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Serving the Nation: Rotary and Lions Clubs,
the Mexican Middle Classes, and the Post-Revolutionary State, 1920s-1960s

By

David Tamayo

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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University of California, Berkeley

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Summer 2018

Serving the Nation:
Rotary and Lions Clubs, the Mexican Middle Classes,
and the Post-Revolutionary State, 1920s-1960s

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ABSTRACT

Serving the Nation: Rotary and Lions Clubs,
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by

David Tamayo

Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Professor Margaret Chowning, Chair

This dissertation studies the relationship between the Mexican conservative middle classes and the post-revolutionary state from the 1920s to the 1960s. It approaches this topic through the prism of U.S.-founded businessmen's philanthropic associations, known as international "service clubs," such as the Lions and Rotary. Beginning in the 1920s, when the first Rotary Club was established in Mexico, men and their female relatives were drawn to them because they associated Rotary and Lions clubs with "modern," cosmopolitan values. By mid-century, tens of thousands of Mexicans were members of these international clubs. During Mexico's unprecedented period of economic growth, known as the "Mexican Miracle," service clubs became a facet of urban life, hosting weekly luncheons, dinners, business seminars, and charitable fundraisers. Over time, however, Rotary, Lions, and other clubs also became sites of conservative political activism.

Scholars have mainly examined middle-class conservatism in Mexico through formal political parties, such as the Nation Action Party (PAN), or the Catholic Church, suggesting that these two institutions offered the only outlets for conservative politics under the post-revolutionary state. This interpretation, however, posits a reactionary and institutionally-narrow view of the middle classes. It also underestimates the transnational circulation of conservative ideas, and ignores the range of ways in which the middle classes participated in politics. This dissertation approaches the question middle-class politicization by examining the U.S.-founded service clubs they populated.

"Serving the Nation" addresses three overarching questions. First, how did the Mexican middle classes independent from government-sanctioned organizations engage with the hegemonic-party state throughout the 20th century? Second, how did conservative politics develop outside of formal opposition parties and the Catholic Church? Third, what influence did U.S. international civic organizations have in the politicization of the middle classes? Based primarily on the internal files and publications of Lions, Rotary, and other clubs in Mexico, this study argues that the self-described middle classes were drawn to these businessmen's organizations and, after joining, they modified club ideology to advance a conservative political agenda and their cultural interests. By providing a crucial ideological and organizational

framework, service clubs became instrumental in the politicization of the conservative middle classes. Without an effective middle-class organization, such as there were for workers and peasants, service clubs afforded the middle classes an independent vehicle to interact with the post-revolutionary state. Finally, this story also has implications for understanding the role of US non-state actors in foreign contexts. "Serving the Nation" challenges the notion that US-based service clubs were successful instruments of American cultural and economic imperialism.

A mis padres y Enrique

A Michiko y Diego

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	1
Dedication.....	i
List of Figures.....	iii
List of Tables.....	iv
Introduction.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	xx
Chapter 1: The "Middle-Class Impulse" and the Establishment of U.S.-Service Clubs in Mexico, 1920-1935.....	1
Chapter 2: <i>Leonismo Mexicano</i> : Lions Clubs, the Mexican State, and the Future of Service Clubs in Latin America, 1930-1945.....	32
Chapter 3: Becoming Sowers of Friendship: The Rotary Club of Monterrey and the <i>Cardenista</i> State.....	63
Chapter 4: Service Clubs and the Crusades for Mexico, 1940s-1950s.....	91
Chapter 5: Service Clubs, Anti-Communism, and the Politics of Education: the Cases in 1960s Puebla and Monterrey.....	128
Epilogue.....	167
Bibliography.....	170

