeles colonia and the Anglo-American community became explosive with the outbreak of the deportation and repatriation drives. Many southern California Mexicans and Mexican Americans had already returned to Mexico and others were planning to leave in an effort to secure employment. In 1931, however, the federal deportation campaign and the Los Angeles County repatriation program, the former aimed at illegal residents and the latter at relief recipients, unleashed a mass exodus to Mexico. The Los Angeles consulate played a major role in the resulting crisis until it abated in 1932.¹

Rafael de la Colina and his consular staff concentrated at first on the federal deportation drive which had gone into operation before the county repatriation program. President Herbert Hoover's Secretary of Labor, William N. Doak, planned and publicized the deportation campaign as a major solution to the country's high unemployment rate. Doak and the Hoover administration believed that illegal aliens had usurped the jobs of U.S. citizens. The swift deportation of
illegals, Doak predicted, would free jobs for Americans. These sentiments were shared by Charles P. Visel, chief of the Los Angeles Committee for Coordination of Unemployment Relief, who urged the labor secretary to send agents to southern California. Visel was less concerned with creating jobs than in scaring aliens out of the country and off relief rolls.\textsuperscript{2}

Five days before the arrival of the immigration agents in southern California, Visel issued a press release directed at “illegals now in the United States.”\textsuperscript{3} Illegals, he warned, would be the target of a deportation drive which had the endorsement and cooperation of federal and local authorities. Los Angeles newspapers published the Visel press release on January 26, immediately followed with feature articles on the impending deportation campaign. The local press frequently described deportation as directed at Mexicans in general and made no distinction between Mexican nationals, Americans of Mexican descent, and legitimate or illegal resident aliens.\textsuperscript{4}

The newspapers' descriptions of the deportation drive frightened and confused the colonia mexicana. Hundreds of Mexicans, including many legal resident aliens and American citizens, went to the consulate and begged for consular intervention against the immigration authorities. Consul Colina attempted to relieve their anxiety by explaining privately and publicly that deportation posed a threat to only a few people and could only be carried out in accordance with immigration laws. Colina was optimistic because he believed the majority of mexicanos in southern California had established residence without violating the immigration laws.\textsuperscript{5} Realizing that his words alone would not put the colonia’s anxieties to rest, Colina conferred with Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce official George P. Clements, an enthusiastic booster of the use of cheap Mexican labor by the local business community. Clements in turn persuaded Walter E. Carr, chief immigration inspector for southern California, to issue a press release denying that the “deportation campaign was aimed” at la raza.\textsuperscript{6}

\textit{A Reign of Fear}

Unfortunately, local newspaper accounts of the raids by the special immigration agents under William F. Watkins over-
shadowed the press statements by the Mexican consul and the chief inspector. Banner headlines shouting “US and City Join in Drive on LA Aliens” introduced stories of massive roundups of Mexican nationals and Americans of Mexican descent. The detaining and questioning of all persons who “look like Mexicans” were the tactics employed in searching for illegal aliens. 

While local newspapers frightened la raza with reports of dragnets, the Sonora Town comerciantes, Mexican and Mexican American merchants, protested to local and national officials. They objected to the mistreatment and massive detention of customers and friends and complained that the raids were ruining their businesses. The comerciantes' fears were genuine, for many colonia residents, even legal aliens and American citizens, feared the agents so much that they avoided shopping in the colonia’s downtown business district, a prime target for the raids.

Aware that protest letters alone would not stop the raids and bring customers back to Sonora Town stores, the comerciantes retained a team of attorneys to defend those detained by immigration agents. The attorneys might build a strong case against the immigration service whose agents, they charged, were indiscriminately arresting suspects, thus engaging in illegal searches and seizures and denying those arrested equal protection of the law. These were direct violations of the Fourth and Fourteenth amendments of the U.S. Constitution, regardless of whether those arrested were U.S. citizens. Since the comerciantes depended upon donations to cover their legal fees, they planned to focus only on a few select test cases to try to obtain a landmark decision that would force the Immigration Bureau to change its tactics.

Consul Colina, always present at the meetings of the Sonora Town Merchants Association, applauded these efforts; but despite their mutual objectives, he refused to officially endorse the merchants’ legal defense fund drive. Colina feared that his endorsement might create a conflict of interest between the consulate and merchants’ attorneys, embarrassing the consulate and the Mexican government. Colina’s overly cautious attitude did little to ease the fear spreading in the colonia. The comerciantes failed to raise enough money to pursue a landmark court decision.
Though Colina did not publicly join forces with the merchants, he did act as an intermediary and personally described their fears and those of other colonia residents to Inspector Carr. His intervention, Colina explained to Carr, did not represent an attack on the Immigration Bureau’s authority to deport illegal aliens, but was based upon “numerous protests against the manner employed for arresting Mexicans suspected of living illegally in this country.” Carr assured Colina that all deportations were being carried out legally and promised to investigate thoroughly any protests.

Colina refused to press Carr further because he had no evidence of illegal deportations. Although there were many cases of illegal detention, Colina interpreted his duty as limited only to protesting against clearly illegal deportations. His attitude was far from surprising, for official consular policy only authorized consuls to determine whether deportation was warranted under the host country’s laws. Colina also believed Carr’s promises, since deportation procedures had usually been handled properly before the recent drive initiated by Visel.

While the consulate monitored the Immigration Bureau’s activities, it refused to aid the search for illegals. In fact, the Los Angeles office severely chastized Jesús Barba, president of the Gloryetta Comisión Honorífica Mexicana, for informing immigration authorities about illegal residents. The consulate labeled Barba “an instrument of American immigration authorities in prejudice to the well-being and happiness of our compatriots in Gloryetta.”

Colina had enough confidence in Carr to pass his assurances on to the colonia through the Spanish language press. La Opinión and El Heraldo cooperated with Colina, for the newspapers believed the meeting between “our government’s representative” and the chief inspector would stop the raids and bring the return of proper investigative procedures. But the Mexican consul, the colonia press, and the entire la raza population were quickly disappointed.

The Placita Park dragnet on February 26 dramatically illustrated that immigration officers and local authorities were determined to continue employing questionable tactics in
searching for illegals. The agents and police detained some four hundred persons in the heart of the oldest Mexican barrio, Sonora Town. Vice Consul Ricardo Hill and others pleaded vainly for the release of the captured Mexicans. Consul Colina wired his Mexico City superiors for instructions, explaining that "indignation was reigning in the colonia" because of the "arbitrary" raids which "hurt legitimate interests by having suspects subjected to public interrogations in an angry and discourteous manner." The news came as no surprise to those in the secretaría since two months earlier Colina had warned them about the upcoming deportation drive, which he had labeled "a policy of hostility toward foreigners." But secretaría officials refused to protest or to demand discussions with the American government. They sidestepped the issue of dragnet tactics and did not deem the fear and terror generated by the detention of three to four thousand suspects in previous raids sufficient grounds for a formal protest. In the eyes of the Mexican government, only illegal deportations would be sufficient reason for intervention.

The Immigration Bureau raids lasted only a few weeks since their limited value quickly became evident. Only 269 illegal aliens had been apprehended when the raids ended on March 7. One hundred and ten Mexican nationals underwent formal deportation proceedings; another 159 decided to forego the official process and departed voluntarily.

While the deportation campaign had produced less than three hundred illegal aliens, the raids, the detaining of thousands of suspects, and the extensive press coverage escalated the colonia's fear of persecution. Former colonia residents Emilio Flores and José Díaz recall that fear caused many resident aliens and their Mexican American children to leave the United States.

Consul Colina's efforts failed to stop or significantly curtail the exodus triggered by the deportation drive. Consular intervention resulted only in press notices disclaiming any intention on the part of immigration authorities to wage a campaign against the colonia mexicana. Colina could perhaps have taken the case before the general public where a strong indictment against the Immigration Bureau might have awakened greater
opposition from the American public and ended the raids sooner. However, Colina interpreted his duties narrowly: to keep his superiors informed and to solicit pledges of fair treatment from U.S. officials. He was also handicapped by the lack of support from his superiors in Mexico City. A protest from the secretary of foreign relations might have stopped the massive raids before the immigration agents themselves halted them.

To La Madre Patria

With the end of the raids in early March, the Los Angeles consulate turned its attention to the repatriation movement. Thousands of Mexican aliens who were legally in the United States and even some Mexican American citizens had begun repatriating themselves at their own expense or with the help of public and private charities. In Los Angeles County some 13,332 persons returned to Mexico on sixteen trains which left southern California between March 23, 1931, and April 15, 1934. The local welfare department paid their passage, but consular assistance remained critically important, especially during the first two years when demand was heaviest. More than three-fourths of the repatriates returned in 1931 and 1932, and the remainder left for Mexico during the last two years of the repatriation drive in 1933 and 1934.22

Los Angeles County's move to repatriate Mexicans originated with local Anglo civic leaders who wanted to cut welfare costs by sending Mexican relief recipients back to Mexico. The Los Angeles County Charities Department was dealing with a growing number of relief cases—from 18,650 during fiscal year 1928-1929 to 42,124 in 1930-1931. The increase in cases brought with it sharp increases in welfare costs—from $1.6 million in 1928-1929 to $4.2 million in 1930-1931.23

As the deportation drive was beginning in January 1931, the county began planning repatriation action. Although formal steps were not taken until March 23, local authorities briefed Consul Colina about the county's proposed program
during a meeting on January 29. William H. Holland, superintendent of charities, accompanied by Clements and Carr, outlined the program. The county promised to provide train transportation for Mexicans requesting repatriation to the border towns of El Paso or Nogales. The charities department would pay the regular single passage from Los Angeles to El Paso or Nogales. Transporting repatriates from the border into the interior would be the Mexican government’s responsibility. 24

Consul Colina tacitly approved the county’s plan but reminded officials that their program should be extended to those Mexicans who were not county residents and were receiving no welfare benefits. “The majority of these compatriots,” the Mexican consul explained, “have used the greater part of their energies for benefiting the development and prosperity of the southwestern United States.” These people, he insisted, should not be “forgotten and treated as social parasites.” 25 Colina was merely following official policy when he reminded the American representatives that helping repatriates was “not an exceptional charity which that country [the United States] concedes to our workers, but rather more of an inherent obligation from having profited from their efforts when their work was necessary and indispensable.” 26 Though unreceptive to Colina’s plea on this occasion, the county in June 1932 changed its policy and began repatriation of individuals not on relief rolls. The county assumed full responsibility for transportation costs in the hope that its gestures would attract large numbers of “volunteer” repatriates.

Colina warned Los Angeles civic leaders that la raza’s problems would not be solved through repatriation. Repatriation, he believed, should be extended only to those Mexican nationals who actually desired to return to Mexico and who were capable of earning a living there. County officials rejected this advice. Rex Thomson, repatriation coordinator for the county board of charities, was convinced there was a “tremendous demand for repatriates in Mexico.” 27 Local authorities assured Colina that those repatriated at county expense would not be regarded as deportees who would later be declared ineligible to reenter the United States. 28
On April 29, a month after the repatriation program was initiated, at a meeting of the immigration committee of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Colina defended repatriation against proposals by some community leaders to stop the movement back to Mexico. Several chamber merchants and growers expressed fear that their businesses might not survive further repatriation. They suggested that suspending half-fare railroad rates available to Mexicans not covered by the county's repatriation program might persuade prospective repatriates to stay in southern California.

Colina vigorously protested attempts to suspend the special train fares. He reminded chamber members of the considerable negotiations that had been required to secure the railroad tickets and insisted that the half-fare rate was not the major force pushing Mexicans across the border. The hiring of American citizens and firing of Mexicans by industries and businesses had produced the unemployment leading to repatriation. Proposals in the California legislature to segregate Mexican school children from Anglos and to prohibit the employment of aliens on public works, Colina argued, had created a hostile environment for his people. Only hiring Mexicans would stop the exodus, he insisted.

The boycott against employing Mexicans also affected Americans of Mexican descent since many employers did not distinguish among la raza on the basis of citizenship. Skin color alone became sufficient reason for denying employment to Mexicans and Mexican Americans. La Opinión underscored this widespread practice when it reported job discrimination against a retired U.S. Army sergeant of Mexican descent. The veteran stated that employers divided job candidates into two lines, one for those with light complexions and another for those with dark coloring. English, Irish, and German aliens were hired, but the ex-sergeant and his compatriots were refused employment.

The Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas, composed of mutualista, recreational, and political colonia organizations, was alarmed because Mexicans and Mexican Americans were losing their jobs because of competition from unemployed
Anglos. Confederación representatives joined Colina in denouncing the proposal to end the special half-fare railroad rates. Eliminating the discount, they argued, would not end the repatriation movement or improve economic conditions in the colonia for Anglo or la raza businessmen. Only lifting the boycott against the hiring of Mexican workers would improve the situation, and until then, explained confederación officials, Mexican nationals should be permitted to return to Mexico where there was “no boycott.”

While talk of suspending special railroad fares worried the consulate and confederación, the chamber of commerce was even more concerned about Los Angeles’s image. Two weeks after the April 29 meeting, the chamber’s president, John A.H. Kerr, issued a press release disclaiming any anti-Mexican sentiment on the part of the Los Angeles community. Kerr advised Mexicans that they “should in no way be influenced in leaving this section because of idle rumors that the people in Los Angeles do not entertain for them the most cordial friendship.”

Colina found little encouragement in Kerr’s message. “If Americans and Mexicans are given employment indistinguishable in the jobs which they have habitually occupied in the Southwest,” Colina replied, “then there would be a lot [for which] to thank the chamber.” Colina’s insistence on action instead of friendly gestures was published in El Heraldo de México and became a warning to compatriots pinning any hope on the chamber’s statement. In a confidential memorandum to his superiors, he elaborated upon his reasons for demanding more than just pledges of fair treatment from the Los Angeles business community. The report was prepared immediately after he had learned of a June 3 meeting of chamber of commerce members and local authorities where criticism was leveled against la raza. There is unfortunately no record of the discussion, but it clearly upset Colina. Local leaders are “far from sincere” and they view the “Mexican laborer as a docile beast of burden, hard-working, economical, and cheap,” he told his superiors. Furthermore, the la raza worker’s “welfare is never the concern of the community” except when “it affects
the efficiency of his labor." This "complete lack of considera-
tion" was unfair to the Mexican worker who "sacrificed in many
cases his health and even his life for making California great." 36

Other Mexican consuls issued similar charges against
American businessmen and authorities in reports to their su-
periors, but they rarely expressed such opinions to civic leaders
themselves. Consul Rafael Aveleyra of Gary, Indiana, was an
exception. He expressed outrage to a local official for failing to
notify him about the arrival of a party of repatriates at the
border so that a consul or his agent would be available to assist
them. He reprimanded welfare authorities for pressuring
compatriots to accept repatriation and for failing to consider
length of residence in the community or ability to earn a
livelihood in Mexico. Responsibility for the repatriates, the
Mexican consul emphasized, rested with the Gary Welfare
Department, not Mexico, because "regardless of their na-
tionality [the repatriates] are members of your community." The
"problem may be easily solved by shipping these people to
the border," Aveleyra declared, but "these people are going to
be subject to all kinds of hardships if you do not show your
cooperation." 37

Colina did not join Aveleyra in such outspoken criticism of
American authorities. "The severity of the economic crisis hin-
dered any attempt to accomplish any significant policy
changes," Colina later explained. 38 The Los Angeles consul
also believed that indictments against local officials would lead
to charges of interference on his part in domestic affairs. 39

While Colina and his staff never criticized American au-
thorities for mistreatment of repatriates, they continually
pleaded for proper care, and they provided what help they
could to make the return trip comfortable. All Mexican consuls
were obligated to help repatriates, but the degree of consular
intervention varied with the locale. For example, unemploy-
ment was severe in El Paso, but the local consul, Renato Cantú
Lara, did not consider repatriation a critical issue because the
border was so close. However, in Salt Lake City, Consul Elías
Colunga feared starvation among his compatriots unless a
repatriation program was immediately organized. 40 Colina
considered the repatriation issue to be as serious in Los
Angeles as in Salt Lake City, but he did not worry about "starvation" because of the existence of the local repatriation program.\textsuperscript{41}

Regardless of the repatriation situation within the consular districts, none could expect help from the Mexican treasury. Officials claimed that the Mexican government could not finance the repatriation of its nationals. Colina's predecessor, Alfonso Pesqueira (Los Angeles consul from 1929 to 1931), had encountered this same response in 1931 when the Cooperativa Mexicana de Producción, Consumo, y Repatriación had asked him to provide financial help to repatriates. The cooperativa was a southern California colonia organization assisting in the repatriation and resettlement of Mexicans. Pesqueira failed to obtain funds from the Ministry of Foreign Relations—the Mexican government claimed it did not have enough money to meet demands at home—and he refused to lend any of his own limited resources for fear he would establish a precedent that would result in a deluge of requests he could not fulfill.\textsuperscript{42}

Only in very special cases did the Mexican government provide funds for repatriates, and the amounts were small. In the summer of 1931 the California consuls solicited and received the approval of Foreign Relations and the Secretaría de Gobernación to commission \textit{El Progreso}, a Mexican naval ship, to carry some eight hundred repatriates from California ports to Mazatlán and Manzanillo. The consuls also obtained funds from public and private charities, as well as from individual Mexicans and Americans of Mexican descent, to help defray the cost of the passage. But they could not raise enough funds, and the Mexican government finally paid $9,857 in pesos to underwrite the voyage. Such a large expenditure caused the Mexican government to refuse to sponsor another vessel. The "uncomfortable accommodations on the warship," recalls repatriate Adolfo Tapia, was another reason why \textit{El Progreso} completed only its maiden trip.\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{Help From the Consuls}

The consuls usually confined their support efforts to activities not requiring an outlay of cash. They allowed the
consulate to serve as a clearinghouse for information about the various options open to those wishing to return to Mexico. Repatriates without sufficient funds to finance their departures were told about the county welfare bureau or colonia charitable organizations. Those capable of paying their own way were told of the special half-fare train rates. A corrido, or popular ballad of the day, records the consulate’s efforts:

Mr. Rafael de la Colina
Consul of the Mexicans
Was chartering a train with kitchen
For dispatching his countrymen
Making many negotiations
For helping his people
He arranged for fine coaches
With the superintendent.

The extent of the Los Angeles consulate’s work in helping to arrange transportation for repatriates was significant. Though there is a lack of evidence for later years, during the first year of the special half-fare rates, from March 23, 1931, to January 12, 1932, the consulate helped 9,700 individuals depart on thirty-four different trains. This was accomplished largely with funds from the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana (the Mexican Benevolent Society), and the repatriates themselves. The number of individuals repatriated on trains accounted for less than half of the estimated 20,000 persons who left the consular district during 1931 and 1932. The other repatriates preferred driving cars or riding buses to the border.

Regardless of their mode of transportation, all repatriates had to go through consular agents to secure residence certificates needed for legal reentry. Without a residence certificate, repatriates at the border would be delayed and their right to bring in certain belongings duty-free would be denied. The city of Santa Ana’s Comisión Honorífica Mexicana president, Lucas Lucio, once attempted to provide substitute documents for Orange County repatriates to speed their departures by saving them a trip to the consulate in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, Lucio’s good intentions backfired; the repatriates were
stranded at the border. Only consular agents could prepare the necessary residence certificates.\textsuperscript{46} The consuls did more than fill out forms; they also took steps to exempt poverty-stricken repatriates from paying customs duties. Consuls Medina Barron of El Paso and S.J. Trevino of Naco, Arizona, successfully obtained an expansion of the duty-free list for repatriates by arguing that such items as automobiles, phonographs, clothing, and livestock, which were regarded as luxuries taxable under Mexican law, should be exempted. These possessions, the Mexican consuls pointed out, represented too sizeable an investment to be left behind by those unable to pay the import duties.\textsuperscript{47}

Consuls also helped repatriates by placing special agents on repatriation trains and instructing them to resolve unexpected problems and provide moral support. Rex Thomson, the Los Angeles Department of Charities coordinator for repatriation, recalled that Vice Consul Ricardo Hill's presence on a train had an especially sanguine effect since difficulties at the border were commonplace.\textsuperscript{48} Customs officers and railroad conductors were known to badger repatriates for bribes. Compatriots might also find themselves stranded at the border if train connections were delayed, a frequent occurrence during the early stages of the repatriation movement. Local merchants welcomed the returning paisanos by mercilessly exploiting them with inflated prices. When the Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas learned about the suffering of Los Angeles repatriates, it demanded that the Mexican government eliminate the abuses.\textsuperscript{49}

The Los Angeles consulate launched an investigation of such practices, but neither the consulate nor the confederación believed an investigation would stop abuses at the border. This was the reason that Colina assigned Hill as an escort on repatriation trains.\textsuperscript{50} The fears of repatriates and colonia residents were calmed by his presence, for they believed Hill, the son of Benjamin Hill, a famous Mexican revolutionary general, could use his family's influence as well as his position as a consular agent to overcome difficulties at the border.\textsuperscript{51}

The Los Angeles Department of Charities made the need for Hill's presence even more urgent when it appointed
Thomson, a civil engineer, as coordinator for repatriation. Thomson's qualifications were dubious, for he did not speak Spanish fluently and had no experience in social work. Thomson also vehemently opposed the employment of professionally trained social workers who might have seen that repatriates were treated more humanely.\(^{52}\)

Even Hill's presence could not dispel the repatriates' sadness on the trip to the madre patria. "The majority of the men were very quiet and pensive," observed Lucas Lucio, organizer of three repatriation trips. "Most of the women and children were crying."\(^{53}\) Lucio attributed the repatriates' grief to the separation from their family and friends in the colonia and the uncertainty of work and life in Mexico. The sadness was contagious, and even Hill was "very quiet and hardly spoke." On one occasion the charities department unsuccessfully attempted to lessen the repatriates' sorrow by stocking provisions in a baggage car, which, according to Thomson, was "full of food."\(^{54}\) Some colonia residents led the repatriates in songs or gave the children toys, but their efforts failed to raise spirits.\(^{55}\)

The repatriates were disturbed about the readjustment they would have to make to life in Mexico. Their deep resentment toward American society and institutions for forcing their removal is expressed in this corrido:

\begin{verbatim}
Now I go to my country
Where although at times they make war
They will not run us from there.
Good-bye, my good friends
You are all witnesses
Of the bad payment they give us.
\end{verbatim}

Perhaps the most effective remedy in lessening resentment among some repatriates was provided by the Los Angeles consulate's colonization desk. This unique institution among Mexican consular agencies assisted repatriates wishing to exchange local property for land in Mexico. The colonization desk originated from demands by the Confederación de las Uniones Obreras Mexicanas (CUOM), a Mexican farm workers union. CUOM leaders knew that many compatriots wanted
to return to Mexico but were unable to travel without first selling their small properties. These holdings could only be sold at a substantial loss because of the economic crisis. CUOM petitioned Mexican President Ortiz Rubio to establish an agency, which under the auspices of Mexico's National Bank of Agricultural Credit, would buy repatriates' property in the United States. The repatriates, in turn, would use the money to establish agricultural cooperatives in Mexico. At first the plan's success seemed unlikely. M.J. Otaloa, a subsecretary for foreign relations, denied CUOM's request, explaining that the bank lacked legal authority to invest its funds outside of Mexico. Otaloa suggested that CUOM advise repatriates to petition the bank for agricultural loans that could finance their resettlement in Mexico.56

Undaunted by the Mexican government's refusal, CUOM Secretary General José Mares Velasco again petitioned the foreign relations ministry for help. If the Mexican government was unable to help destitute connacionales by purchasing their properties, observed Velasco, then the ministry should devise another way to protect the property of repatriates.57 The ministry again rejected CUOM's demand, but this time it suggested that property exchanges between American nationals owning land in Mexico and the repatriates might serve as a solution.58 However, CUOM and the repatriates were cautioned about the implementation of the exchange plan. Repatriates were advised to investigate each trade offer to avoid becoming victims of unscrupulous transactions. Consular agents, the secretariat pointed out, would be available to provide advice concerning the exchanges as well as sale of properties.59 Though all consulates were obligated to assist repatriates in liquidating their properties, the Los Angeles office was the only one to establish a special desk to review the land exchanges. The presence of the CUOM's headquarters in Los Angeles was certainly a major reason for this service.

After being notified of a possible land trade, the consulate would investigate the offer. For example, when J.D. Faught, owner of the Coacoyolitios Hacienda in Sinaloa, Mexico,
placed his property on the exchange market, consular officials questioned the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce about his solvency and sincerity. The consulate in Faught’s hometown of Nogales, Arizona was asked about his standing in the local business community, and inquiries about the Coacoyolitos Hacienda were also directed to the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture and Promotion and the governor of Sinaloa. The consulate evaluated this information in a memorandum before it listed the Coacoyolitos or any other property on its exchange market for repatriates. Even then, the consulate would still warn compatriots not to base their decisions solely on its investigation. They were urged to read carefully all documents regarding the property, to personally inspect the land, to insist that all verbal promises be written into the contract, and to sign the agreement only before a notary public.

Though the consulate encouraged repatriates to make independent decisions, it always supported these choices, even when they went against the consulate’s recommendation. For example, Rancho Los Becos, located in a light rainfall area of Sinaloa, was guaranteed only a limited water supply, which the consulate deemed insufficient for farming. The water shortage was underscored in the consulate’s report and stressed in discussions between the consuls and interested repatriates. Disregarding the consulate’s advice, a group of thirty-two families insisted on exchanging their southern California properties for the 1,750 hectares of Los Becos. Though disappointed, the consulate contacted the local governor and secured his pledge to assist the colony. The San Francisco consulate general praised the Los Angeles office’s initiative and dedication in advising compatriots about the problems they might encounter. Indeed, the consulate general was so impressed that it referred cases in its jurisdiction to Los Angeles.

Despite the popularity of the Los Angeles office’s special department, the program received sharp criticism from the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C. By assessing property transactions, declared the embassy, the Los Angeles consulate risked criticism later for any recommendations that went sour. The embassy also hinted at another reason why consuls should not assist Mexicans trying to liquidate their U.S. properties
and return to Mexico. The property owners were the "most desirable group" with "the most roots, solvency, responsibility," and their departure would represent the loss of "a very important moral force in our colony."\textsuperscript{64}

The secretary of foreign relations promptly overruled the embassy's attempt to stop the work of the colonization desk. The Los Angeles consuls, explained the secretariat, had restricted themselves to familiarizing Mexican nationals with properties to prevent them from becoming victims of unscrupulous transactions. Such advice, the ministry noted, was "in agreement with the propositions and recommendations" of the Mexican government and was regarded as "beneficial to our compatriots."\textsuperscript{65} Furthermore, observed the secretariat, any efforts directed at helping repatriates contributed to Mexico's own agricultural development. The secretariat also disagreed sharply with the embassy's claim that the loss of colonia properties might seriously weaken the la raza community. The importance of Mexican-owned properties in the United States had been overstated, for these properties rarely averaged more than a few thousand dollars in value. "Our patriotic interests," the secretariat reminded the embassy, "are more tied with Mexicans who are rooted and prosper in national territory [Mexico] promoting the development of our own resources than the prosperity which our own compatriots are able to obtain abroad."\textsuperscript{66} The secretary of foreign relations, while sensitive to the plight of the colonia mexicana, was even more concerned about contributions the repatriates could make to the economic development of the Mexican nation.

The Mexican government's concern for the repatriates during the Depression's darkest days was clearly reflected in its attempts to ameliorate the plight of repatriates. Though the Mexican government was limited by an internal financial crisis caused by the world Depression, its consuls helped defend the rights of repatriates before Mexican and American authorities and tried to lessen the rigors and problems of their return trip to their mother country. The inordinately heavy demands the repatriates posed during 1931 and 1932 forced Colina and his colleagues to take an active role in formulating policy and in organizing a new colonia society to help care for the poor and
unemployed Mexicans and Mexican Americans who remained in southern California.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO


5. Consul Rafael de la Colina to the Mexican Embassy, 29 January 1931, in Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, IV-343-19 (Hereafter cited as ASRE); *La Opinión*, 29 January 1931.


10. Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 23 February 1931, in ASRE, IV-343-19. Also see *La Opinión*, 20 February 1931.


13. Los Angeles Consulate to the San Francisco Consulate General quoted in San Francisco Consulate General to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 26 October 1929, in ASRE, IV-104-16.


18. Consul Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 11 February 1931, in ASRE, IV-185-11.


21. Interview with Dr. José Díaz, Los Angeles, California, 9 March 1976; Flores interview.


23. California, State Relief Administration, Review of the Activities of the State Relief Administration of California: 1933-1935 (San Francisco, 1936), 349.


25. Ibid.


27. Interview with Rex Thomson, Rancho Bernardo, California, 11 March 1976.

28. Consul Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 31 January 1931, in ASRE, IV-343-19; La Opinión, 8 March 1931. An exception was George P. Clements who strongly disagreed with the local authorities that those repatriated at county expense could return to the United States. See Hoffman, Unwanted Mexican Americans 91, 95.

29. Hoffman, Unwanted Mexican Americans, 68-69; Consul Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 10 June 1931; in ASRE, IV-185-16. The article appeared in El Nacional, 23 May 1931 and El Demócrata Sinaloa, 4 April 1931.

30. Consul Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 1 May 1931, in ASRE, IV-550-10; La Opinión, 30 April 1931; 30 April 1931; El Heraldo, 1 May 1931.

31. Ibid. For information on legislation against the employment of aliens see: Los Angeles Times, 7 April 1931; San Francisco Chronicle, 29 August 1931; California, State Legislature, Final Calendar of Legislative Business: Assembly Final History (Sacramento, 1931), 123.

32. La Opinión, 8 February 1931. Also see La Opinión, 12 June 1935, for another case of job discrimination against Mexican Americans.

33. Interview with José Solórzano, Montebello, California, 11 March 1976; La Opinión, 2 May 1931.

34. A copy of Kerr’s statement is in ASRE, IV-339-17.

35. El Heraldo, 1 May 1931. Also see La Opinión, 1 May 1931.

36. Consul Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 8 June 1931, in ASRE, IV-550-10.

37. Consul Rafael Aveleyra to Mary Grace Wells, undated, circa July 1932, in ASRE, IV-354-12.

38. Colina interview.


41. Colina interview.

42. Consul Alfonso Pesqueira to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 24 June 1930, in ASRE, IV-100-9.


44. Los Angeles Consulate Special Report to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 27 January 1932, in ASRE, IV-343-19.

45. *Ibid.;* Colina interview.


48. Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 2 January 1932, Los Angeles Consulate to Benito Gutiérrez, 6 August 1932, Los Angeles Consulate to U.S. Immigration Bureau, Los Angeles, 12 September 1932, in ASRE IV-328-1; Cristina Valenciana de Balderrama interview with Rex Thomson, Rancho Bernardo, California, 4 August 1976; author's interview with Thomson.


50. See personnel file on Ricardo Hill, in ASRE, 21-6-4 (1).

51. Lucio and Thomson interview.

52. Thomson interviews.

53. Lucio interview.

54. Thomson interview.


58. Secretary of Foreign Relations to the Confederación de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas, 10 March 1932, in ASRE, IV-339-18.


60. Vice Consul Joel Quiñones to Foreign Relations, 27 April 1932, in ASRE, IV-185-32. For other instances see: Joel Quiñones to San Bernardino
Consulate, 21 April 1932 and Joaquín Terrazas to San Bernardino Consulate, 24 May 1932, in ASRE, IV-328-1; Los Angeles Times, 23 April 1932.
63. San Francisco Consulate General to the Los Angeles Consulate, 29 September 1932, in ASRE, IV-105-32.
64. Mexican Embassy to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 14 September 1932, in ASRE, IV-185-32.
66. Ibid.
The Comité
de Beneficencia
Mexicana

During the height of the deportation crisis, Consul Rafael de la Colina and a group of prominent colonia leaders decided that only quick, concerted action would improve the steadily worsening situation. Thousands of people were out of work and some were surviving only by eating rotten fruit and vegetables discarded by the Los Angeles Produce Market. Colina and the local leaders responded by creating the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana, charged with enlisting the entire colonia in the struggle to help distressed compatriots.¹

The Call for the Comité

Previously no community organization existed with the necessary resources or prestige to confront the widespread poverty resulting from the vast unemployment. Organizations like the Cruz Azul and the Sociedad de Madres Mexicanas had done commendable work, but their resources and membership were limited. The Cruz Azul, an organization directed by the
consuls and, in effect, an auxiliary arm of the consular service provided food, shelter, and clothing to la raza's poor. The Sociedad de Madres Mexicanas, since its founding in 1926 by long-time colonia leader Maria H. Dozel, was dedicated exclusively to raising funds for the legal defense of Mexicans and Mexican Americans accused of committing crimes. But the all-female membership of the two societies prevented them from tapping the full—albeit limited—resources of the colonia. Some assistance was also provided through the mutualistas, or mutual aid societies, which existed throughout southern California and boasted a large membership among Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Members usually contributed monthly dues of less than a dollar in return for a $250 or $500 life insurance or funeral expense policy. A few mutualistas also provided limited unemployment relief, medical treatment, and legal assistance, but they were incapable of making significant inroads against poverty in the colonia. Nor could the consulate, by itself, offer more than piecemeal assistance. Migrant farm workers and other needy individuals frequently turned to the consuls for help if they had not completed the six-month residency requirement needed to qualify for assistance from the Los Angeles County Department of Charities. Some migrants also secured shelter or food from private institutions such as the Catholic church, but here too the resources were far less than the demand.

The call for an organization like the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana was not new. Some colonia leaders had advocated a similar plan since the outbreak of the Depression. Colina had first learned of these sentiments in 1930 during a conversation with José Solórzano, president of the Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas, at a 16 de Septiembre independence celebration. The confederación was a loosely-knit organization dedicated to facilitating the exchange of information among the various mutualistas and recreational societies of the colonia. It had been established in 1925 at the suggestion of Consul Rafael Aveleyra, who wanted all Mexican societies grouped into a single organization to foster la raza unity. By the end of 1930 the confederación realized that something new was
needed to combat the increasing unemployment and disillusionment. Its leaders urged creation of a Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana as well as the establishment of a clinic to provide free medical service.\textsuperscript{8}

Though sympathetic to both projects, Consul Colina at first urged colonia leaders to give priority to the clinic.\textsuperscript{9} The example of a clinic sponsored by the Cruz Azul in San Antonio may have influenced his decision. The Texas facility had received strong consular support and enjoyed major success in providing free medical services that would otherwise have been denied to most members of la raza. A full-time physician, nurse, pharmacist, secretary, and custodian provided patient care, and a group of prominent San Antonio physicians volunteered their services. Payment was requested only for medication, if a patient was able to pay.\textsuperscript{10} The clinic's success inspired establishment of a second one in San Antonio in 1930. The founder and sponsor of the new medical center was Ignacio Lozano, owner of two prominent Spanish-language newspapers, San Antonio's La Prensa and Los Angeles's La Opinión.\textsuperscript{11} Lozano, however, never provided the same enthusiastic support for a Los Angeles clinic, possibly because he was a San Antonio resident and only periodically visited Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{12}

Encouraged by the San Antonio examples, Colina tried to recruit physicians and dentists to staff a Los Angeles facility. He first contacted Dr. Camilo Servín, a young physician sharing a practice with his father. Servín warned the Mexican consul about the tremendous expenses involved in securing a building and obtaining equipment. His warning proved prophetic; Colina was forced to abandon his campaign for the clinic not only because of the building and equipment costs, but primarily because of the lack of support from la raza physicians and dentists. While doctors such as Servín, José Díaz, and Reynaldo Carreón recognized the need for a clinic, they believed that greater emphasis should be given to creation of the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana. The colonia's resources, they believed, should be devoted to securing food, shelter, and clothing. They offered to donate their skills and time to the clinic if it were established, but they were unable to
comite de beneficencia

Contribute financially to it. Most of them were young, just beginning their medical careers, and lacked adequate funds to maintain their own practices. 13

Colina began to channel his energies into promoting the Comite de Beneficencia Mexicana and publicly called upon the colonia mexicana to support the new organization. On February 10 he invited about three dozen prominent colonia leaders, mostly Mexican nationals and some Mexican Americans, to the consulate and persuaded them to select nine directors for the Comité. 14 The directors, in turn, appointed an interim executive board. The officers were a distinguished group—physician Alejandro Wallace, merchant Mauricio Calderon, and pharmacist Juan B. Ruiz—named president, vice president, and treasurer. Ampelio Gonzalez, secretary of the confederación; Elena de la Llata, president of the Cruz Azul Mexicana; Adolfo Moncada Villarreal, president of the Partido Liberal Mexicano; Arturo Cantú, administrative officer of La Opinión; and Adalberto Gonzalez, director of El Heraldo de Mexico, were also selected to serve on the executive board. 15

Although prominent colonia leaders gave generously of their time and talents to the Comité, it was the consulate which actually founded the new society. Colina had called the organizational meeting, and he drafted the articles of incorporation which enabled the Comité to operate legally as a nonprofit institution. His key role was also reflected in the society's constitution which made the Los Angeles consul the honorary president. 16 Some Comité members later explained that Colina's strong hand was necessary because he had more experience in organizing people than anyone else. 17 This view overstates the consul's importance, for there were individuals, such as Jose Solórzano and others, who had considerable organizing experience. Colina's influence in establishing the Comité seems primarily to reflect his strong interest in a project which he had initiated.

Raising Funds

As in the founding of the Comité, the consulate played a major role in arranging the society's first major fund-raising
event, a musical variety program held at the Philharmonic Auditorium on February 18. Colina commissioned Ernesto Romero, a member of the consular staff, to supervise production of the program. Romero was particularly suited for the task since he was also serving as a consultant to the motion picture industry on movies about Mexico. Through his Hollywood contacts, Romero signed up many well-known stars, including such Mexican idols as Ramón Navarro and Virginia Fabregas.

*El Heraldo* and *La Opinion* extensively publicized the Philharmonic benefit and encouraged colonia residents to attend. The response was so enthusiastic that *El Heraldo* speculated that some ticket buyers might have to be turned away from the box office. Not only were many members of the colonia expected, but numerous Anglo friends of la raza had also made reservations.

*El Heraldo*’s prediction of success proved to be correct; the Philharmonic Auditorium was filled to capacity. Celebrated humorist Will Rogers made a surprise appearance and, much to the delight of the audience, was introduced as Guillermo Rodríguez. Rogers and the other Hollywood personalities were warmly received and showed their appreciation by performing until two o’clock in the morning.

The Philharmonic benefit netted some $1,293.25 from gross receipts of $1,608.25. Comité members considered the program a financial success; more importantly, observed Dr. Carreón, the “benefit encouraged us to keep going.”

Despite the colonia’s desperate need, the consulate and the Comité’s executive board earmarked ten percent of the proceeds to aid the victims of a devastating earthquake in Oaxaca, Mexico, a decision lauded by the colonia press. *El Heraldo* and *La Opinion* had constantly reminded the Los Angeles colonia of its moral responsibility to the Oaxaca victims. Unemployment in the colonia, they lectured, was not adequate reason to refuse help. Private donations and the contribution from the benefit resulted in $245.10 being sent to Oaxaca.