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1 Francisco Doria Paz entertaining party guests.....	vii
2 Francisco Doria Paz and his wife Ada Carrasco leading a conga line.....	viii
3 Public toilet stalls: The Rotary Club of Chicago's first public service project in 1907.....	xiv
4 The "Pullman City" advertisement.....	24
5 First delegation of Lions from Mexico, 1934.....	50
6 Manuel Ávila Camacho during the "National Unity" speech.....	59
7 Graduation ceremony at the Hospital Muguerza, circa 1950s.....	66
8 Sowers of Friendship Club emblem.....	85
9 Members of the Rotary Club of Puebla at Father Teyssier's all-girls school, ca. 1944.....	96
10 Sowers of Friendship and <i>maestras misioneras</i> with their students in the Barrio Xanenetla in Puebla, ca. 1946.....	98
11 The Sowers of Friendship's <i>maestras misioneras</i> teaching a lesson in the Barrio de San Antonio in Puebla.....	99
12 Casino of the Lions Club of Monterrey in 1957.....	113
13 Sowers of Friendship Club of Mazatlán's " <i>Dantesco Torneo de Cerveza</i> ".....	114
14 Cover of the magazine <i>Vea</i> , 1954.....	117
15 Queen of the Lions Club of Mexico City.....	126
16 Tito Guízar entertaining the Cuban delegation during their visit to the Mexico City Lions Club in 1959.....	137
17 Jaime Torres Bodet distributing textbooks to grade-school children, ca. 1961.....	148
18 Jaime Torres Bodet as the guest of the Sowers of Friendship Club of Mexico City.....	151
19 Editorial cartoon lampooning the 1962 conflict between Torres Bodet and the Monterrey parents.....	161

LIST OF TABLES

Tables		Page
1	Rotary Clubs in Latin America, 1921 – 1935.....	xv
2	Service Club growth in Mexico, 1921 – 1974.....	xvii
3	Occupational distribution of Lions and Rotary Clubs in Mexico, 1920s – 1930s.....	16
4	Rotary International net club growth, 1938 – 1943.....	35
5	Global distribution of Lions Clubs International, 1949.....	36
6	Occupational distribution of Rotary and Lions Clubs of Monterrey, 1920s-30s.....	73

INTRODUCTION

In a 1950 letter addressed to the some two hundred Lions Clubs in Mexico, the president of the Mexican association, Francisco Doria Paz, commended his fellow *leones* for their exemplary work in propagating "Lionism." Since 1933, when Lions International was permanently established in Mexico, the organization had expanded remarkably, attracting businessmen, professionals, industrialists, and even politicians for the stated purpose of unselfishly serving their communities. Doria Paz now encouraged club members to continue their "apostleship work," gathering individuals who were best suited to instill "cooperation among Mexico's social groups," by which he meant to promote harmonious relations between workers and employers—an objective shared by Lions, Rotary, and other US-imported service clubs in Mexico.¹

Born in 1906, Doria Paz was raised in comfortable style—he was the grandson of a governor and military hero—in the country's emerging powerhouse of heavy industry, Monterrey, 80 miles north of his native town of Linares, Nuevo León. There he studied law but later relocated to Mexico City where he became involved in textiles and other business ventures. Since the emergence of the post-revolutionary regime and what he perceived as its pro-labor policies, Doria Paz had fought many battles with labor unions, both legally and literally—he once had bottles broken on his head in a fight with the influential union boss, Luis N. Morones. Before becoming a member of the Lions, Doria Paz in 1929 joined several close colleagues from Monterrey in forming the Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana (COPARMEX), a powerful independent employers' association that sought to counter the influence of the state-sponsored labor unions.²

The presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) increasingly dissatisfied Doria Paz who saw a state favoring the interests of popular groups at the expense of what he called the middle classes. In 1936, he co-founded the Confederation of the Middle Class (CCM), a quasi-fascist, anti-communist civic coalition that purportedly represented "professionals, students, industrialists, agriculturalists, property owners, employees, artisans, etc." Doria Paz and many others were convinced that the middle classes lacked unity and needed urgently to awaken from their political "stupor." This apathy had emboldened communists, who blamed the middle classes for the nation's social and economic injustices. But for self-described "middle-class" individuals like Doria Paz, it was this social group that had "civilized" the country, producing "arts, science, industry, commerce." And in Mexico's most recent past it was the middle classes

¹ "Carta del presidente nacional a todos los leones mexicanos. México, D.F., enero 2 de 1950," in *Anuario leonístico mexicano: ejercicio social 1949-1950* (México D.F., 1950), 9–10.