The Comité, however, directed most of its efforts to helping poverty-stricken Mexicans and Mexican Americans. It provided meals in local inexpensive restaurants, lodging at
Sonora Town hotels, and food, milk, and medicine for the indigent. The Comité also purchased train tickets for those who wanted to return to the madre patria. Incomplete records make it impossible to determine how many were assisted in their return to Mexico, but available evidence indicates that the Comité paid transportation costs for some 1,500 repatriates who left Los Angeles by train in April and May.24

Petite bourgeoisie Mexicans and Mexican Americans, mostly small merchants and physicians, made up the majority of the thirty to sixty compatriots active in the Comité. There were exceptions, such as José Solórzano, a founder and the society’s third president, who worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad. A sense of noblesse oblige toward the less privileged was not what persuaded the petite bourgeoisie to help the colonia mexicana. Rather, they candidly described their assistance as an expression of solidarity with working class compatriots. They felt close ties to their own working class origins, for many had been laborers or had parents or relatives who were still laborers. In their own words, they were “not wealthy” and were “just trying to get by.” Doctors Carreón, Díaz and Servín later admitted that they could have used the groceries that they distributed to the needy.25 Francisco Balderrama Terrazas, an owner of small grocery stores, also remembered that operating a business during the Depression was “a struggle in spite of a substantial trade with the colonia” because “mexicanos were frequently unable to pay their accounts.”26

La raza merchants, mostly owners of small “mom and pop” grocery stores and a handful of drugstores, formed the Cámara de Comercio Mexicana, or Mexican Chamber of Commerce, to help themselves and the rest of the community. Unfortunately, they were not very successful. Their most promising plan called for the creation of a wholesale purchasing program that they hoped would allow them to compete successfully with Anglo merchants. However, the program was never put into operation. Emilio Flores, a former cámara president, attributed the failure to a struggle between urban Sonora Town and suburban East Los Angeles merchants over the organization’s leadership.27 The divisive politics also contributed to undermining another cámara project—the establishment of an employment agency for la raza. But even a united
cámara would probably have been unable to organize an effective agency since employment opportunities in the colonia and in the greater Los Angeles area declined rapidly.28

Despite their unsuccessful projects, Mexican and Mexican American merchants provided significant help to the Comité. They, along with the few restauranteurs and innkeepers, offered goods and services at cost to the Comité, allowing the charitable organization to maximize its funds.

Mexican and Mexican American physicians and dentists also provided care through the Sociedad Médica Mexicana, or the Mexican Medical Society, a Comité subcommittee. La raza physicians and dentists offered free consultations to all compatriots sent by the Comité's executive board. The society's eighteen doctors and dentists—the entire la raza medical profession in Los Angeles—daily treated between three to ten such patients in addition to their regular cases.29

Consular officials cherished this alliance between la raza medical personnel and the Comité, for they had long wanted to enlist the services of Mexican physicians for the colonia's charity cases. Some physicians had routinely donated their services, but Alfonso Pesqueira, Colina's predecessor, wanted all la raza physicians to help with the colonia's charity cases. During the spring of 1930, a year before the medical subcommittee was formed, he had asked the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to allow physicians who were Mexican nationals to have staff privileges at the county hospital. This would have meant suspending the regulations that barred non-American citizens from practicing there. Pesqueira pointed out that Mexican physicians and surgeons, many of them graduates of American medical colleges, wanted to help with Mexican charity cases. Local newspapers, Pesqueira reminded the county officials, had recently published articles spotlighting the heavy load of Mexican and Mexican American charity cases. “It is only natural,” explained the consul, “that...Mexican physicians should be more than anxious to do their share.”30 Pesqueira succeeded in persuading the board of supervisors to grant staff privileges to Mexican physicians; not until the creation of the Sociedad Médica Mexicana, however, did both Mexican and Mexican American doctors join to provide free medical assistance to their own people.
The efforts of colonia doctors and merchants to help less fortunate Mexicans and Mexican Americans were not entirely unselfish. Dr. Carreón, for instance, who was very active in Comité affairs, looked upon his participation as "one way to indirectly and ethically advertise my profession." Likewise, Emilio Flores, Eduardo Negrete, and other grocery store owners viewed their work for the Comité as a way to strengthen their trade with the colonia.

Even with their assistance, the Comité remained on shaky financial ground. About a thousand dollars a month was needed to cover living expenses of needy compatriots and to pay transportation costs of desperate repatriates. The money was not forthcoming. On March 18, at the beginning of the Comité's second month of operation, El Heraldo editorialized about the organization's financial dilemma. The newspaper described the colonia's warm response to the Comité-sponsored festivals, dances, and other entertainment, but noted with disappointment the small number and size of voluntary contributions. A week later, on March 27, El Heraldo and La Opinión underscored the seriousness of the financial problem by reporting that the Comité bank balance was only $300, an amount woefully inadequate to sustain the next month's activities.

Because of the urgent need for contributions, the executive board once more turned to the consular staff for help. The board created a special subcommittee headed by Vice Consul Romero, charged with bringing more money into the organization. Romero's earlier success in managing the Philharmonic affair seemed to indicate that he was a wise choice. He quickly contacted key community leaders and then announced an ambitious plan for fundraising in April. On April 2 a Mexican recreational club, Bohemia, sponsored a dance at the State Playground with all proceeds going to the Comité. On the eighth, a festival, which included popular Spanish-surnamed actors and actresses, was staged at the Hidalgo Theatre with half the proceeds set aside for the Comité. On the twelfth, a baseball game was played between the Mexico-El Paso team and the Joey Brown Hollywood Stars, with such motion picture personalities as Buster Keaton in the lineup. Like the Hidalgo
Theatre arrangement, fifty percent of the baseball game's proceeds were earmarked as the Comité's share. On the eighteenth, the Mexican Athletic Association held a dance at the Royal Palms Hotel with all contributions set aside for the Comité. By the end of the month, Romero's projects had produced some $439.67.34

While Romero coordinated various fundraisers, Comité officer José Solórzano proposed another way to place the organization on solid financial ground. The Comité, he suggested, should model its fund-raising activities after French and Spanish charitable societies in Mexico. Those organizations usually sponsored benefits to coincide with the celebration of their national holidays.35

The selection of Mexican national holidays seemed an excellent strategy for attracting contributions. México de afuera society religiously observed the 16 de Septiembre, Mexico's independence day, and Cinco de Mayo, the date of the French defeat at Puebla. La raza had been celebrating these holidays even before the massive twentieth-century immigration movement. The Los Angeles celebrations, traditionally held in dance halls on Main Street, were rarely very dignified events. Mexican nationals found the admission fees, the bar-room atmosphere, and disrespectful playing of the Mexican national anthem scandalous, and they complained to the Mexican government. The consulate stepped in and persuaded the Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas to stage free programs that properly observed the Mexican holidays.36

During the Depression, however, community leaders began withdrawing from the confederación to work for the Comité, which they believed could better meet la raza's pressing financial and medical needs. In 1931 the consulate, with the strong support of former confederación president Solórzano and other leaders, responded to the problem by creating still another organization to plan the official celebration of Mexican holidays. The new organization, known as the Comité Oficial de Festejos Patrios, or Official Committee for Patriotic Festivals, was charged with only one responsibility: sponsoring programs free to colonia residents which would commemorate the 16 de Septiembre and Cinco de Mayo. Now the Comité de
Beneficencia Mexicana was free to organize its own activities and usually did so as a complement to the patriotic committee's programs.37

In 1931 Solórzano and other Comité de Beneficencia members drew up their first fund-raising plans for celebrating the sixty-ninth anniversary of the Cinco de Mayo at Lincoln Park. It was to be held in conjunction with the official commemoration planned by the patriotic committee. All la raza organizations participated by operating more than fifty food and game stands and sponsoring beauty, dance, and regional contests.38 In addition to the residents of the colonia, festival organizers extended invitations to Anglos, especially city and county officials, to support and participate in the fund-raising activities. Mexican consular officials also publicized the affair among fellow consuls. As a result, some 25,000 to 30,000 people attended the celebration.39

Though the Cinco de Mayo celebration and Romero's April fund-raising benefits netted hundreds of dollars for the treasury, the Comité was not entirely satisfied. In addition to meeting its current expenses, it also wanted a regular income which would allow development of long-term projects to benefit the community. It hoped the celebrations would spur colonia residents to donate weekly or monthly without expecting admittance to a festival in return for their contributions. El Heraldo and La Opinión assisted the Comité in its drive to secure regular support by extensively covering the organization and its activities. The Spanish-language press also published almost daily an official consular message asking the colonia to support the benevolent society.40

**Disbanding the Cruz Azul**

Despite the Comité's efforts and press publicity, the charitable organization never secured the needed regular monthly income of $1,000. It continued to operate hand-to-mouth, obtaining most of its revenue during the holidays of Cinco de Mayo, Mexican Independence, and Christmas. This financial situation continued until Consul Colina's departure in March
1932, when his successors sought to place the organization on solid financial footing by calling for the Cruz Azul’s incorporation into the Comité.

The proposal to dissolve the Cruz produced a controversy between the Los Angeles consuls and their superiors in San Francisco and Mexico City. The conflict dramatically illustrates the constraints under which the consuls operated even though their efforts might have been in the colonia’s best interests. On November 22, 1932, Colina’s immediate successor, Joaquín Terrazas, opened the debate when he wrote to the San Francisco consul general and asked for permission to place the Los Angeles community’s charitable efforts in a single organization—the Comité. The proposal called for dissolution of the Cruz, the only major charitable society still operating. Terrazas had become especially alarmed when he learned about the Cruz Azul’s inability to cover its expenses. El Heraldo supported the proposal on the grounds that “the duplication of efforts by the Cruz Azul resulted in less money for needy connacionales.”

In the name of the San Francisco consul general, Vice Consul Joel Quiñones rejected Terrazas’s request. Quiñones was familiar with the Los Angeles situation, since he had served as interim consul there during the time between Colina’s departure in March and Terrazas’s appointment in November. Terrazas, Quiñones observed, was correct in his assumption that elimination of the Cruz Azul would result in greater efficiency, but Quiñones feared consolidation would antagonize Cruz members who might “not agree to disbanding themselves in favor of a single organization like the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana.” Quiñones also hinted that serious consequences might result because the Cruz was one of the officially sponsored “auxiliary arms of our consular service,” a distinction shared by only one other organization, the Comisiones Honoríficas Mexicanas.

Apparently what really bothered Quiñones, though he did not say it in his official reply, was his fear that the breakup of the Cruz Azul would be construed as a failure of the Mexican Consular Service. The service had been especially sensitive to this charge since Detroit Consul J.M. Batizal had disbanded a
Comisión Honorífica Mexicana chapter in the fall of 1929. Batizal had then created another organization to do the work of the previous one. This action had produced a heated battle which ended only when the consular service reestablished the comisión and removed Consul Batizal. Quiñones hoped to avoid a similar controversy in Los Angeles.

But Quiñones's support of the Cruz Azul was prompted by more than a desire to avoid a dispute and the implication of consular service failure. He believed the organization was still capable of successful operation, and a recent failure in fundraising "was not a conclusive indication of the uselessness of the Brigada de la Cruz Azul Mexicana." Moreover, noted Quiñones, disbanding the Cruz Azul would be an insult to the memory of Elena de la Llata, a former resident of the Los Angeles colonia and Cruz president whose leadership had guided the organization through a period of great activity. During her presidency, the Cruz had sponsored a festival in Mexico City that had raised $252.45 for underprivileged children in the Los Angeles colonia.

Terrazas did not docilely accept Quiñones's rejection of his proposal. He wrote a second letter in which he acknowledged the difficulty of successfully disbanding one organization in favor of another, but he believed that the dismantling of the Cruz Azul could be accomplished through the use of "determination and tact." Unfortunately, the Los Angeles consul was not tactful in his comments concerning Quiñones's reference to Elena de la Llata. Quiñones was being overly "sentimental," he declared. Of far more importance, he explained, was the Comité's "activities, capacity, seriousness, efficiency, efficacy, and prestige," which were superior to those of the Cruz Azul. Terrazas, like his predecessor Rafael de la Colina, attributed the Cruz Azul's inferior executive leadership and financial responsibility to the all-female membership. Terrazas claimed that women "lacked executive qualities, were difficult to organize, mobilize, and were largely susceptible to gossip among themselves and were generally disunited." The members of the Cruz Azul would probably protest the loss of their society, he admitted, but their "sacrifice, like all constructive sacrifices, ought to be made for the good of the group, the community."
The consul general remained unmoved by Terrazas's second request and adamantly denied his petition.

Before Terrazas could reply to the second denial, he was transferred to the Calexico, California consulate. His transfer was apparently not connected with his insistence upon disbandment of the Cruz Azul. It seems more likely that when the Calexico post became vacant, Terrazas was selected for the job simply because he was experienced and highly qualified. 49

The transfer of Terrazas did not lessen the desire of colonia leaders in Los Angeles to eliminate the Cruz Azul. In January 1933 Laredo Consul Alejandro V. Martínez replaced Terrazas in Los Angeles, and a few months later he suspended the Cruz for mismanagement of funds. The organization had again spent more money than it had taken in. The secretary of foreign relations voiced no objection, probably regarding the suspension as merely a temporary measure until Martínez organized a new Cruz Azul. This assumption was understandable, for consular agents had been instructed to continue organizing chapters of the Cruz Azul and Comisión Honorífica Mexicana. Consul Martínez, however, dissolved the Cruz permanently at the request of its own executive board. The board unanimously called for a termination of all activities and the transfer of the organization's property and remaining funds to the Comité. 50 When the news reached Mexico City, the secretary of foreign relations ordered Martínez to lead the colonia in establishing a new Cruz Azul. 51 Martínez obediently followed the instructions, but his efforts failed to revive the Cruz. The charitable organization, he explained, "had died a natural death on account of lack of interest." 52 The lack of interest was apparently largely a result of the death of Elena de la Llata in 1931, whose leadership had been essential to the society's vitality. 53

Even though the Cruz Azul's dissolution freed some desperately needed funds and personnel for the Comité, the struggle for financial support continued. The Comité was caught in the dilemma of depending upon support from a colonia suffering poverty and despair. Despite its financial problems, the Comité persisted in its efforts to help needy compatriots and continued its work into the 1980s. The loss of
the Comité's records makes it impossible to analyze how many persons were actually fed, housed, or repatriated under the auspices of the society during the Depression. While the precise extent of the Comité's impact upon poverty-stricken Mexicans and Mexican Americans cannot be determined, undeniably its efforts were important. Colonia residents remember the Comité as "significant for demonstrating the concern among la raza for its own people in the face of few financial resources."54

**Colina's Influence**

Members of the Comité still believe that Consul Colina's enthusiastic support was crucial to the early life of the society. However, Colina's successors did not emulate him, for they never contributed the same degree of support, though all consuls occasionally gave advice and publicly endorsed the society's projects. Some post-Depression consuls were considerably less than enthusiastic about the society, suggesting that it be disbanded because improved economic conditions made its work unnecessary. But the organization's membership stubbornly refused to consider disbandment.55

Consul Colina's interest in the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana was not confined to the Los Angeles area. He wanted the Los Angeles Comité to serve as a model for similar organizations throughout México de afuera. To further this aim he sent a copy of the articles of incorporation and bylaws to the secretary of foreign relations for distribution to other consuls in the United States. The Comité, Colina explained to his superiors, was an excellent vehicle for alleviating the poverty and misery in the American colonias.56 Other short-lived Comités de Beneficencia eventually appeared in colonias in Brownsville, El Paso, and Laredo, Texas but their goals were narrower than those of the Los Angeles society. They were concerned only with assisting repatriates and never offered help to Mexicans and Mexican Americans remaining in the United States.57
Colina's Influence

Colina had little success in promoting the type of assistance furnished by the Los Angeles Comité, probably because he lacked support in the upper echelons of the Ministry of Foreign Relations. Even though he eventually became Mexican ambassador to the Organization of American States, his influence was not especially strong during the Depression. Despite his meritorious service as Los Angeles consul, he lost his new position as chief of the consular service to a rival with greater influence. He then worked in Mexico's Department of Weights and Measures until 1933 when he was appointed consul general in San Antonio.58

Though his efforts in Los Angeles were not entirely successful, Colina left his mark on southern California. He successfully encouraged Mexicans and Mexican Americans to found Comités in Watts, Santa Ana, San Bernardino, and Santa Paula. The four new chapters adopted articles of incorporation and regulations identical to those drawn up by the original Comité. Their fund-raising and assistance programs were also patterned after the Los Angeles organization. But each committee's autonomous governing board and the distance separating them resulted in little communication among the organizations. All Comités were initially very active; but only the Los Angeles branch endured. The presence of a larger group of merchants and physicians in Los Angeles than in the other southern California communities probably accounted for the longevity of the Los Angeles Comité.59

The Los Angeles colonia demonstrated its gratitude to Colina in a farewell gathering at Lincoln Park prior to his return to Mexico City in March 1932. Alejandro Wallace and Camilo Servín, former presidents of the Los Angeles Comité, gave Colina a scroll thanking him for his support of charitable activities throughout southern California.60 People who lived in the colonia during the Depression testify that appreciation for Consul Rafael de la Colina has not dampened; he is still remembered as the founder of the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana and "champion of the poor."61

Colina's participation in the Comité strongly contrasted with his simultaneous campaign against the threat of school
segregation. In the segregation struggle he and his colleagues worked behind the scenes and avoided public calls for support.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE


2. Consul Rafael de la Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 23 March 1931, in Archivo de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, IV-339-11 (Hereafter cited as ASRE).


4. Interview with José Solórzano, Montebello, California, 11 March 1976.

5. Interview with Lucas Lucio, Santa Ana, California, 16 March 1976, 23 March 1976.

6. Interview with Rex Thomson, Rancho Bernardo, California, 8 March 1976.

7. Interview with Dr. Camilo Servín, Los Angeles, California, 5 March 1976.

8. Interview with Dr. José Díaz, Los Angeles, California, 9 March 1976; Solórzano interview.

9. Interview with Dr. Reynaldo Carreón, Los Angeles, California, 9 March 1976; Díaz, Servín, and Solórzano interviews.


12. Interview with Nicolás Avila, Los Angeles, California, 8 April 1976.


17. Carreón, Díaz, and Servín interviews.
18. Consul Rafael de la Colina to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 25 February 1931, in ASRE, IV-339-10; Carreón, Díaz, Servín, and Solórzano interviews.


20. *La Opinión*, 20 February 1931; 21 February 1931; *El Heraldo*, 20 February 1931; *Los Angeles Times*, 20 February 1931; interviews with Emilio Flores, Los Angeles, California, 17 March 1976; José David Orozco, Los Angeles, California, 13 March 1976; Carreón, Díaz, Servín and Solórzano interviews.

21. Ibid.

22. Carreón interview.

23. Los Angeles Consulate to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, circa March 1931, in ASRE, IV-457-29.


26. Interview with Francisco Balderrama Terrazas, Capistrano Beach, California, 26 December 1975.

27. Interview with Eduardo Negrete, Fullerton, California, 26 March 1976; Flores interview. See *El Heraldo*, 27 September 1930 for an account of the Cámara de Comercio Mexicana’s founding.


30. Consul Alfonso Pesqueira to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, in ASRE, IV-72-1.

31. Carreón interview.

32. Flores and Negrete interviews.


34. *El Heraldo*, 27 March 1931; *La Opinión*, 27 March 1931; 3 and 9 April 1931, Colina to Secretary of Foreign Relations, 23 April 1931 in ASRE IV-339-10; Solórzano interview.

35. *La Opinión*, 26 March 1931; Solórzano interviews.

36. Flores and Solórzano interviews.

37. Solórzano and Orozco interviews.

38. *La Opinión*, 22 April 1931; *Los Angeles Times*, 2 May 1931, 6 May 1931; Carreón, Díaz, Flores, Orozco, Servín, and Solórzano interviews.

39. Ibid.

40. See *La Opinión* and *El Heraldo* from 8 February to 1 May 1931.

42. For a discussion of Quiñones work as consul see *La Opinión*, 13 March 1932.


46. Quiñones to Terrazas, 28 November 1932.

47. Report and other documents regarding the fundraising may be found in ASRE, IV-100-8.


49. See personnel file of Joaquín Terrazas in ASRE, IV-339-11.

50. Consul Alejandro Martínez to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 6 June 1933, in ASRE, IV-642-21.

51. Secretary of Foreign Relations to Consul Alejandro Martínez, 14 June 1933, in ASRE, IV-642-21.

52. Servín interview.

53. Carreón, Flores, Servín, and Solórzano interviews.

54. Servín interview.

55. Carreón, Díaz, Flores, Servín, and Solórzano interviews.

56. Los Angeles Consulate to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 23 March 1931, in ASRE, IV-339-11.

57. Secretaria, *Memoria de 1931 a 1932*, 315; various documents regarding the Texas Comités de Beneficencia Mexicana are in ASRE, IV-354-1.

58. Negrete interview.

59. Consul Joaquín Terrazas to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 28 July 1932, in ASRE, IV-339-10; *El Heraldo de México*, 27 March 1931; *La Opinión*, 24, 26, 27 March 1931; Lucas Lucio interview.

60. *La Opinión*, 5 March 1932, 6 March 1932.

Chapter Four

The Battle Against School Segregation

Mexico's consulates contended daily during the Depression with the overwhelming poverty and despair that engulfed the colonias, but these struggles did not deter them from dealing with other formidable issues. One of the most sensitive of these was the school segregation problem.

After the turn of the century, local school authorities greeted the waves of Mexican immigrants to the United States with segregated schools. As the number of segregated students increased so did the concern of the California consulates. Although complete figures are impossible to obtain, official statistics indicate that in 1926 there were 65,572 la raza children who constituted 9.4 percent of California's total elementary school population. Responsibility for these children rested most heavily with the Los Angeles consulate; Mexican and Mexican American school children made up 17.1 percent of the city's school enrollment and 13.5 percent of the total county enrollment.1

By the time the Depression hit, the segregation policy was firmly entrenched. Though no state statute legally sanctioned
segregation, local school boards had purposefully separated la raza children by “drawing up boundaries of a school district around the Mexican colony and providing a school for that area.” There is incomplete statistical evidence available for defining the extent of segregation and the number of children involved during the Depression. However, a survey in 1931 disclosed that more than 80 percent of the school districts in southern California enrolled Mexicans and Mexican Americans in segregated schools. Former la raza residents of southern California also testify that school segregation was commonplace. Segregation was so prevalent that many educators felt obligated to defend it on the basis of “the Mexican temperament, the high percentage of juvenile arrests among Mexicans, the nature of the offenses committed and their low moral standards.” School officials usually refrained from such pejorative statements when questioned, and they often gave pedagogical reasons for such action, arguing, for example, that la raza children could receive special assistance in mastering the English language in segregated schools.

**Roots of Opposition**

The Mexican government had long been disturbed by the practice of school segregation. As early as the summer of 1919, San Francisco Consul General Rafael De Negris had protested to California Governor William D. Stephens about the segregation of Mexican students in the state’s elementary schools. De Negris’s protest was directed primarily at the El Centro, Santa Paula, and Gloryetta school authorities who had compelled Mexican children to attend schools designated exclusively for them. Mexican children, insisted the consul, should be granted the “same rights and considerations given to Anglo-Americans.”

Will C. Wood, state superintendent of public instruction, argued that De Negris was mistaken. “There has been no segregation of children on the grounds of nationality or race,” he told Governor Stephens. The “segregation” that exists, Wood explained, “is a natural one, being due to the fact that
Mexicans live in a settlement by themselves." Later Wood acknowledged that school administrators had ordered the separation of Mexican and Anglo students, but this, he claimed, had been done to assist Spanish-speaking children who "had no knowledge of the English language." 6

Though De Negris was dissatisfied with Wood's explanation, he believed there was little more he could do. Appeals to the U.S. government would not end school segregation since federal authorities were powerless. Educational policy was considered strictly a local issue. Federal officials could inquire about the situation but could not compel local authorities to end segregation. 7 Moreover, the explanations given by local school districts for segregated schools effectively concealed the prejudice behind school segregation. Not until the Depression did some Mexicans and Mexican Americans begin organizing against segregated schools and urge the Mexican government to broaden its policies and question the excuses for school segregation.

In 1931 Secretary of Foreign Relations Manuel C. Téllez supplied México de afuera society with reasons for opposing school segregation. He published the findings of a team of Mexican and Mexican American educators who claimed that the abilities and needs of the individual child were frequently overlooked in segregated schools. Mexican children who spoke English and Spanish, they explained, were held back in their studies because they were often grouped with children who knew only Spanish. Segregation also denied a fundamental educational principle—the opportunity to meet and learn to live in harmony with other ethnic groups. In addition, segregation fostered racial tension and prejudice not only in the Mexican community but also in Anglo society. The educators recognized the need for separate instruction for children who had difficulty with English, but they condemned the separation of all Mexican students from the general student body. Their report stressed that language skills could be achieved in special classes during the first and second years of instruction. 8

On the basis of the report, the Mexican government voiced strong disapproval of those U.S. school officials who "were putting into operation practices manifesting racial prejudice." 9
but it also acknowledged "each country as sovereign in adopting and implementing principles which should guide its public education." 10

**The Lemon Grove Case**

Major controversy over segregation of Mexican school children in California erupted in 1930 in the San Diego suburb of Lemon Grove where a small colonia of less than fifty families worked as laborers in the citrus industry. All Lemon Grove school children, Mexican and Anglo, had always attended the same elementary school, the town's only educational facility. However, the overcrowded conditions in the school during the 1929-1930 school year provided an opportunity for the Parent-Teachers Association and the local chamber of commerce to pressure the school board into constructing a two-room instructional center some distance from the existing school. The new school was located in the Mexican neighborhood and was designated by the school board exclusively for Mexicans. 11

The Mexican parents were willing to permit their younger children to attend special English classes, but they adamantly refused to place older students who were fluent in English in separate schools or classes. They organized themselves into the Comité de Vecinos de Lemon Grove (the Neighbors' Committee of Lemon Grove) and vowed to end school segregation in their community. 12

A contemporaneous and well publicized drive against separate schools in Texas had helped persuade the Lemon Grove colonia to challenge school segregation in southern California. Spearheading the campaign in the Texas colonia had been Mexican Americans who belonged to the League of United Latin American Citizens, or LULAC as it was popularly known. A group of Spanish-speaking U.S. citizens, most of them small businessmen, had organized LULAC in Texas during 1927 for the purpose of ending discriminatory practices based on race, religion, or social position. During the 1930s LULAC focused its attention on the schools because it considered them the necessary instruments for Americanizing la raza.
Lemon Grove Case

and enabling Mexican Americans to achieve full civil, social, and economic rights in American society.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1930 LULAC's executive board selected the Del Rio school district for a test case to outlaw the policy. The incident which led to the lawsuit was a general school district election for a bond issue to enlarge a facility designated exclusively for Mexicans. In the name of Jesús Salvatierra, a Del Rio student, the complaint challenged the legality of "the complete segregation of school children of Mexican and Spanish descent from the school children of all other white races."\textsuperscript{14} Manuel C. González, a thirty-one-year-old lawyer who was president of LULAC and attorney for the San Antonio consulate, prepared the case for \textit{Salvatierra v. Independent School District}.

On October 12, 1930, the District Court of Val Verde County granted an injunction restraining the district from segregating Mexican children. School officials immediately appealed the ruling. On October 29, 1930, the Texas Court of Appeals issued an opinion which agreed in part with the lower court. "School authorities," it declared, "have no power to arbitrarily segregate Mexican children...merely or solely because they are Mexicans."\textsuperscript{15} However, the appeals court upheld the school district's right to separate children on the basis of their English language handicaps. The court also refused to question the motives behind this practice on the grounds that such inquiries exceeded the court's authority: "No court may lay down a set of rules by which the school board and faculty shall grade, classify, and assign the pupils" because it is "wholly foreign to the prerogatives of the judiciary."\textsuperscript{16} LULAC attorneys appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, but the Court dismissed their petition for want of jurisdiction on October 26, 1931.\textsuperscript{17} Though LULAC never obtained a judicial decision condemning school segregation, its struggle attracted publicity in the Spanish language press and inspired the Lemon Grove colonia to organize its own drive against separate schools.

While both LULAC and the Lemon Grove comité waged battles for the same cause, their approaches differed. There was no petite bourgeoisie of small Mexican American businessmen in the Lemon Grove comité as there was in LULAC. On
the contrary, the comité had a predominantly working-class leadership and membership as did almost all southern California colonia organizations. The economic status of the comité membership severely limited the society's financial resources in comparison to the funds available to LULAC businessmen. The comité was further handicapped since most members were Mexican nationals who were less familiar with the American legal system than the Mexican Americans of LULAC. Thus they sought a Mexican institution—the consulate—for financial as well as moral support.

At the request of the Lemon Grove colonia, San Diego Consul Enrique Ferreira became the first consular agent to intervene in the school segregation controversy in California during the Depression. He seemed to be a potentially powerful ally since, unlike most other consular agents, his ready access to high officials in the Mexican government might allow him to have more influence. This access had resulted from his tenure of more than ten years as San Diego consul and from his family connections. His brother-in-law was Plutarco Elías Calles—strongman behind Mexican presidents from 1924 to 1934.18

Consul Ferreira recommended attorneys Fred C. Noon and A.C. Brinkley to the Lemon Grove comité, which agreed to pay the legal fees, though the consulate pledged to help if the comité were unsuccessful in its fundraising. The San Diego colonia was, however, able to cover all costs with the proceeds gained from a plea in La Opinión for contributions from colonias throughout southern California. Meanwhile, Ferreira personally, but quietly, organized the campaign against school segregation which resulted in a suit filed in the name of a segregated student, Roberto Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District. The consul also encouraged a boycott of the "Mexican" school that began on January 5, 1931, and, except for a single family, had the unanimous support of the local colonia. Ferreira also lessened the tensions between the colonia and school administration during the boycott by persuading both sides to agree to abide by the shortly expected court decision.19

The San Diego Superior Court of Judge Claude Chambers deliberated nearly four weeks in the case of Roberto Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District. The court heard school officials
repeat the argument that the Mexican school had been built to help children who were not fluent in English and were thus handicapped in their studies. The officials also offered another explanation. The Mexican facility, they stated, had been located in the barrio so that la raza children would not have to cross dangerous railroad tracks to reach it. Such arguments did not persuade Judge Chambers, and on March 13 he ordered the Mexican children readmitted to the regular school. Though Chambers acknowledged the need for special English classes, he ruled that "to separate as a group all Mexicans was without the authority of California law.... This separation deprives Mexican children of the presence of American children which is so necessary for learning the English language." Honoring its pledge to Consul Ferreira to accept the court's decision, the Lemon Grove School Board resisted community pressures to appeal the court's ruling. The la raza children once again were admitted to classes previously reserved for Anglo students.

**The Bliss Bill**

An attempt was made that would have overturned Chambers's ruling, but it did not come from Lemon Grove. On January 19, 1931, California Assemblyman George R. Bliss of Carpinteria introduced a bill to legalize the segregation of Mexican and Mexican American students. The Bliss bill called for an amendment to section 3.3 of the California school code which provided local school districts with "the power to establish separate schools for Indian children, and children of Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian ancestry." Assemblyman Bliss wanted the section dealing with Indian children modified to read "Indian children whether born in the United States or not." This change in wording, Bliss explained, would give schools authority to separate Mexican and Mexican American students from their Anglo counterparts on the grounds that la raza children were Indians. Bliss had employed this subterfuge when, acting in his capacity as a member of the Carpinteria school board, he had helped segregate the Aliso Elementary School. The school had been designated an "Indian School,"
but its enrollment had been restricted to Mexicans and it was commonly regarded in the colonia mexicana and larger Anglo society as the "Mexican school." 23

The Carpinteria colonia had protested to Consul Rafael de la Colina about the Aliso "Indian" school, but it refused to pursue the issue in the courts despite Colina's pledge to provide legal counsel. 24 This attitude contrasted sharply with the determined efforts of the Lemon Grove community and was largely due to the Carpinteria colonia's special social and economic position. While members of both the Lemon Grove and Carpinteria colonias earned their livelihood as laborers in the citrus industry, la raza in Carpinteria worked under more precarious circumstances. The recent invasion of Anglo migrants or "okies" into Santa Barbara County was seen as a threat to the jobs of la raza laborers. Though the growers still favored Mexicans as workers, the members of the colonia feared that a legal battle might provoke citrus employers to replace them with the newcomers. 25 "The rancheros [growers] controlled everything; they were the government," recalls a former colonia resident. 26

Fear of losing jobs was the primary reason for the colonia's refusal to fight school segregation openly, but a lack of confidence in the Los Angeles Mexican consulate also influenced the decision. Mexicans and Mexican Americans initially sought consular assistance, but they felt that local authorities "had no respect for Mexico, its government or its consulate." 27 Mexican consuls, recalls one contemporary, were partially responsible for this attitude because they tended to overlook the Carpinteria colonia due to its small population and distance from Los Angeles. The Los Angeles consuls directed most of their attention in Santa Barbara County to the larger Mexican settlement in the city of Santa Barbara.

Still another reason for the colonia's refusal to contest the segregated school was the public endorsement given to the "Indian" facility by California Attorney General Ulysses S. Webb. Though Webb could find "no authority for the establishment of separate schools for Mexicans," he still contended that segregation was legally defensible. 28 "The greater portion of the population of Mexico is Indian," Webb explained, and
“when such Indians emigrate to the United States they are subject to the laws applicable to other Indians.” 29 Webb’s views represented a professional opinion prepared for the Department of Education and did not constitute a judicial ruling. Nevertheless, Webb’s status as state attorney general intimidated the Carpinteria colonia. Unfamiliar with the American legal system, la raza of Carpinteria believed that Webb’s opinion could not be successfully appealed. “No one could do anything, [neither] the government nor the consulate,” recalls a contemporary. School segregation “was the law.” 30

Placement of Mexican and Mexican American students in educational facilities designated for Indians rested on ambiguous legal grounds. The ambiguity had been apparent since 1893 when Ricardo Rodríguez, a Mexican national and legal U.S. resident, petitioned to become a naturalized citizen. The county court of Bexar County, Texas, denied Rodríguez citizenship on the grounds that he was a “Mongolian” or at least that “his appearance indicates that he is a descendant of the original races of Mexico.” 31 The court based its decision on a federal statute restricting naturalization to Caucasians and persons of African descent. In 1897 the ruling was overturned in In Re Rodríguez, when the U.S. Circuit Court for the Western District of Texas upheld Rodríguez’s right to citizenship. The court declared that certain laws, treaties, and constitutional provisions “affirmatively confer the right of citizenship upon Mexicans.” 32 But the court added that “if the strict scientific classification of the anthropologist should be adopted, he [Rodríguez] would probably not be classed as white.” 33 Despite the decision in Rodríguez, the legal classification of Mexican nationals and Americans of Mexican descent remained unclear, for the decision applied only to Mexicans seeking citizenship. Thus no judicial precedent could be invoked to invalidate a law like the Bliss Bill which sought to legalize segregated schools for Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Distracted by the economic crisis, Mexican consuls in Los Angeles and elsewhere in California failed to learn about the Bliss Bill until after it had been approved by the state assembly. Lillian Hill, chief of the Division of Migratory Schools in the California Department of Education, alerted them shortly
after the assembly endorsed the legislation by a vote of 49 to 13 on March 5, 1931.34 She urged the Mexican consuls to lobby the Mexican and Anglo communities against the Bliss proposal and explained her opposition on the grounds that "segregation was simply un-American and unjust." She linked the introduction of the Bliss proposal to the earlier Lemon Grove controversy. According to Hill, a Lemon Grove supporter of school segregation had announced, "If this [the attempt to segregate Lemon Grove] fails, we will slip a bill through the state legislature so we can segregate these greasers."35

Los Angeles Consul Colina used Hill's words instead of his own to alert the colonia to the bill. He did so because he had been ordered by the Ministry of Foreign Relations to abstain from public criticism of the measure. The consuls could work against enactment of the law but only unofficially and confidentially. Colina informed the southern California colonia that the secretary of foreign relations and the Mexican Embassy in Washington were monitoring the bill's progress. The Los Angeles consul also pledged "to work in the manner which our government finds the most convenient to defeat the bill."36 He feared the measure would lead to a "much more serious" threat—enactment of "Jim Crow" laws and systematic segregation of all public facilities, including trains, buses, restaurants, and theaters.37

Believing that Anglo organizations would more effectively influence state politicians, Colina and his colleagues appealed for their help. Among those responding was the Los Angeles Conference of Civic Societies with a membership of 120 service clubs. The group publicly condemned the Bliss proposal as "anti-American, anti-democratic, and in conflict with our educational ideals."38 Consul Ferreira also worked closely with the Inter-Racial Council of San Diego, an organization founded to promote understanding among ethnic groups. The council enlisted the support of State Senator William E. Harper, a member of the Senate's Education Committee, who vowed to fight the discriminatory measure.39

While some southern California civic organizations denounced the Bliss bill as racist or un-American, homicide detective Edward Durán Ayres of the Los Angeles Sheriff's
Department offered other reasons for blocking the measure. Ayres, a well-known criminologist, warned that separate schools denied Indian and Mexican children "the opportunity to assimilate over time the North American culture and laws." This experience would "provoke hatred and resentment in children" and would later "give occasion to countless crimes for Indians and Mexicans."  

Though pleased with Ayres's opposition to school segregation, La Opinión criticized his reasons. The newspaper viewed the "assimilation of any culture as good," but Ayres's inference that Mexican culture, not school segregation per se, produced a disrespect for law and order incensed La Opinión's editors. "Our bloody conflicts, our revolutions, with all their sorrow and cruelty," the newspaper declared, "have all been the product of social and economic problems which have not escaped any country on earth." The Mexican immigrant's obedience to American law, La Opinión observed, was strong testimony to his respect for law and order.

Within the consular service, responsibility for stopping the Bliss measure from becoming law rested heavily upon San Francisco Consul General Alejandro Lubbert, the highest ranking Mexican diplomat in California. Lubbert appealed directly to Governor James Rolph for his support against the school bill. Rolph did not promise to veto the measure, but he assured Lubbert of his desire to work for harmony between the United States and Mexico. Though he received no pledges from Rolph, Lubbert reported to his superiors in Mexico City that he was confident of Rolph's veto. He based his prediction on his long and close personal friendship with the California governor.

The activities of Lubbert and others began to have an effect. By early April Senator Harper was predicting that the bill's chances for passage appeared slight. In an attempt to save the measure, amendments were proposed which would limit segregation to educational facilities below the eighth grade, but Harper argued that such changes would not disarm a "dynamite" bill capable of exploding into an international controversy. On April 16 he persuaded the Senate Education Committee to reject the measure.
There are no available transcripts of the education committee's proceedings, making it difficult to determine accurately the reasons for the bill's demise. The explanation seems to lie in Assemblyman Bliss's decision to back off from his own proposal because of the unfavorable publicity it had generated about Carpinteria.\textsuperscript{44} The \textit{Los Angeles Evening Express} had denounced Carpinteria school authorities for segregating Mexican American children and also criticized Attorney General Webb for sanctioning the policy. "Whatever be their race or color of their skin," the \textit{Evening Express} lectured Webb, "all persons born in the territory of the United States are citizens of this country and have a right to the same treatment which the law concedes to other citizens."\textsuperscript{45} The newspaper incorrectly presumed that all the children attending segregated classes in Carpinteria were Mexican Americans, but its editorial succeeded in creating unease among Carpinteria officials.