² The anecdote involving the altercation between Doria Paz and Morones is from Susan M Gaus, *Made in Mexico: Regions, Nation, and the State in the Rise of Mexican Industrialism, 1920s-1940s* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 131; by the 1940s, Doria Paz had varied business interests, including in dairy. See: Maria del Pilar Zazueta, "Milk against Poverty: Nutrition and the Politics of Consumption in Twentieth-Century Mexico" (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 2011), 163.

that unselfishly led the "fight against exploiters," in reference to the revolutionary movement initiated by Francisco I. Madero.³

Despite claiming a membership of 162,000, the CCM was dissolved shortly after its candidate Juan Andreu Almazán lost the violent and fraudulent presidential election in July 1940. Doria Paz's commitment to the CCM, however, had already waned—quite likely because of the frequent attacks from unionists and the police raids, which in 1937 led to his arrest.⁴ Instead, throughout most of the 1930s Doria Paz invested a considerable amount of time and financial resources in helping expand the Lions Clubs in Mexico—a less combative, socially-oriented, pro-business organization that also gathered "middle-class" Mexicans. The jovial and collegial atmosphere of the Lions was well-suited for Doria Paz who was a gifted public speaker, gregarious, and enjoyed the social limelight—one of his two marriages was to the film and television actress Ada Carrasco. And as a member of the Lions Club of Mexico City, he could also fraternize with elite circles from the official revolutionary party, which increasingly in the 1940s found the novel service club appealing. In fact, during the presidency of Manuel Ávila Camacho, Doria Paz began to serve on the city council in the Federal District and for many years on the National Tourism Council, a remarkable development for a once-vocal opponent of the post-revolutionary state.⁵

³ Manifiesto: Confederación de la Clase Media, May 1936, fojas s/n, exp. 437.1/512, caja 490, fondo Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, Rama Presidentes, Archivo General de la Nación, hereafter LCR, RP, AGN; Ing. Gustavo Sáenz de Sicilia to Lázaro Cárdenas, June 3, 1936, fojas 44-49, exp. 437.1/512, caja 490, fondo LCR, RP, AGN.

⁴ During a police raid on the CCM's headquarters in DF, Doria Paz was said to have been among those apprehended. See: "Acusados de fascistasprehendieron a varios veteranos de la revolución," *El Informador*, August 6, 1937, 1.

⁵ An account of Francisco Doria Paz as a young litigator is found in Federico Sodi, *El Jurado Resuelve...Memorias*, 2. ed. (México: Ediciones Oasis, 1971), 49–50 and 63–67; On his contributions toward the propagation of Lions in 1930s Mexico, see: Fernando Lascuráin, "Historia leonística," *Boletín: Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México*, February 15, 1966, 19. His marriage with Ada Carrasco is from: "México, Distrito Federal, Registro Civil, 1832-2005." Database with images. FamilySearch. <https://FamilySearch.org> : 14 March 2018. Archivo de Registro Civil de Distrito Federal (Civil Registry Archives), Federal District.



Figure 1: Francisco Doria Paz *behind* the bar (second from left to right) entertaining party guests at his home in Mexico City. Circa 1945.

Source: "Francisco Doria Paz convivendo con otros licenciados en un banquete," Colección Archivo Casaola, Fototeca Nacional, INAH Mediateca, http://www.mediateca.inah.gob.mx/islandora_74/islandora/object/fotografia%3A34531.

The story of Doria Paz illustrates clearly the way a growing segment of Mexican society, self-described as the "middle class," related to the post-revolutionary regime during the 1920s and 30s. There were thousands of university-educated businessmen, professionals, industrialists like him who were dissatisfied with the state, for a variety of related reasons, including its labor policies, its "communist" ideological bent, and its anti-clericalism. Not all disaffected "middle-class" individuals joined political organizations or employers' associations, for doing so involved an open, direct, and risky challenge to the hegemonic-party state. Many like Doria Paz favored something less confrontational, and so joined the ranks of service clubs such as Rotary and the Lions, where they found others who shared similar political and cultural values as well as anxieties about the nature of the state.



Figure 2: Doria Paz and his wife Ada Carrasco leading a conga line to the music of his cabinet record player on the right. Circa 1945.

Source: "Francisco Doria Paz y esposa durante una fiesta en su casa," Colección Archivo Casaola, Fototeca Nacional, INAH Mediateca http://www.mEDIATECA.INAH.GOB.MX/ISLANDORA_74/ISLANDORA/OBJECT/FOTOGRAFIA%3A34536.

This dissertation recounts the story of the men who led the service club "movement" in Mexico, namely in Lions and Rotary but also in others, between the 1920s and the 1960s.⁶ Focusing on voluntary associations that were populated by individuals who by a variety of criteria (occupation, income, social position, and education) can be viewed as "middle class" and who identified as such, allows me to raise new questions regarding the post-revolutionary period. Three overarching questions are at the core of this dissertation. First, how did the Mexican middle classes, independent from government-sanctioned organizations, engage with the state? Second, in what ways did service organizations contribute to the development of conservative politics in post-revolutionary Mexico? Third, what influence did US-based international civic organizations have on the politicization of the middle classes?

The following pages will demonstrate that middle-class men and women were drawn to the US-imported service clubs because they associated them with "modern," cosmopolitan values. Once they joined, however, Mexicans molded the ideology of these international clubs to further their own cultural interests and conservative politics. Over time, service clubs afforded

⁶ Although service clubs were by and large populated by men, women were also highly involved and played crucial roles. In some cases, as we shall see in Chapter 2, women also formed their own service clubs, independent from their husbands, which caused frictions.

Mexicans with an independent vehicle to engage in civic and political activism, from opposing state-mandated secular education and labor unions to supporting the military repression of leftist student groups and labor strikes. I argue that Rotary, Lions, and other clubs provided a crucial ideological and organizational framework through which the conservative middle classes became politicized. No other organization in Mexico had the same combination of social prestige, an honorable apolitical and secular mission of social justice, trendy internationalism, class cohesion, and regular meetings in which political ideas inevitably were discussed, in the 1940s and 1950s relatively casually, but more intensely by the 1960s. Rather than dismiss the conservative middle classes as simply reactionary, I show that they utilized these voluntary associations to defend their own visions of "modernity" and social justice.

"Serving the Nation" contributes to several literatures. First, it offers a novel approach to studying the politicization of the middle classes in twentieth-century Mexico: through the transnational civic associations they joined.⁷ My work recovers the key role that international service clubs like Rotary and Lions played in helping Mexicans advance their politics and cultural values in the public sphere and thus to shape politics even when they remained on the sidelines. Instead of using an abstract or normative definition of what the middle classes are, this dissertation offers an empirically-based study of how and why a particular segment of Mexicans perceived themselves as members of this group.⁸ By making the Lions, Rotary, and other service clubs the unit of analysis, this study offers a concrete and researchable approach for examining the difficult question of middle-class politicization in post-revolutionary Mexico.

⁷ Over the last two decades there has been a burgeoning literature on the middle classes in Latin America. For example, on Argentina see the pathbreaking work by Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Historia de la clase media argentina: apogeo y decadencia de una ilusión, 1919-2003* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2009); Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999); Patrick Barr-Melej, *Reforming Chile: Cultural Politics, Nationalism, and The Rise of the Middle Class* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 2001); David Parker, *The Idea of the Middle Class: White-Collar Workers and Peruvian Society, 1900-1950* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Louise Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes After 1968* (Stanford University Press, 2013); Ezequiel Adamovsky, Sergio E. Visacovsky, and Patricia Vargas, eds., *Clases medias: nuevos enfoques desde la sociología, la historia y la antropología* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2015); David S. Parker and Louise E. Walker, *Latin America's Middle Class: Unsettled Debates and New Histories* (Lexington Books, 2012).