The \textit{Carpinteria Herald} attributed the \textit{Evening Express}'s attack to a formal complaint by the Mexican government. While no such complaint had been registered, there had been behind-the-scenes pressure and public criticism from many American citizens. The unfavorable publicity eventually resulted in Bliss's resignation from the local school board. Though the assemblyman refrained from explaining his action, it was apparently due to his desire to shield his hometown from further attacks in the press.\textsuperscript{46} Bliss's resignation was immediately followed by an invitation from Harry Lintz, principal of the Aliso School, to Los Angeles Consul Rafael de la Colina. Lintz wanted to set the Mexican consul "right as to the work of Aliso."\textsuperscript{47} Colina politely declined the invitation because of "pressing diplomatic affairs."\textsuperscript{48} A heavy work load was probably not Colina's reason for avoiding Carpinteria. The Mexican consul's inspection of the Aliso "Indian" school with its Mexican student body might have been interpreted as official approval of the separate educational facilities.

Segregation continued in Carpinteria, though there was a slackening in its enforcement. Some Mexican students were admitted to Anglo schools upon special request and after demonstrating competency in English. Still, most la raza children remained in segregated classes in Carpinteria and elsewhere in California.\textsuperscript{49}
While segregated schools for Mexicans and Mexican Americans continued in California, the legality of that segregation remained unresolved. The issue was further blurred when the school code was reworded in 1935. The new code retained the provisions authorizing separate schools for Indians but it also seemed to contradict this reaffirmation in another provision which exempted “wards of the United States government” or “descendants of the original American Indians of the United States” from attending separate facilities. Rather than being contradictory, the new wording actually reflected a devious attempt to authorize segregated schools but only for Mexican “Indians.” Demands by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs for an end to the segregation of Indians had resulted in the contorted language of the school code.

Méndez v. Westminster School District

The ambiguity surrounding the legality of school segregation for la raza remained until 1946 when the practice was declared illegal in Méndez v. Westminster School District. “The segregation of public grade school children of Mexican or Latin descent,” the federal district court ruled, “is contrary to general requirements of the school laws of California.” The Ninth Court reaffirmed the lower court decision adding that school officials “in segregating children of Mexican descent against their will and contrary to the laws of California violated the Fourteenth Amendment by depriving them of liberty and property without due process of law and by denying to them equal protection of the laws.”

Mexican consuls had not joined openly in the school integration campaign leading to the Méndez decision, but they had urged Mexican nationals to support the efforts of Mexican Americans who were leading the drive to integrate the schools. On the other hand, the consuls tried to instill a pride for the madre patria among their compatriots and their Mexican American children by encouraging the establishment of special learning centers where the Spanish language and Mexican history could be taught. "If it is right and just to make
Mexican residents in Mexico literate," observed Consul Aurelio Gallardo of Nogales, "it is more just and more patriotic to instruct and Mexicanize Mexicans outside of the nation in danger of losing their language, their Mexicanism, and their nationality." 55

In southern California the consuls helped establish learning centers in Van Nuys, El Monte, Colton, Irwindale, and Pacoima during the 1920s and 1930s. Interest in the classes was strong among colonia residents, and they fondly recall the campaign for mexicanismo. 56 The secretary of foreign relations rarely authorized funds for teachers' salaries or other operating expenses, but during the Depression books and supplies were usually provided through the Ministry of Education. 57 The centers also often received help from local school authorities. The Santa Monica Board of Education, for example, sold at a discount some twenty school desks to the local chapter of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, a colonia organization which sponsored an educational program in west Los Angeles. 58

Despite official and popular support for mexicanismo, there were some consuls who were less than enthusiastic about the educational program. Consul General Adolfo de la Huerta, an ex-president of Mexico who served as inspector of consulates in the United States during the Depression, advised long-time colonia residents to apply for American citizenship. A Mexican resident in the United States, de la Huerta explained, should participate in the political life of the community where he resides. Vice Consul Ernesto Romero shared de la Huerta's views and together they convinced some colonia residents to renounce their Mexican citizenship. Though only a few consuls gave unofficial and confidential advice of this type, their status lent an aura of authority to their recommendations. 59

Wielding prestige or influence also best describes the strategy employed by the California consuls to combat school segregation during the Depression. They directed their appeals almost exclusively to Anglo organizations and leaders, and they entered the fray only after others had initiated action. They were essentially followers, responding with strong
support to the appeal from the Lemon Grove colonia while studiously avoiding actions considered beyond their authority. They did help defeat the Bliss bill, but that victory did not end the practice of separate schools. Even the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision in 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education* that struck down the separate school principle did nothing to change the de facto segregation of school children resulting from housing patterns.

Since the 1946 *Mendez* and 1954 *Brown* decisions, other rulings have reaffirmed that segregation of Mexican and black school children violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Nevertheless, some school authorities subverted the law's meaning by integrating only Mexicans and blacks into the same schools. Local officials explained that by placing blacks among "white" Mexicans they were obeying the law. But in 1970, a federal district court, in *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi School District*, lent new strength to the integration process by declaring that "Mexicans are an identifiable minority group."\(^{60}\)

On the school segregation issue, the consuls in Los Angeles and elsewhere in California did not challenge the will of the colonias, but other developments, especially the church-state conflict in Mexico, threatened to rupture the consular-colonia relationship in the United States.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR


3. William A. Farmer, "The Influence of Segregation of Mexican and American School Children Upon the Development of Social Attitudes" (M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1937), 7; interviews with Eduardo Negrete, Fullerton, California, 26 March 1976; Lucas Lucio, Santa
Sclwol Segregatwn
Ana, California, 16 March 1976; 23 March 1976; and Emilio Martinez, Stanton, California, 29 March 1976.


5. Rafael De Negris to William D. Stephens, 7 June 1919, in National Archives, Department of State, Record Group 59, 311.12/422 (Hereafter cited as Nat. Arch., RG 59).


9. Secretary of Foreign Relations to the San Francisco Consulate General, 17 April 1931, in Archivo de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, IV-320-34 (Hereafter cited as ASRE).

10. La Opinión, 24 April 1931; Colina to the Mexican Embassy, 20 April 1931, in ASRE, IV-320-34.


15. Ibid.; also, see La Frensa, 7 May 1931; Hidalgo County Independent, 8 May 1931; El Defensor, 8 May 1931.


19. La Opinión, 25 January 1931; Evening Tribune, 8 January 1931; San Diego Union, 9 January 1931; La Mesa Scout, 15 February 1931; El Nacional, 6
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September 1931; Álvarez interview; “Lemon Grove School Board Minutes,” 14 January 1931, 12 February 1931.


23. Interview with Anna Hebel, Carpinteria, California; 27 October 1976. Also see: “Carpinteria School Board Minutes, 1930-1931,” Carpinteria, California; interview with José Macías, Carpinteria, California, 27 October 1976.

24. Consul Rafael de la Colina to José C. Limon, 16 January 1931, in ASRE, IV-320-34.


26. Macías interview.

27. Ibid.


30. Macías interview.

31. In Re Rodríguez, 81 Federal Reporter, 1st Series, 338 (W.D. Texas, 1897).

32. Ibid., 354.

33. Ibid., 349.

34. California, Assembly Journal of the Forty-Ninth Session of the Legislature of California (Sacramento, 1931), 41.

35. Lillian Hill to Senator Herbert Slater, 17 March 1931, in ASRE, IV-320-34.

36. La Opinión, 23 March 1931; Consul Colina to the Mexican Embassy, 18 March 1931, in ASRE, IV-320-34.

37. La Opinión, 24 April 1931.

38. La Opinión, 24 April 1931; Colina to the Mexican Embassy, 20 April 1931, in ASRE, IV-320-34.

39. Ferreira to Foreign Relations, 19 May 1931, in ASRE, IV-320-34.

40. La Opinión, 27 April 1931.

41. La Opinión, 28 April 1931.

42. Consul General Alejandro Lubbert to the Mexican Embassy, 7 April 1931, 7 May 1931, in ASRE, IV-320-34.
43. Senator William E. Harper to Nellie Foster, Inter-Racial Council of San Diego, 7 April 1931, 17 April 1931 in ASRE, IV-320-34.
44. Ibid.
45. Los Angeles Evening Express, 18 April 1931.
47. Carpinteria Herald, 17 April 1931.
50. California, State Legislature, Final Calendar of Legislative Business (Sacramento, 1935), 1563.
52. Méndez v. Westminster School District, 64 Federal Supplement 544. Also see Wollenberg, All Deliberate Speed, 125-135; Westminster Herald, 1 March 1946, 22 March 1946, 5 April 1946; Santa Ana Register, 3 April 1946; La Opinión, 16 April 1946.
This ruling foreshadowed an opinion eight years later in the landmark decision in Brown v. Board of Education which dealt with school segregation for blacks: "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Brown v. Board of Education, 347 United States Reports, 483, 495.
54. Negrete interview.
56. Interview with José Solórzano, Montebello, California, 11 March 1976; interview with José David Otozco, Los Angeles, California, 13 March 1976; Martínez interview.
57. La Opinión, 25 March 1931, 25 May 1931, 11 December 1931, 9 December 1934; El Heraldo de México, 21 September 1931; Los Angeles Consultate to Agustín R. Gómez, 3 June 1932, Consultate to Tranquilino Ponce, 8 June 1932, in ASRE, IV-328-1; Consultate to José Limón, 7 August 1933, in ASRE, IV-642-1; Consultate to Fernando Palomares, 6 June 1935, Consultate to Juan López, 28 June 1935, in ASRE, IV-710-6.
CHAPTER FIVE

Church-State Conflict in Southern California

MEXICO'S CHURCH-STATE CONFLICT reached across the border into southern California during the Depression when the Catholic church staged religious processions in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe as protests against the Mexican government. Consuls Alejandro V. Martinez of Los Angeles and Hermolao Torres of San Bernardino discouraged Mexican citizens from participating in the processions. In so doing they aroused the anger of Catholic groups and many in the colonias who accused them of interfering with the right of religious freedom and overstepping their responsibility as consular officials. For a time, the intensity of the dispute threatened to destroy the harmony needed to combat the Depression crisis.

Cárdenas's Reforms

The southern California controversy can be traced to the decision of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) to nominate General Lázaro Cárdenas for the Mexican presidency at its national convention in December 1933 in Querétaro. Party
leaders there called for revision of Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution. Free secular education and state supervision of private schools had been guaranteed under that article, but PNR leaders wanted the provision amended to require teaching of socialist principles at the primary and secondary levels in private and public schools. They sought to promote Marxism but were even more concerned with implementing a school curriculum devoted to secular rather than religious education.

Even before Cárdenas was elected and the constitution amended, the government introduced part of the new program. Narciso Bassols, secretary of education under President Abelardo Rodríguez, ordered in 1933 that instruction in the physiology of human reproduction be made part of the primary school curriculum. Bassols's promotion of courses in sex education reflected not only PNR's platform but also the recommendations of the Sixth Pan American Child Welfare Congress, which in 1930 had encouraged the teaching of hygiene and physiology. The goal was to reduce unwanted pregnancies and abortions among working and middle-class teenage girls.

The Catholic hierarchy and some lay leaders deliberately misrepresented the program to the public. Teachers were falsely accused of parading nude models in front of classes, conducting sexual experiments, and seducing their students. By May 1934, the campaign had become so successful that public opinion forced President Rodríguez to transfer Bassols from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of the Interior. The transfer did not silence him, however; he stepped up his criticism of the Catholic church, claiming that the attack on the new courses was a subterfuge to conceal Catholic desire to control education and secular affairs. Bassols urged President Rodríguez to launch an aggressive campaign against the church. Failure to do so, he told Rodríguez, would mean that the president's "reputation as a revolutionary would be broken into bits and pieces." Though a strong supporter of Bassols's education program, Rodríguez resisted his request. A more radical program, Rodríguez predicted, would "leave the presidential palace in smithereens" for incoming President Lázaro Cárdenas.
Like his immediate predecessors, Cárdenas came to the Mexican presidency with an anticlerical reputation. He often expressed his contempt for the clergy and religion by observing that “every moment spent on one’s knees is a moment stolen from humanity.”

Cárdenas used the presidential office to try to indoctrinate the Mexican population with his views about the clergy and society. The concept of class struggle should be a part of the curriculum, he insisted, because it would help protect peasants and workers from clerical domination.

Cárdenas also called for “the supremacy of the cooperative system, socially organizing the rural and urban laborers as producers and consumers” in order to “eventually transform the economic system of production and distribute the wealth among those who produce it.”

The hierarchy of the Mexican Catholic church initially refrained from attacking Cárdenas during his presidential campaign in the hope that a modus vivendi might be reached before the inauguration. Cárdenas, however, soon reaffirmed the principles of “socialist education” that he had developed while governor of Michoacán, prompting the clergy to single him out for attack. Archbishop Leopoldo Ruiz y Flores, the papacy’s apostolic delegate to Mexico, became the leading church critic of the new government. In 1934 the archbishop was forced to flee Mexico because of the furor he created with his defense of Pope Pius XI’s Acervus Animi, an encyclical sharply critical of Mexican legislation restricting the number of clergy in the country. From his exile post in San Antonio, Texas, Archbishop Ruiz y Flores continued his attacks against Cárdenas and Mexican educational policy. In pastoral letters, he directed priests and bishops to forbid Catholic parents to send their children to government or public schools. Those who did so would be excommunicated. He also ordered the clergy to continue religious instruction of students to counteract inroads made by government schools.

Ruiz y Flores and many other Mexican priests residing in the United States, some by choice and others because of forced exile, lobbied the American public for support against the Mexican government’s educational program. They sponsored demonstrations and published articles critical of the Mexican
government, hoping to arouse the American people to demand U.S. intervention against the Cárdenas administration. The movement received strong approval from American Catholic bishops who asked fellow Americans, Catholics or otherwise, to join the protests.¹²

Criticism of the Cárdenas policies was especially strong in southern California where Mexicans exiled since the time of the Díaz dictatorship had plotted against regimes south of the border. Los Angeles clergy had long welcomed refugee priests and bishops from Mexico and drafted them for pastoral work among the rapidly increasing number of Mexican and Mexican American Catholics. In 1932 sociologist Samuel Ortegón had conservatively estimated that among the more than 170,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the area, some 60 percent were practicing Catholics while another 20 percent were nominal Catholics.¹³ Another contemporary sociologist, while claiming that “the ethical side of religion” among la raza Catholics “is almost lightly regarded,” nonetheless acknowledged that “to the average Mexican mind” the church played a critical role: “to furnish manners and to sanctify functions of life, as birth, death, and marriage.”¹⁴ Whatever the church’s actual influence, there were twenty-six parish churches and four Catholic community centers serving the southern California colonia mexicana during the 1930s.¹⁵ These contacts provided the exiled clergy with an excellent opportunity to enlist recruits in the campaign against the Cárdenas government.

The Prayer Movement

In Los Angeles the Mexican clerics found their most dedicated followers among the members of the Mexican branch of the Holy Name Society, a religious confraternity of laymen dedicated to stopping the use of blasphemy and obscenity. José David Orozco, a local radio announcer and travel agency owner, founded Santo Nombre, as it was popularly known in the colonias, and organized some forty chapters in southern California during late 1929 and early 1930. His reasons were
more than religious. The widespread discrimination and prejudice against Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Orozco believed, might produce an inferiority complex among la raza. He sought to offset this possibility by using Santo Nombre to promote a “Mexican consciousness” and ethnic pride in the community.16

Orozco and Santo Nombre became vigorous critics of the Cárdenas regime. The society received strong encouragement from José Orozco’s uncle, exiled Guadalajara Archbishop Francisco Orozco y Jiménez, whose criticism of Mexico’s religious policies had led to his expulsion from the country three years earlier.17 Orozco y Jiménez and his nephew urged Mexican and Anglo Catholics to sponsor a prayer movement for Catholics suffering persecution in Mexico.18

The annual procession honoring the Virgin of Guadalupe, patroness of Mexico, was to be the vehicle to draw attention to the prayer movement. The procession had first been held in east Los Angeles in 1928 when Julio C. Guerrero and other eastside Catholics had escorted a local chapter of the Hijas de María, a women’s society dedicated to venerating the Virgin Mother, on a short march. In 1930 Orozco had persuaded Guerrero to have Santo Nombre sponsor the procession. By 1934 the procession had become a tradition among all Holy Name chapters, Anglo as well as Mexican.19 Advertised in the Catholic and Spanish language press as a memorial service for those who had suffered persecution in Mexico, the 1934 procession attracted Catholic organizations like the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Boy Scout Drum and Bugle Corps, and the Loyola High School Band. Bishop John J. Cantwell, head of the diocese, endorsed the procession and agreed to review the parade and officiate at a benediction.20

Plans for the march alarmed local Mexican consular officials, who feared it would lead the American public to favor U.S. intervention against the Cárdenas government. Los Angeles consuls had been monitoring the activities of Mexican clerics since 1930. Consul Rafael de la Colina suspected that Archbishop Orozco y Jiménez was secretly gathering arms for a revolt against the Mexican government. To collect evidence against the archbishop, he had in 1932 placed an agent, posing
as a chauffeur, in a prominent Mexican family known for its generous support of the church. Colina's tactics attracted the attention of ex-President Plutarco Elías Calles, strongman behind the Rodríguez presidency, who sent a personal message to Colina, asking to be kept posted on what the consul discovered. 21

When no evidence was found against the archbishop, Colina called off surveillance of exiled clerics and their supporters. Not until protests surfaced in 1934 against the Cárdenas government did the consulate again become concerned. Consul Alejandro V. Martínez, Colina's successor, responded to the clerical attacks by sponsoring conferences and appearing on radio broadcasts. His explanations of the Mexican government's church policy were aimed primarily at the residents of the colonia "so they may understand the justice of our laws." 22 Privately, Martínez confessed to his superiors that he was making little headway in winning over la raza. He predicted that the clerics would persuade the colonia to support the forthcoming protest march, and he feared the demonstration would lead to an attack on the consulate. As a safety precaution he secured local police protection and employed special detectives to watch the activities of David Orozco and Archbishop Orozco y Jiménez.

On December 7 Martínez released a statement to La Opinión accusing organizers of the march of planning to use the parade to pressure the American government to intervene in Mexico's internal affairs. The organizers, he stated, were "eternal enemies of Mexico's social, economic, and cultural progress," and he urged all Mexicans "who are real Mexicans" not to participate in the procession. 23

The next day a handful of Mexican and Mexican American Catholics gathered outside the offices of La Opinión and demanded publication of their response to Consul Martínez. The procession's objective, they declared, was to honor the Virgin of Guadalupe and not to persuade the American people to oppose the Mexican government. Americans were well aware of recent events in Mexico and did not need a procession to bring this issue to their attention. On the other hand, they acknowledged that their participation in the parade would
reflect their opposition to the Cardenas government. They saw themselves as the “defenders of Mexico’s national integrity.”

Though La Opinión refrained from endorsing either party in the dispute, it did criticize the Mexican government’s educational program. “Socialist education places schools within the infernal circle of a degraded and corrupt politics,” the colonia newspaper stated. La Opinión’s criticism infuriated Consul Martínez, who told his superiors that the newspaper was “anti-revolutionary, fanatical, unpatriotic,” and the voice of Catholic propaganda. Martínez’s anger caused him to forget that La Opinión was far from being a mouthpiece for Catholicism. American intervention, demanded by some members of the Mexican Catholic hierarchy in the United States, was sharply denounced in the newspaper. On this issue La Opinión sided with the consulate and considered talk of American intervention a threat to Mexico’s sovereignty. There would be no need for intervention, La Opinión editorialized, because religious education would be reestablished in due time.

La Opinión’s hope of eventual rapprochement between church and state did not appear likely on December 9 when the procession moved down Boyle Avenue and into the heart of the east Los Angeles colonia. The turnout in 1934 was so great—an estimated 40,000 persons attended—that colonia residents still recall this procession as the most popular ever held. Not only la raza but the entire southern California community supported the procession. Anglo-American, Italian, Japanese, Polish, and black Catholics sent representatives from as far away as Banning, Brawley, San Diego, and Santa Barbara. But la raza naturally formed the largest ethnic group, for the procession was officially a celebration of the 403rd anniversary of the apparition of the Virgin at Tepeyac—considered the holiest of all events by many Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

The marchers fulfilled Martínez’s prediction that the procession would become a protest against the Mexican government. Mexico’s educational policy was the subject of many bitter pronouncements delivered by church leaders. “Let us pray,” intoned Bishop Cantwell, “that the eyes of the present administration in Mexico may be opened and the unhappy
nation may redeem its past and become a great Catholic country under Christian rulers." Other speakers described “men and women dying at the doors of their churches.” The audience applauded these speeches with shouts of “Viva Cristo Rey,” the famous battle cry of the armed Catholic rebellion of 1926 to 1929 against the Calles presidency.

The controversy did not cease with the end of the march. Two days later, on December 11, Father John Vaughan, a Jesuit priest and philosophy professor, attacked Martínez for his call to boycott the procession. The antireligious policy of the Cárdenas government made it unworthy of the Mexican people’s support, Vaughan said in a radio broadcast. Persecution of the church in Mexico should concern not only the colonia mexicana but everyone in southern California. Anglo Americans who regarded the “cause of Mexico as the cause of God” should join the protesting Mexicans, he declared.

Consul Torres’s Appeal

Martínez’s refusal to respond to Vaughan’s charges quieted the debate between the consulate and the Catholic protesters until another Virgin of Guadalupe procession was staged in San Bernardino only a week after the Los Angeles march. San Bernardino Vice Consul Hermolao Torres, like his Los Angeles colleagues, closely watched the staging of the procession under the direction of Father Gabriel Pérez, a local priest. Though confronting the same situation, Torres tried harder than his Los Angeles counterparts to stop the procession. He obtained the support of local Masonic lodges and Manuel J. López, a close friend of San Bernardino Mayor Ormande W. Secumbe. Accompanied by López and representatives of the lodges, Torres went to city hall and asked city officials to cancel the parade permit. The procession, he argued, was not simply a religious event but a demonstration against the Mexican government. Although failing to get the permit revoked, he received Mayor Secumbe’s pledge to stop the march if posters or signs slandering the Mexican government were displayed.
Torres then issued a statement to *El Sol*, a local San Bernardino and Riverside Spanish-language newspaper, urging a boycott of the parade. Few colonia members read the consul's message, however, because young Catholics apparently either bought or stole almost all the copies of the newspaper. Although denying the charges of theft, the Los Angeles and San Diego Catholic diocese newspaper, *The Tidings*, conceded that mexicano youths were buying the papers and burning them to demonstrate their disgust with the consul's appeal.

Torres enlisted a group of newspaper vendors to insure delivery of a second message the following day. This time his appeal was successfully circulated among the colonias in San Bernardino and neighboring Mexican communities. Torres asked his compatriots not to demonstrate against their government and sully Mexico's image in the United States. On questionable legal grounds, he warned Mexican nationals that it was "unlawful and unpatriotic to take part in a protest demonstration in a foreign country against our country." He also denounced Father Pérez, a Spaniard, as "neither a Mexican nor a member of la raza...without any right to intervene in affairs purely Mexican." Torres compared the Spanish priest's supporters to the Mexicans who refused to defend their country against the American invasion of 1846 and the French intervention of 1862.

Torres also took his appeal to the radio audience. Through free air time provided by a local business, Torres implored Mexican nationals to boycott the procession and affirm their patriotism for the madre patria. "Those participating in the protest demonstration," the San Bernardino consul predicted, "will receive the anathema which bad sons of the country deserve."

In an attempt to secure more radio time, Torres contacted the Club Nacionalista Pro-Baja California and asked for permission to make an appeal on that organization's weekly program. But the club denied the consul air time on the grounds that the message conflicted with the society's objectives. The club, established to aid Mexicans returning to their homeland, especially Baja California, was also dedicated to "protecting the good name of Mexico and its nationals" and working "for unity
and welfare" of the southern California colonia. Members were required to refrain from discussing politics or religion, and it was probably the desire to avoid controversy that led to the organization's refusal to grant Torres radio time. Insulted by the club's denial, Torres asked the secretary of foreign relations to inform the governor of Baja California about the society's lack of cooperation. But the Mexican consul was as unsuccessful in having the Club Nacionalista chastized as he was in securing its support.

Torres's campaign failed to stop the procession from attracting a large crowd. Two to three thousand people either marched or watched the Guadalupe procession. But not all parade observers were in sympathy with the marchers. Pedro Samano, a Baptist minister, and Mexican members of local Masonic lodges attended as Torres's special agents and watched for posters slandering the Mexican government. No such signs appeared, and the parade was held without incident. Father Pérez, however, publicly criticized the Mexican government for its "persecution of Catholics in Mexico" and assured his parishioners that "we are in a free country and have the right to follow our religion." A few days after the march, members of Father Pérez's church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, publicly condemned Torres's campaign against the procession and accused him of obstructing religious freedom guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. The Holy Name Society for the Los Angeles–San Diego diocese endorsed the parish's protest in a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Both Torres and Los Angeles Consul Martinez were denounced for their "audacious interference" with "our constitutional principles of religion and expression" and for their "attack and insult [to] the Catholic religion." The society demanded that the U.S. government pressure the "atheistic" Mexican regime into respecting the rights of the Catholic church as well as other religions in Mexico. By urging American intervention in Mexico's domestic affairs, the Catholic organization was hardly in a position to complain about the Mexican consuls' alleged meddling in U.S. internal affairs.

The Independent, a San Bernardino newspaper, joined the Catholic groups in demanding the removal of Consul Torres.
The English-language press had been silent during his attempts to stop the Guadalupe procession, but the Independent now criticized Torres for his "cheeky" behavior in "robbing local Mexicans of their religion." The newspaper also accused the Mexican government of using "Bolshevist methods" against the entire Catholic population in Mexico.

Consul Torres responded to the newspaper's accusations by recounting instances of clerical interference in Mexican affairs. Church meddling in secular matters, Torres explained, was partially responsible for the Mexican revolution—a movement grounded in Mexican ideas and doctrines, not in the foreign ideology of bolshevism. While defending his government, Torres refrained from answering the attacks leveled personally at him, even though he regarded the Independent's charges as libelous. A Mexican consular agent, Torres explained to Independent editor Gerald Ward, is obligated to protest only matters involving "the good name of Mexico and its government." Torres's defense of Mexico's religious policies failed to convince Guadalupe parishioners and other members of the San Bernardino community. On the contrary, they cited the Independent's attacks on the San Bernardino consul and the Mexican government as evidence of the need to expel Torres and Martinez from the country.

Protests against the Mexican consuls were sent to Massachusetts Congressman John W. McCormack, chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities, which was investigating charges that foreign consular and diplomatic agents were spreading Nazi and Communist propaganda. McCormack asked the U.S. State Department to determine if the consuls' removal was warranted. Privately, he had already decided that the consuls were guilty of attempting to suppress religious freedom, and he hoped the State Department would find them guilty and demand their expulsion. McCormack wanted the American government to publicly proclaim the
reason for the expulsion: Mexican foreign agents had interfered in U.S. internal affairs. The congressman also wanted the consuls' ouster explained as a corollary to the Roosevelt policy of nonintervention in Mexico.\textsuperscript{48}

A Catholic and a Democrat, McCormack believed that Roosevelt had not taken a strong enough stand against Cárdenas's policies. His views were shared by Congressman Clare G. Fenerty, a Republican from Pennsylvania who introduced a congressional resolution on June 6 requesting the Mexican government to recall the consuls. The House Committee on Foreign Relations did not endorse the resolution, but it did receive strong support from many quarters.\textsuperscript{49}

While McCormack and the State Department awaited completion of a Justice Department investigation, Edward L. Reed of the State Department's Division of Mexican Affairs discussed Consul Torres's case with Dr. Pablo Campos-Ortiz, Mexican chargé d'affaires. The United States, Reed explained, would ask for the consuls' recall if there were any basis for the complaints. Campos-Ortiz had also received reports about Torres and was inclined to believe "the consul had exceeded his authority and exhibited far too much zeal when protesting against the demonstration."\textsuperscript{50} Martínez faced similar charges, but he was not mentioned in this conversation, probably because his action had not attracted as much attention. Nevertheless, the chargé was sufficiently impressed with the complaint against Torres that he was willing to regard the "slightest intimation" as reason enough to order the consul's transfer to another post.

The strength of the complaint against the southern California consuls was not the decisive reason for Mexico's willingness to transfer Torres and Martínez. The religious issue had produced vigorous protests among American Catholics and others who were demanding that the Roosevelt administration abandon its policy of nonintervention. The Fenerty resolution had been only the latest of many measures urging such action. Six months earlier Massachusetts Congressman John P. Higgins had introduced a resolution asking the president to break relations with Mexico until that country changed its policy on religion and religious education.\textsuperscript{51} A few weeks later Idaho
Senator William Borah introduced still another resolution requesting the Senate to protest Mexico's religious situation. The bills did not arouse sufficient support for passage in Congress, but the measures attracted public attention in the United States.

Despite pressure, the United States remained committed to its nonintervention position. The State Department repeatedly defended the policy by presenting it to American protesters and their supporters "in the most positive and unequivocal language." Secretary of State Cordell Hull explained to Congressman Higgins that his proposal to withdraw recognition of Mexico "is not within the province of this government" and "would be tantamount to an effort to determine the course to be taken by another nation." The Mexican government sought to encourage Hull's position by expressing its willingness to remove the consuls if the United States desired their expulsion. The Mexican government recognized that a defense of the consuls would provide Catholic protesters with more ammunition against Roosevelt's Mexican policy. The New Deal's nonintervention policy would elicit less criticism and reduce the danger of its repudiation if Mexico promptly removed the southern California consuls.

Within a few weeks of Campos-Ortiz and Reed's conversation, Torres and Martinez were transferred to the less prestigious posts of Denver, Colorado and Tucson, Arizona. Campos-Ortiz assured the State Department that the consular agents would refrain from doing anything in their new posts that would invite criticism; they had been "properly admonished." Nevertheless, Reed suspected the consular controversy would not end until the consuls were out of the country. Any inquiries by Catholic groups, Reed reasoned, could be easily assuaged with news of the consuls' transfer to posts outside the United States. Their removal would also permit the State Department to close the case and avoid the unpleasantness of a formal protest to the Mexican government. Congressman McCormack, pressing the State Department for action, also considered the consuls' reassignment to another country as the "satisfactory solution." Mexico's chief representative in the United States, Ambassador Francisco Castillo Nájera, agreed
with Reed and McCormack and urged Mexico's secretary of foreign relations to assign the consuls to posts outside the United States. Reassignment of the consuls to the Arizona and Colorado posts, admitted Castillo Nájera, had been a "serious mistake." On July 6, 1935, the Mexican secretary of foreign relations transferred Consul Martínez to Havana, Cuba, and Vice Consul Torres to Panama City, Panama. On May 21, almost two months before their transfer, the Justice Department had completed its investigation and exonerated consuls Martínez and Torres of any wrongdoing. The investigators could cite no evidence that the consuls or any group acting for them had interfered with religious freedom in the United States. The investigation also disclosed that Torres's and Martínez's remarks had been directed specifically to Mexican nationals, not to American citizens of Mexican descent or other American nationals. In short, observed Mexican Affairs Chief Reed, there was not "a reasonably good case against the consuls."

Though found innocent of any impropriety, consuls Martínez and Torres had created an uproar in the Los Angeles and San Bernardino colonias and elsewhere. The organizers of the Guadalupe processions in Los Angeles and San Bernardino remember vividly the strong resentment against the consuls among la raza Catholics. But the feelings of animosity soon subsided. After Martínez's transfer, Santo Nombre leader José David Orozco reestablished ties with the consulate. In 1939 he served as president of the consulate-sponsored Committee of Patriotic Festivals for the 16 de Septiembre and Cinco de Mayo celebrations. Later that year he was part of a welcoming committee for such notorious anticlerical Mexican leaders as President Plutarco Elías Calles, in exile at Del Mar, California, and President Lázaro Cárdenas, who was visiting nearby Tijuana.

With the passage of time, ill feeling toward Torres and Martínez disappeared, and surviving supporters of the Guadalupe processions regard the consuls as having merely carried out their duties as representatives of the Mexican government. Rather than remembering them as fanatical anticlerics, they point out that Martínez enjoyed close friendships
with several Catholic priests and Torres allowed his family to participate in religious services at the local parish church. Nevertheless, the conflict over the processions had caused an uproar in both the colonia and Anglo community and sharply underscored the consuls' vulnerability. Martínez and Torres had failed to rally the colonia mexicana, even though their pleas had been aimed at la raza's strong sentiments for la madre patria. Religious fervor among la raza was much stronger than the patriotic ties linking the colonia to the consulates. The church-state conflict, however, was not the only test of consular prestige and influence. Attempts to organize la raza agricultural workers also provoked bitter confrontations.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. An official account of the proceedings is found in Partido Nacional Revolucionario, Memoria de la segunda convención nacional ordinaria del Partido Nacional Revolucionario efectuada en la ciudad de Querétaro del 3 al 6 de diciembre de 1933 (México, D.F., 1934).


5. Ibid., 202.


10. Excélsior, 4 May 1934. Also see Cárdenas's inaugural address in Universal Gráfica, 30 November 1934, and Excélsior, 2 December 1934.


12. The Tidings, 28 December 1934.


16. Interview with José David Orozco, Los Angeles, California, 13 March 1976.

17. Dulles, Yesterday, 299-300, 460, 530.

18. The Tidings, 30 November 1934, 7 December 1930; La Opinión, 7 December 1930; Interview with Julio C. Guerrero, Los Angeles, California, 6 March 1976; Orozco interview.


20. The Tidings, 30 November 1934, 7 December 1934; La Opinión, 7 December 1934; Los Angeles Evening Herald Express, 6 December 1934; Orozco and Guerrero interviews.


23. La Opinión, 7 December 1934. La Opinión was the only Spanish-language newspaper in Los Angeles after El Heraldo de México's demise in 1931.

24. La Opinión, 8 December 1934.

25. La Opinión, 18 July 1935.


27. La Opinión, 18 and 19 January 1934.

28. Interview with Catarino Cruz, Orange, California, 23 March 1976; Orozco interview.

29. La Opinión, 16 December 1934; The Tidings, 14 December 1934; Los Angeles Evening Express Herald, 10 December 1934; "Celebración del 403 aniversario de la aparición guadalupina, 1531-1934," 9 December 1934, in possession of Julio C. Guerrero; Guerrero and Orozco interviews.

30. The Tidings, 14 December 1934.

31. Ibid.

32. Consul Hermolao Torres to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 12, 15 and 17 December 1934, in ASRE, IV-318-3.

33. El Sol, 14 December 1934; Torres to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 17 December 1934, in IV-318-3.

34. The Tidings, 28 December 1934.

35. Torres to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 17 December 1934, in ASRE, IV-318-3.

36. El Sol, 14 and 15 December 1934.

37. Ibid.
38. Radio message to the colonia mexicana over Station KFXM, 15 December 1934, in ASRE, IV-318-3.


41. Torres to Foreign Relations, 10 January 1935, in ASRE, IV-318-3.

42. *San Bernardino Sun*, 17 December 1934; *The Tidings*, 28 December 1934; Matilde E. Hicks interviews with Eduardo Rubio, San Bernardino, California, 2 June 1976; and Jesus Casarez, San Bernardino, California, 2 June 1976; Torres to Foreign Relations, 17 December 1934, in ASRE, IV-318-3.


46. Torres to Gerald E. Ward, 13 February 1935; also, see Torres to Ward, 9 February 1935, Ward to Torres, 12 February 1935, in ASRE, IV-318-3.

47. Oliver M. Charleville to John W. McCormack, 1 February 1935, in National Archives, Record Group 59, 702.1211/2411 (Hereafter cited as Nat. Arch., RG 59).


49. Congressional Record, 74th Congress, 1st session (June 6, 1935), 8819.


52. Ibid., (January 31, 1935), 1298; see also Key Pittman to Cordell Hull, 5 February 1935, Nat. Arch., RG 59, 812.404/1541.


57. Reed to the Secretary of State, 29 April 1935, Nat. Arch., RG 59, 702.1211/2437.


59. Ibid.
60. Orozco, Guerrero, Casarez, and Rubio interviews.

61. "Speech of José David Orozco on the occasion of the visit of President Lázaro Cárdenas to Tijuana, Baja California," 8 July 1939, in author's possession, courtesy of José David Orozco; Orozco interview.

62. Interview with Nicolás Avila, Los Angeles, California, 8 April 1976; Orozco, Rubio, and Casarez interviews.
CHAPTER SIX

Organizing

La Raza

Farm Workers

MEXICAN CONSULAR AGENTS in the United States had intervened in labor disputes from the time that large numbers of Mexican immigrants had begun arriving in the United States at the turn of the century. During the Depression the Los Angeles consuls actively aided the unionization of la raza farm workers, but the relationship was not always harmonious. Differences in philosophy and strategy strained tempers and hampered cooperation. Nonetheless, sentiments of Mexican patriotism and cultural heritage led workers to look to the consuls for assistance, and sometimes leadership, just as they had during the repatriation crisis and the school segregation controversy. In responding, the Los Angeles consuls tried to devise strategies that reflected the general guidelines and specific instructions issued by their superiors in Washington, D.C. and Mexico City. These strategies also reflected a consul's own perception of duty and personal political ideology.

The sometimes uneasy relationship between the Los Angeles consulate and organized labor during the Depression
became evident at the outset in the experiences of the Confederación Uniones Obreras Mexicanas (CUOM). In 1928 Consul Alfonso Pesqueira had lent his support to the drive to create CUOM, a union which was to include all la raza laborers in southern California, rural as well as urban. The leaders of southern California’s colonia societies believed that only such unity could produce improvement in wages and working conditions. Former members believe that the interest expressed by the consuls played a large part in attracting “workers from throughout southern California to the union” and swelling membership to between two and three thousand in the first year.  

CUOM welcomed the consulate’s assistance but the consular-union alliance was far from harmonious. At the organizing convention in May 1928 the consuls were disappointed when CUOM leaders endorsed anarchist-syndicalist principles calling for labor union control of industry and government and the use of strikes and sabotage to achieve those ends. The union’s constitution advocated the “complete freedom [of the proletariat] from capitalistic tyranny.” The Los Angeles consuls had long opposed such ideas and on occasion had even spied on those Mexicans and Mexican Americans whom they suspected of advocating radical tactics. On August 23, 1907, for example, Los Angeles Consul Antonio Lozano had aided U.S. authorities in the arrest of Ricardo Flores Magón, the leading advocate of anarchist-syndicalist principles in the colonia mexicana during the early twentieth century. Magón and his followers had organized the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) in 1905 in St. Louis, Missouri, to overthrow Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz. By the late 1920s, however, Los Angeles consuls were no longer battling the PLM for influence over la raza. Nor was the PLM any longer the staunch defender of the working class. Union organizers and other colonia residents now criticized PLM members for confining themselves to giving colorful “speeches at the placita” in Sonora Town and at testimonial dinners. The society’s decline was dramatically underscored when Adolfo Moncada Villarreal, who had once spied on PLM for the Mexican government, was the organization’s president during the 1920s.
The PLM heritage was reflected in the newly created CUOM, which voiced anarchist-syndicalist principles but mainly as a ritualistic bow to the past by a union now pledged to observe the “laws of this country.” The consuls recognized that CUOM's espousal of radical methods was largely rhetoric they would have preferred not to hear. As it turned out, the alliance between CUOM and the consuls was short-lived; the union declined in influence and ceased operations in 1933. The collapse came as no surprise to those who had accused the union leaders of spending more time and energy proclaiming support for working-class solidarity and rights than bettering members' working conditions and wages. Contributing to the union's demise was the lack of financial resources. Only some two hundred members, less than 20 percent of the entire membership, paid their dues. Some felt they had no reason to pay but most simply could not afford to do so. Mexicanos generally “never had enough money to...pay for food and housing” much less union dues, according to union organizers.

The Berry Pickers Strike

Differences among union activists and consuls over the proper strategy for helping la raza farm workers surfaced dramatically shortly after the disintegration of CUOM. The occasion was a wage dispute between la raza berry pickers and their Japanese employers, which erupted in May 1933. Hundreds of berry pickers harvested the crop from May to June for earnings varying from 9 cents to 20 cents an hour. To maximize their incomes, entire families, parents and children, labored in the fields.

The berry pickers rallied for higher wages and attracted farm workers from throughout the San Gabriel Valley to the Zaragoza meeting hall in El Monte. There they drew up demands for the Japanese growers and organized a strike committee led by Armando Flores, a former CUOM organizer. The committee demanded 25 cents an hour or 50 cents for a crate of berries. The growers offered to go as high as 20 cents
Organizing Farm Workers

an hour or 45 cents a crate, but the farm workers remained firm in their demands. A strike was called which began on June 1.12

Despite their united resistance to the growers, the farm workers were battling among themselves for control of the strike committee. There were two major factions, one led by Flores and another by representatives of the Cannery and Agricultural Industrial Union (CAWIU). The Communist party in 1931 had organized CAWIU as an arm of the Trade Union Unity League, and the union had participated in a number of strikes until its leaders were arrested on criminal syndicalism charges in 1934.13 Some scholars have identified the CAWIU as Anglo and Communist, and the Flores opposition as Mexican and non-Communist.14 But union activists and colonia residents remember only a philosophical difference over who was to be the sole bargaining agent for the strikers. CAWIU, “composed largely of Communists and anarchists,” opposed Flores and his more moderate supporters. There was no clear-cut division along ethnic lines, for Mexicans and Mexican Americans were members of both groups.15

Flores attempted to win control of the strike committee with the support of Consul Alejandro V. Martínez. He persuaded Martínez to speak on his behalf on June 7 before the striking farm workers at the Zaragoza hall. Martínez drew a large audience: there were “so many people there,” recalls Alejandro Castro, a former Hicks Camp resident, “you could hardly get into the hall.” Martínez condemned the CAWIU leaders as “reds,” but his charge failed to sway most of the strikers, many of whom accused him of selling out to the growers; a few even “threatened his life.”16 The CAWIU remained a strong force on the strike committee until eight of its organizers were arrested and jailed on June 10. The absence of CAWIU leadership gave the Flores faction and the consuls victory by default.17

While the strikers argued among themselves, the strike continued and gradually spread from the San Gabriel Valley to elsewhere in Los Angeles and Orange counties. At first the consulate remained uninvolved despite occasional appeals for help from individuals and small delegations. One such
delegation, led by Torrance residents Nicolás Avila and Guillermo Velarde, helped lead to a change in policy. Avila, fired from his job for reading a strike leaflet, had persuaded several fellow workers, including his friend Velarde, a grocery store owner with anarchist-syndicalist sympathies, to accompany him to the consulate. 18

The delegation found Martínez reluctant to help during the second week of the strike, even though he claimed to sympathize with them. “We were turned down very politely, Mexican style,” Guillermo’s sister Evelyn Velarde Benson recalls. 19 Martínez’s hostile reception at the Zaragoza hall may have accounted for his reluctance. Almost immediately, however, the delegation’s spirits lifted when they heard Vice Consul Ricardo Hill rebuke his superior and pledge “one hundred percent support for his paisanos.” 20 Hill’s reaction was not surprising, for he later explained in an interview after his tenure in Los Angeles had ended that he interpreted his “duty as a consular officer of Mexico...to protect the interests of my nationals in any way and all controversies in which their human and constitutional rights are at stake.” 21 He was motivated by more than his personal conception of consular duty, however, for he regarded capitalism as an “outmoded profit system,” though this was a view he shared only with close friends in the southern California community. 22 Hill also cared little if his outspoken behavior angered Martínez. Son of revolutionary General Benjamín Hill, he was independently wealthy and had influential political connections. He had already become popular in the colonia because of his work during the repatriation crisis, and his stature increased when word got out that he had criticized Martínez for his refusal to provide assistance to the farm workers. 23

Though Martínez had no enthusiasm for helping the striking farm workers, he soon changed his mind when his Mexico City superiors demanded consular intervention. On June 9 Foreign Minister José M. Puig Casauranc instructed the Los Angeles consulate and other California offices to “render all assistance” so the berry strike might be a “success [in] securing an increase in the insignificant, unjust salaries paid our compatriots.” 24 On the same day, Puig discussed the strike with
U.S. Ambassador Josephus Daniels who requested an "unofficial and personal memorandum" from the Mexican government summarizing its concern.\(^{25}\)

The ministry's interest reflected more than the views of Puig Casauranc. Former President Plutarco Elías Calles, who remained a powerful figure in Mexico although living in Baja California, personally contributed some $4,500 to the striking farm workers. He also contacted Mexican ministers and labor and political leaders, urging their support for the strikers. In addition, Calles asked President Franklin D. Roosevelt "to exert every effort toward bringing about a prompt resolution" of the strike.\(^{26}\) Some scholars suspect Calles was using the strike as a ploy to strengthen relations between his country's official political party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario, and labor in Mexico.\(^{27}\) Whatever his motives, he helped encourage the Ministry of Foreign Relations to take a strong stand in support of the striking workers.

Pressure from home and his own vice consul prompted Martínez to appeal to federal and state officials for the appointment of an arbitration team that might help end the dispute. On July 7 a settlement was reached after talks were held among representatives of the strike committee, the State Division of Labor Statistics, the growers, and the consulates of Mexico and Japan. Farm workers wanted more than the 20 cents per hour or $1.50 for a nine-hour day they were receiving, but the settlement was enough to end the strike.\(^{28}\)

The strike had secured higher wages but the season was ending and the demand for pickers was slackening. Financial help from Mexico also ended because General Calles and Puig Casauranc regarded the signing of the contract as a complete victory: "Our compatriots in a foreign land...may count upon the support of their brothers in Mexico," General Calles declared.\(^{29}\) Actually Mexican assistance was needed because officials found that many Mexicans and Mexican Americans remained unemployed and "starvation" for some appeared imminent.\(^{30}\) Los Angeles consuls Martínez and Hill responded by cooperating with the local chamber of commerce in helping workers secure employment in the San Joaquin Valley or repatriation to Mexico.\(^{31}\)
Though chamber and consular officials worked together to help destitute farm workers, their relations were strained because of the role Martínez and Hill played in ending the berry strike. "The Mexican consular office is being used to put over a labor organization and to foment labor troubles throughout the state," declared George P. Clements, head of the chamber's agricultural department.\(^{32}\) Clements's complaint reached the departments of Labor and State in Washington, D.C., where it was quietly shelved. Herschel V. Johnson, head of the State Department's Mexican Affairs desk, found no "conclusive evidence of a character which might be held either unlawful, unfriendly, or improper."\(^{33}\) The chamber and many growers remained unconvinced, but the relative lack of unrest in the fields during the next two years calmed their anxieties.

**A New Alliance**

Shortly after the settlement of the berry strike, Hill was invited to attend a meeting of farm workers who wished to transform the loosely knit group of former strikers into a formal union. The meeting, held on July 15, 1933, produced a new organization, the Confederación de Unión de Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos (CUCOM), and an alliance with the consulate.\(^{34}\) The union's constitution stipulated that the Los Angeles consulate would have a representative on the governing board.

Recruitment of farm workers proved time consuming, and two years passed before CUCOM regarded its membership as large enough for a test of strength with the growers. The interregnum also coincided with the absence of Ricardo Hill, who had been ordered to a post in Marseilles, France, despite protests from la raza union leaders who regarded his transfer as "detrimental to the interests of Mexican workers."\(^{35}\) Hill returned in the summer of 1935 following a struggle over control of the Mexican government between ex-President Calles and President Lázaro Cárdenas. The conflict had been won by Cárdenas who immediately set about putting his supporters into key positions.\(^{36}\) As part of the reshuffling, Hill was
promoted to consul and reassigned to Los Angeles where he received a warm welcome from southern California colonia leaders when he arrived at Union Station on August 17, 1935.\textsuperscript{37}

Immediately following his arrival, Hill publicly vowed to "intensify as far as possible the work of protection which our consular office has been imparting."\textsuperscript{38} He did not specifically mention Mexican farm workers, but he privately assured la raza union leaders of his support for their work and told them that President Cárdenas and the secretary of foreign relations had directed him "to take care of labor problems."\textsuperscript{39}

Hill's pledge to help CUCOM reinforced the consular-union alliance forged during the berry strike. Confident of consular support, CUCOM leaders placed a long list of demands before the vegetable growers—a minimum salary of 40 cents an hour for an eight-hour day, 60 cents an hour for overtime and holidays, picking equipment, housing for workers, and guarantees against harassment.\textsuperscript{40} The union threatened to strike on September 17 if these demands were not met. Though the growers refused to comply, the union was forced to back down when it could not muster enough workers to back the promised strike.\textsuperscript{41} Hill was disappointed with the strike's collapse and infuriated with the growers' refusal to bargain. "If the Mexican workers are not organized now, I'll see that they are before winter is over."\textsuperscript{42}

Several weeks later Hill became personally involved in a labor dispute involving some 3,500 orange pickers. Almost all of them were Orange County residents who harvested crops during a seven-month season from March to November. They were usually paid five-and-a-half cents per box and were also promised an extra half-cent bonus per box, payable at the end of the season, which they often did not receive.\textsuperscript{43}

Hill and Lucas Lucio, president of the city of Santa Ana's Comisión Honorífica Mexicana, agreed to present CUCOM's demands to the citrus growers. The union wanted recognition, a $2.25 minimum wage, abolition of transportation charges, and discontinuance of the bonus system. The growers rejected the demands and threatened to bring in Filipino workers if the Mexican pickers went on strike. CUCOM called a strike, but once again turnout was small and the walk out ineffective. Hill repeated the pledge he had given the vegetable workers: to
help organize a stronger union for the 1936 harvest. CUCOM leaders readily accepted the offer.\textsuperscript{44}

Hill’s efforts on behalf of the union provoked the local Orange County press to admonish him to “adopt the established methods of...recognized diplomacy.”\textsuperscript{45} The Orange County Farm Bureau promised to work “for the dismissal of any foreign representative who attempts to incite trouble among workers in the United States.”\textsuperscript{46} Such criticism only caused Hill to redouble his efforts. He attended CUCOM membership rallies in El Monte, Whittier, and elsewhere in southern California urging compatriots to join the union.\textsuperscript{47}

CUCOM sought not only to recruit new members but also to affiliate with other agricultural unions to apply greater pressure on the growers. In January 1936 CUCOM allied itself with the Agricultural Industrial Workers Labor Union (AIWLU) and the Filipino Labor Union (FLU) by joining with them in the new Federation of Agricultural Workers Union of America (FAWUA).\textsuperscript{48} Hill was not “directly involved in these negotiations,” recalls former CUCOM Secretary Nicolás Avila and other union leaders, but “he did approve and support” the move to affiliate with other organizations.\textsuperscript{49} Affiliation with the Federation helped restore CUCOM’s confidence to the point that leaders presented growers with new demands in the spring of 1936. CUCOM first approached the Japanese vegetable growers and insisted the growers pay a 35-cent hourly wage.\textsuperscript{50}

Although supporting CUCOM’s demands, Hill’s union involvement was interrupted when he was suddenly called to Mexico City as a result of the labor activities of Consul Juan Richer of Laredo, Texas. Richer shared Hill’s sympathies with mexicano workers: In a speech made on March 13 at a recruitment meeting of a local union, Richer expressed strong support of the unionization effort and explained that his views were shared by the Mexican government and President Cárdenas who was battling the “inroads and encroachments of capitalism against the working class.”\textsuperscript{51} The Knights of Columbus, the Laredo Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service immediately protested to the U.S. State Department about Richer’s presence at the meeting and his remarks.\textsuperscript{52} Concern had been
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expressed even across the border where U.S. Consul Romeyn Wormuth of Nuevo Laredo warned his superiors to “put a stop to the apparent intention of these consular officers to organize laborers in the United States.” The protests brought an immediate apology from Mexican Ambassador Francisco Castillo Nájera, who explained to the state department that Richer was “inexperienced and unfamiliar with the proper limitations of his office.” The ambassador agreed to order Richer home to avoid repetition of the incident and to sidetrack the Texas congressional delegation’s demand for a formal protest to Mexico.

To further “satisfy the Texas congressional delegation,” Mexico’s secretary of foreign relations ordered all consuls to “cease the social-political activities which some of them had been carrying on” and to avoid “lectures, meetings, or acts of any kind alien to consular functions.” Significantly, however, the directive did not identify consular participation in the unionization of la raza farm workers as one of the alien activities.

The recall of Ricardo Hill and his vice consul, Alejandro Gómez Maganda, to Mexico City was announced in the same press release that urged the consuls to exercise discretion. Hill was joined by his older brother, Consul Benjamín Hill of San Antonio, who had also been accused by local businessmen of “organizing Mexican labor and bringing in union organizers from Mexico City.” The Mexican ministry knew about the work of both Benjamín and Ricardo Hill; indeed, as noted earlier, it had instructed the Los Angeles consul to deal with “labor problems.”

La Opinión and the Los Angeles Times suspected Hill’s activities with the union were responsible for his recall, but he never admitted this was the reason for his departure. He defended his involvement with labor as entirely proper and stressed his cooperation with “local police and federal officials” in assisting his nationals. Nor did Hill change his position when he returned to Los Angeles on April 16. The trip’s purpose, Hill told the local press, had been to confer with Foreign Minister Eduardo Hay about the “false charges” against a Mexican consul accused of spreading “Communist
propaganda." He had also met with President Cárdenas, who "instructed him to proceed as before in helping Mexican workers and protecting their rights under American law." The conference in Mexico City was at most probably a warning to Hill to use discretion rather than a ban on activities in support of union organizing efforts.

In any event, shortly after Hill’s return CUCOM called a strike and the consul immediately endorsed it. The walk out began in the Venice celery fields when the growers’ association refused wage demands for 40 cents an hour instead of the prevailing 22 cents. The strike spread to other vegetable-growing areas in Compton, Watts, Palos Verdes, El Monte, and Norwalk with the number of striking farm workers increasing from three hundred to some two thousand within a few weeks. The growers refused to consider the workers’ demands until the strike leadership had been purged of “Communists and radical agitators.” Especially upsetting to the growers was the presence of Lillian Monroe, a former Communist party member who had participated in other California agricultural strikes.

Hill intervened and insisted that CUCOM was free of Communists. He persuaded the union to demonstrate the truth of his assertion by asking Monroe to leave the area. Some celery pickers and union officials opposed the request, but most agreed to disassociate themselves from Monroe. Her removal was not enough; the growers then refused to negotiate until the pickers returned to work. Hill adamantly refused to endorse this request and, instead, toured the picket lines to show his “moral support for the strikers.”

**Violence Erupts**

The failure to bring about negotiations was followed by the outbreak of violence in Venice when vigilantes tried to prevent striking farm workers from forming picket lines. Los Angeles Police Captain John Hynes and his infamous “Red squad,” labor organizers observed, contributed to the violence by “provoking and intimidating strikers and sympathizers”
even though Hynes was operating outside the city limits and his proper jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{64} The police began a melee when they resorted to riot clubs and tear gas—leaving some ten people injured. CUCOM President Guillermo Velarde attempted to stop the violence and end the strike by asking for 35 cents an hour instead of the 40 cents originally demanded, but the Japanese growers refused the offer and the strike continued, marked daily by violence. The violence and the strike finally ended in late May when the growers agreed to negotiate because they feared losing their crops. The consulate obtained a 27-cent wage for the farm workers but failed to gain union recognition. Even though Velarde and other union members wanted to hold out for union recognition, they accepted the consulate's settlement.\textsuperscript{65}

The slight wage gains obtained in the celery workers' strike encouraged orange pickers to request CUCOM and the consulate to assist them in a struggle for higher wages and better working conditions. In March they presented Orange County packing house managers and growers with a demand for 40 cents an hour for a nine-hour day, discontinuance of the bonus system, free transportation to the fields, and recognition of the union. The growers rejected the demands and countered with an offer of 26 cents a box and a half-cent bonus per box payable at the end of the season.\textsuperscript{66}

Though a strike appeared imminent, Hill attempted to prevent a walk out by offering to serve as a mediator. Claiming that CUCOM was a "radically led and controlled organization," the growers refused the offer and chastized Hill for "encouraging unionization, especially among American citizens of Mexican descent."\textsuperscript{67} They urged him "to use his influence to avoid an unjustified strike." The refusal of the growers to negotiate resulted in some 1,500 farm workers going on strike June 19. The strike successfully stopped the orange harvest.\textsuperscript{68}

As he had done during the celery strike, Hill attempted to bring the growers to negotiations by disassociating the CUCOM and farm workers from any radical involvement. The Orange County Strike Committee also shared Hill's desire to present a nonradical image to the public. To demonstrate this resolve, the strike committee refused membership to local
Communist Elías Espinoza and Lillian Monroe, though they were permitted to address the strikers. Hill’s disclaimers about radical involvement in the strike movement failed to convince the growers, who campaigned through the Associated Farmers organization for his removal. Congressman Sam Collins and Senator Hiram W. Johnson passed the protests on to the U.S. State Department, which forwarded them to Mexico’s secretary of foreign relations. News of a State Department investigation to determine the propriety of Hill’s actions did not cause Hill to change his tactics. He informed La Opinión that he was “more determined than ever to continue working on the same road for the benefit of my compatriots.” Colonia civic organizations, such as the Comité Revolucionario Mexicano, Partido Liberal Mexicano, and Sociedad Cultural Mexicano, joined CUCOM in applauding Hill’s decision to carry on in spite of the protests. They asked the Ministry of Foreign Relations to keep Hill in Los Angeles where, according to CUCOM’s Velarde, he “always protects workers from inhuman exploitation.” The Partido Juárez also predicted serious consequences if Hill were removed: a precedent might be established which “would incapacitate consuls in helping their nationals.”

As colonia organizations rallied around Hill, he personally defended his actions before grower representative Stuart Strathman and federal labor negotiator Edward H. Fitzgerald at a meeting called to settle the strike. The meeting made no headway in ending the strike but instead served as a forum for Strathman to indict Hill and the consular staff for “fomenting violence.” The charges, Strathman explained, were “drawn from reports by paid undercover agents who attended strike meetings.” Hill readily admitted to attending the meetings and encouraging his compatriots but said he was also present to “warn his nationals to respect the law.” CUCOM members Nicolás Avila, Emilio Martínez, and Pascual Rivas confirmed Hill’s explanation and recall that the Mexican consul advised them “to obey the law” and “to avoid violence.”

A few days later, on July 6, Hill again intervened to prevent violence when the orange groves were transformed into battlefields as strikers clashed with strikebreakers arriving from
outlying areas. The police once again demonstrated that their sympathies were with the growers by arresting and jailing some two hundred strikers. Emilio Martínez and others recall sharing an "open pen" at the Santa Ana city jail. But arresting the strikers did not stop the violence; it broke out again the next day when pickers burned a bus. Orange County Sheriff Logan Jackson heightened tensions further by issuing a "shoot to kill" order against labor agitators. On the ninth, strikers again learned they faced not only fierce opposition from police but also vigilantes. Some forty vigilantes disrupted union meetings with clubs, guns, and tear gas. These incidents brought Hill to Orange County to personally demand police protection for his nationals.

Sheriff Jackson refused to cooperate with Hill until an anonymous farm worker threatened to use dynamite if strikers did not receive immediate police protection. This threat led Jackson to revoke his "shoot to kill" order, and Hill toured the colonias to convince strikers to remain home during a cooling-off period. The local Orange County press joined Labor Commissioner Edward Fitzgerald in praising the consul for "ending the violence." The dynamite threat not only brought peace but also fostered a more cooperative attitude among the growers. They still refused to deal directly with the union but agreed to negotiate with the strikers through representatives appointed by Consul General Adolfo de la Huerta, a former president of Mexico and now a visiting inspector of Mexican consulates in the U.S. If de la Huerta found the growers' offer acceptable, he would then recommend it to the strikers. Anglo and la raza residents, as well as the English and Spanish language press, predicted that de la Huerta's prestige would guarantee the ratification of any agreement that he endorsed.

With Hill's advice and consent, de la Huerta presented the union with a proposal for 20 cents an hour for a nine-hour day, abolition of the bonus system, free transportation to the fields, and free picking equipment. There was no provision for union recognition, which angered Velarde. Although he had earlier accepted contracts which did not provide for union recognition, he now became adamant because of his confidence that a
longer strike would result in union recognition. Velarde con-
demned the consular proposal and accused de la Huerta and
Hill of tricking their compatriots into accepting a “sell out”
offer. This was a sharp turnaround from his earlier support
and approval of the Mexican consul.

The split between the Los Angeles consulate and CUCOM
president divided the strikers and brought negotiations to a
standstill. While Hill and Velarde lobbied for support among
the local colonias, the growers threatened to rescind their offer.
Pressure for a settlement was also developing within the
strikers’ rank and file, for some four hundred families were
without “food and near starvation.” Hill and his supporters
emphasized the desperate situation of many compatriots and
persuaded the strike committee to ban Velarde from a general
meeting staged to gain approval of the offer. Velarde was
further handicapped because he was also sought by police for
failing to appear for a traffic violation. The bench warrant
and strike committee banishment kept Velarde from mount-
ing effective opposition to the offer, which union members
approved on July 24.

The official end of the strike did not end consular involve-
ment with the Orange County pickers, for 116 of them were
arraigned a short time later in superior court on charges of
rioting. Colonia residents who attended the arraignment viv-
idly recall the presence of consuls Adolfo de la Huerta, Ricardo
Hill, and Ernesto Romero who persuaded the judge to drop
the charges and release the farm workers because they were
innocent victims of mass arrests.

Hill’s intervention in behalf of Mexican and Mexican
American farm workers provoked quite a different reaction
from the Associated Farmers. That organization continued to
denounce the Mexican consul for interfering in American
“internal affairs.” The State Department launched an investi-
gation and concluded on August 17 that “there does not exist a
single complaint of the American Government against Hill.”
Though officially innocent of any wrongdoing, Hill’s activities
on behalf of CUCOM had seriously undermined his relation-
ship with local authorities. Police Chief James Davis and Lieu-
tenant Peter Delgado had frowned upon Hill’s involvement in
the celery and orange strikes and had even “threatened [him] with removal...on account of [his] labor activities.”

**Consul Hill's Transfer**

Hill’s tenure in Los Angeles ended when a dispute erupted between him and Lieutenant Delgado. Ironically, the controversy resulted over a project to further good relations between Mexico and the United States—a concert tour by the Mexico City Police Department Orchestra. The band arrived while Hill and his staff were busy negotiating a settlement of the Orange County strike, and he allowed the Los Angeles Police Department to assume responsibility for arranging the tour. The police scheduled performances for which half the admission returns would pay band expenses and half would go to needy Mexicans in southern California and Mexico. Hill objected to the charges because he believed they were incompatible “with the intention of my government to further good relations.”

Hill’s objections over arrangements for the Mexico City orchestra angered Lieutenant Delgado and led him to cancel a free performance that Hill had arranged for the colonia mexicana at Lincoln Park on August 8. Delgado informed the band leader that “there would be no concert at Lincoln Park because [Hill] had not secured said Park and did not have the $80.00 with which to pay for transportation.” On the contrary, Hill had reserved Lincoln and the police department had assured him it would pay transportation costs as had been done throughout the orchestra tour. Hill successfully rounded up the orchestra at the last moment. On the way to Lincoln Park, he encountered Delgado and a public argument ensued. The scene produced headlines describing Hill and Delgado “at the point of exchanging blows.” What actually occurred remains unclear. Hill claimed in a report prepared by the California Division of Criminal Identification and Investigation that Delgado called him a “son of a bitch” and attempted to strike him until he was restrained by a fellow officer. Delgado denied this account and alleged that Hill insulted him by declaring: “The
expenses of this orchestra were paid by the Mexican government and the orchestra came here to play for Mexicans and not for any American sons of bitches."\textsuperscript{87}

Police Chief Davis expressed his "sincere regrets for this occurrence" and offered his "fullest excuses [apologies]" and promised to "discipline those responsible."\textsuperscript{88} Hill and the secretary of foreign relations regarded this apology as "adequate amends," but it was clear to many that Hill had outlived his usefulness in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{89} On October 30 he was transferred to San Antonio, Texas. The official explanation from Chargé d'Affaires Luis Quintanilla was that "the position of a Mexican consular representative in a locality where he encounters the manifest hostility and antipathy of the police authorities is from all perspectives insupportable."\textsuperscript{90}

Some colonia organizations protested Hill's removal. The Comisión Honorífica Mexicana of Irwindale and the Legion Aeronáutica Mexicana "demanded a new term [for Hill] to finish the work he had begun."\textsuperscript{91} But most members of the southern California colonia mexicana were reconciled to Hill's transfer, especially those who had dealt with the consul during the strikes. They regarded the transfer to San Antonio as a reprimand for Hill's activities on behalf of labor.\textsuperscript{92}

Hill's departure did not mean the end of consular efforts on behalf of laborers, but, in the words of union organizer Nicolás Avila, there was never again to be "such intensive concern."\textsuperscript{93} The new attitude was revealed in a conversation among Vice Consul José Couttolenc, George P. Clements of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, and Arnold Clark of the Associated Farmers. Clements had arranged the meeting in order "to get to Mr. Renato Cantú Lara, the new consul of Mexico [Hill's immediate successor], the critical situation of Mexican labor." This was especially necessary because "not only the [Mexican] national but the American Mexican took his troubles to the Mexican consul." Vice Consul Couttolenc, who attended the meeting on behalf of Cantú Lara, assured those present that the consulate planned to restrict itself to the "care of nationals as individuals" rather than "collectively." The new consul, he told them, can be expected "to adhere strictly to his
consular work and join [them] in every way to bring a correct understanding between his nationals and the employees."94

Consul Cantú Lara ended the consular involvement that had begun with the creation of CUOM and continued through the strikes in El Monte, Venice, and Orange County. That involvement had been slow to develop. Consul Alejandro V. Martínez and Vice Consul Ricardo Hill had intervened only after the 1933 El Monte strike was well underway and the strike committee chairman had requested their help. In 1935, following Hill’s appointment as consul, a more aggressive policy in support of Mexican laborers was pursued. There were setbacks, but there were also higher wages and better working conditions for many workers. Hill’s efforts won him wide acclaim in the colonia, and he is still remembered fondly by older residents. “This man was a real consul,” one of them recalls. “There was never another consul like Hill.”95

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX


see Archivo de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Asunto Flores Magón, LE 918-954, 36 Volumes (Hereafter cited as ASRE).

5. La Opinión, 26 May 1935; 1 April 1935; interview with Nicolás Avila, Los Angeles, California, 8 April 1976; Alcántara and Cruz interviews.

6. Adolfo Moncada Villarreal to Consul José María Carpio, 21 May 1917, in ASRE, I/131/3859. Moncada Villarreal also served as secretary at the consulate during the 1920s. See F. A. Pesqueira to Secretary of Foreign Relations, September 1929, in ASRE, I/131/3859.


8. Interview with Evelyn Velarde Benson, Los Angeles, California, 8 April 1976; Avila interview.


10. Avila and Velarde Benson interviews.

11. Edward Fitzgerald to Hugh L. Kerwin, 22 July 1933, in National Archives, Department of Labor, Record Group 280, 170-803 (Hereafter cited as Nat. Arch., RG 280); interviews with Alejandro Castro, El Monte, California, 21 December 1976; Plutarco Núñez, El Monte, California, 21 December 1976; Jesús Corona, El Monte, California, 21 December 1976; and Alfonso Jiménez, El Monte, California, 21 December 1976.

12. Vice Consul Ricardo Hill to Secretary of Foreign Relations, June and July 1933, in ASRE, I/4-626-2.

13. McWilliams, Factories in the Field, 228.


15. Avila, Castro, and Velarde Benson interviews.


18. Avila interview.

19. Velarde Benson interview.

20. Avila and Velarde Benson interviews.


22. Interview with Stuart Strathman, Fullerton, California, 28 February 1976.

23. Interview with Rex Tomson, Rancho Bernardo, California, 8 March 1976; Medina, Avila, Velarde Benson, and Lucio interviews.

24. Secretary of Foreign Relations to the Los Angeles Consulate, 9 June 1933, in ASRE, 3465-2.

25. Secretary of Foreign Relations José M. Puig Casauranc to Ambassador Josephus Daniels, 10 June 1933, in ASRE 3465-2; in National Archives, Department of State, Record Group 59, 811.5045/128 (Hereafter cited as Nat. Arch., RG 59).


29. El Nacional, 7 July 1933.


31. George P. Clements to Arthur G. Arnoll, 12, 13 July 1933, Clements Collection, Bundle 7, Box 62.

32. Clements to Ross H. Gast, 20, 21 July 1933; Clements to Arthur G. Arnoll, 20 July 1933; Clements to Gast, 27 July 1933, Clements Collection, Bundle 7, Box 62.

33. H. Bursley to Herschel V. Johnson, 28 July 1933, in RG, 811.5045/140.

34. Spaulding, “The Mexican Strike,” 575; Avila interview.

35. Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana to Dr. José Manuel Puig Casauranc, 3 October 1933, in ASRE 1/131/4977. Also see Comité Pro-México de Afuera to Secretary of Foreign Relations, 26 December 1933, in ASRE, 1/131/4977; La Opinión, 23 September 1933.


37. La Opinión, 17, 18 August 1935.

38. La Opinión, 15 September 1935.


42. “Ricardo G. Hill, Mexican Consul, Activities in Labor Unionizing and Strikes,” 17 August 1936, in ASRE, IV-131-155. Also see various documents in ASRE, 1/131/4977.


47. *Western Worker*, 11 June 1936.


49. Avila and Velarde Benson interviews.


52. State Deputy of Knights of Columbus William P. Galligan to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 16 March 1936, in Nat. Arch., RG 59, 811.5043/37; Laredo Chamber of Commerce President H. L. Jackson to Congressman West, 13 March 1936, in Nat. Arch., RG 59, 811.5043/35; American Legion Executive Committee to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 23 March 1936, in Nat. Arch., RG 59, 811.5043/54; Lieutenant Colonel F. B. Mellon to the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Department, Washington, D.C., 18 March 1936, Nat. Arch., RG 59, 811.5043/56; Inspector Frank Crockett to Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Service, Nat. Arch., RG 59, 811.5043/44.


54. Division of Mexican Affairs to Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles, 19 March 1936, in Nat. Arch., RG 59, 811.5043/39.

55. Ambassador Francisco Castillo Nájera to Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles, 30 March 1936, in Nat. Arch., RG 59, 811.5043/57.


57. Galligan to Roosevelt, 16 March 1936.

58. Various reports are in ASRE, IV-626-2.


60. *Los Angeles Examiner*, 16 April 1936.


62. Avila and Medina interviews.

64. Workers and Unemployed Union to the President of the United States, 30 April 1936, in Nat. Arch., 280, 182-1279.
66. Subcommittee on Violations, Part 70, 25858.
67. Consul Ricardo Hill to Orange Growers of Orange County, 6 June 1936, and Orange Growers to Hill, 9 June 1936, in ASRE, 1/131/4977.
68. Interviews with Pascual Rivas, Tustin, California, 30 March 1976; Eduardo Negrete, Fullerton, California, 26 March 1976; Emilio Martínez, Stanton, California, 23 March 1976; Alcántara, Cruz, and Medina interviews.
69. Alcántara and Medina interviews.
70. Representative Sam L. Collins to Chargé d’Affaires Luis Quintanilla, 17 June 1936; Quintanilla to Collins, 18 June 1936; Quintanilla to Edward L. Reed, chief of Mexican Affairs, U.S. State Department, 25 June 1936, in ASRE, 1/131/4977.
74. Alcántara, Avila, Martínez, Medina, and Rivas interviews.
75. *Santa Ana Register*, 6 July 1936; *La Opinión*, 7 July 1936; *Anaheim Bulletin*, 7 July 1936; Martínez interview.
76. *Santa Ana Register*, 6 July 1936; *Anaheim Bulletin*, 10 July 1936; *Orange City Daily News*, 10 July 1936; *Los Angeles Times*, 10 July 1936; *Western Worker*, 30 July 1936; Lucio interview.
81. *Santa Ana Register*, 29 July 1936; *La Opinión*, 29 July 1936; Alcántara, Lucio, Negrete, Martínez, and Rivas interviews; interview with David Marcus, Los Angeles, California, 17 November 1976.
83. Governor Frank T. Merriam to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 1 September 1936, and “Alleged insult of Mexican Consul Mr. Ricardo Hill at Los Angeles,” 28 August 1936, in Nat. Arch., RG 59, 702.1211/2632; Consul
Ricardo Hill to General Vicente González, Chief of Mexico, D.F., Police Department, 29 July 1936, in ASRE, 1/131/4977; *La Opinión*, 23 July 1936, 27 July 1936.

84. Hill to Ambassador of Mexico, 11 August 1936, in ASRE, 1/131/4977.
89. Ambassador Francisco Castillo Nájera to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 11 September 1936, in Nat. Arch., RG 59, 702.1211/2635.
90. Chargé d’Affaires Luis Quintanilla to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 17 August 1936, in ASRE, 1/131/4977.
91. Irwindale Comisión Honorífica Mexicana to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 6 October 1936, and Legion Aeronáutica Mexicana to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, 30 September 1936 in ASRE, 1/131/4977.
92. Avila, Alcántara, Medina, Lucio, and Velarde Benson interviews.
93. Avila interview.
95. Avila, Alcántara, Licero, Lucio, Martínez, Medina, Rivas, and Velarde Benson interviews.
Ricardo Hill's transfer in 1936 marked the end of the Los Angeles consulate's extensive efforts in behalf of the colonia mexicana during the Great Depression. Succeeding consuls faithfully observed the March 1936 directive obliging all consular agents to cease social-political activities. Former colonia residents agree that since Hill's tenure the Mexican government has never sent "consuls who worry about Mexicans."\(^1\) Consuls are thought to be more concerned with commercial or trade relations than protection of la raza, an attitude in tune with Mexico's vigorous search after 1940 for foreign investment to develop the country's industrial base.\(^2\)

The shift in consular involvement also reflected a lessening of the severity of the Depression for many mexicanos. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal battled the Depression by establishing various agencies and programs. Among them the Works Progress Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration proved especially helpful to la raza. Even though
economic recovery was slow, former colonia residents are convinced that "Roosevelt helped!" Roosevelt's New Deal had a tremendous impact upon la raza, so much that historian Rodolfo Acuña has observed: "Most Chicanos have been nurtured to believe in the Virgin of Guadalupe, the Sacred Heart, and the party of Franklin D. Roosevelt." Also in the making was a new group of Mexican Americans who were to fight in World War II and become the "GI generation." They would replace Mexican nationals as the dominant group and as leaders of México de afuera. This development weakened consulate ties to the colonia because these Mexican Americans looked to American institutions rather than to consuls for redress of grievances.

Between 1929 and 1936, however, the Los Angeles consuls played a major role in the life of the colonia. It was a time when strong bonds based on patriotism and cultural heritage linked the consulate to the local colonias. Consul Rafael de la Colina had opposed the deportation campaign, sought to eliminate the worst features of the repatriation process, and led the colonia in establishing the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana to help destitute mexicanos. The limited resources of the consulate and colonia restricted the help that could be given, but Colina did what he could with the resources available. Colonia residents remember him as a "champion of the poor."

Though unemployment and despair paralyzed the colonia and placed a heavy burden on the consulate, consular officials supported the efforts of those who chose to battle school segregation. The fight cannot be considered a success, but there were victories in Lemon Grove where the school was integrated and in Sacramento where the Bliss bill was defeated. Of greater concern to the consulate was the uproar created when the Mexican church-state conflict extended into southern California and embittered relations between local consuls and the colonias in Los Angeles and San Bernardino. The dispute produced no long-lasting effects, however, and whatever ill feeling remained was offset by Ricardo Hill's efforts on behalf of la raza farm workers. Disagreements occurred with union leaders over appropriate methods and
goals, and the consuls eventually abandoned their earlier insistence upon union recognition; but their efforts encouraged labor organization and helped some workers obtain higher wages and better working conditions.

The far-reaching consular intervention in behalf of la raza in Los Angeles during the Great Depression should not be credited to the consuls alone. The colonia mexicana played a critically important role from the start by drafting the consuls into service as it did during the campaign against school segregation and the farm labor conflict. Once alerted, the consuls supported their compatriots largely due to their own patriotic sentiments and political views. Mexican consuls took the lead only when the issues were officially recognized consular functions, such as protecting the rights of those threatened by deportation, organizing the Comité de Beneficencia Mexicana, and protecting the good name of Mexico from Catholic protesters.

Whether intervention was initiated by the consulate or colonia, consular policy was neither planned nor implemented in a vacuum. The individual consul's relationship with local authorities had an important impact on all consular activities, especially during the height of the deportation-repatriation crisis and the farm labor disputes. Another significant influence was colonia organizations that, in their support of or opposition to consuls, frequently helped determine the pattern and direction of consular intervention. The American press and Spanish language newspapers also played an influential role in consular endeavors, but the impact was greatest during the church-state conflict and deportation-repatriation crisis.

These considerations frequently gave consular intervention a controversial tone, by questioning consular authority, leadership, and intentions. Though its record is uneven, the evidence indicates that the Los Angeles consulate provided effective assistance to the more than 170,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans during the twentieth century's most severe economic crisis. The consuls' successful defense of la raza deserves recognition today if for no other reason than that
problems facing Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States in the 1980s are not altogether different from those of the 1930s. La raza is still concerned with combatting deportation-repatriation pressures, establishing effective organizations, battling school segregation, defining its relationship with the Catholic church, and organizing workers. That the consulate and the Los Angeles colonia often displayed initiative, dedication, and courage with these issues during the Great Depression is an instructive lesson for present-day consuls and the Chicano community.

NOTES TO RETROSPECT

1. Interviews with Eduardo Negrete, Fullerton, California, 26 March 1976; Emilio Martínez, Stanton, California, 23 March 1976; Lucas Lucio, Santa Ana, California, 16 March 1976, 23 March 1976; Nicolás Licero, Tustin, California, 30 March 1976; Pablo Alcántara, Yorba Linda, California, 23 March 1976; and Pascual Rivas, Tustin, California, 30 March 1976.


3. Interviews with Ramón Curiel, El Modena, California, 25 March 1976; Catarino Cruz, Orange, California, 23 March 1976; Celso Medina, El Modena, California, 12 April 1976; Lucio interview.


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