⁸ Social scientists have tended to rely on various categories to define the middle classes and explain their political activism in Mexico. While these studies have provided invaluable insights, the capacious definitions and long list of attributes of the "middle classes" have often rendered this social group too vague and unruly to examine consistently over a long period. For instance, some have used education and prestige as key determining factors. See Soledad Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México: la querrela escolar, 1959-1963* (México D.F.: Colegio de México, 1988); others have combined Marxist and Weberian frameworks: Dennis L Gilbert, *Mexico's Middle Class in the Neoliberal Era* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); others have used a laundry list of indicators to define middle class, including occupation, income, health, consumption habits, profession, and so forth. See: Emilio Mario Corral García, "The Mexico City Middle Class, 1940-1970: Between Tradition, the State and the United States" (PhD Diss., Georgetown University, 2011); Walker, *Waking from the Dream*.

Second, understanding the emergence of the middle classes as political actors in post-revolutionary Mexico has implications for past as well as recent developments. During the 1980s, the conservative National Action Party (PAN) began achieving significant electoral victories, leading ultimately to the historic dethroning of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) from the presidency in 2000. Most scholars attribute the ascendance of the PAN in the post-1980s in large part to the influx of the middle classes into its ranks and leadership, which breathed new life into a party that was virtually irrelevant in the 1970s.⁹ While it is clear that the PAN has benefitted from middle-class support in last three decades, we know less about how the conservative middle classes channeled their political and cultural demands outside of party politics before the 1980s.¹⁰ By focusing on civic associations, rather than political parties, this study offers a fresh angle on the relationship between the middle classes and the state prior to the PAN's rise.

Third, unlike the existing scholarship on the Mexican middle classes, this dissertation situates the emergence of middle-class conservatism in within a hemispheric transnational framework.¹¹ This dissertation's transnational perspective reveals important aspects about the relationship between members in foreign contexts and international associations they joined. As members of this international "parliament of businessmen," as they often called themselves, Rotarians, Lions, and many others in Mexico were constantly exchanging opinions about politics, economics, and other social issues with their global peers. This means that, first, conservative ideas in Mexico developed along with influences coming from abroad. Second, Mexican club members were active participants in both the hemispheric production and circulation of conservative ideas. And third, service club ideology produced in the United States was not necessarily accepted wholesale by locals in Mexico.

⁹ During the 1970s, the PAN suffered from internal fighting and even failed to present a presidential candidate in 1976, leaving José López Portillo of the PRI completely unopposed. See: David A Shirk, *Mexico's New Politics: The PAN and Democratic Change* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 98.

¹⁰ Alejandro Moreno, "Who Is the Mexican Voter?," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics*, ed. Roderic Ai Camp (Oxford University Press, 2012), 571–95; Shirk, *Mexico's New Politics*, 98; Michael J Ard, *An Eternal Struggle: How the National Action Party Transformed Mexican Politics* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2003), 114–15; Soledad Loaeza, *El Partido Acción Nacional: La Larga Marcha, 1939-1994: oposición leal y partido de protesta* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 99; Yemile Mizrahi, *From Martyrdom to Power: The Partido Acción Nacional in Mexico* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 171, footnote 46.

¹¹ Recently, a group of scholars have adopted a transnational lens to study the history of the middle classes. See the important edited volume by A. Ricardo López and Barbara Weinstein, *The Making of the Middle Class: Toward a Transnational History* (Duke University Press, 2012); pathbreaking works that explore the transnational character of the right include Kathleen M. Blee and Sandra McGee Deutsch, eds., *Women of the Right: Comparisons and Interplay across Borders* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012) in this volume especially the piece by Margaret Power; Heidi Tinsman, *Buying into the Regime: Grapes and Consumption in Cold War Chile and the United States* (Duke University Press, 2013); and Geraldo Cadava's project in progress: *The Silenced Minority: The Rise and Fall of the Hispanic Conservative Movement*, Forthcoming.

Fourth, in addition to offering a new perspective on the conservative middle classes, this dissertation contributes to the scholarship on the global influence of international civic organizations in the 20th century, in particular those that emerged from the United States.¹² Historians informed by the "transnational turn" have emphasized the importance of non-state actors abroad for both the "sending" and the "receiving" countries, and especially how the latter accepted and/or rejected the influences of the former.¹³ By employing a transnational approach and working extensively in archives in Mexico with documents in Spanish, my work departs from other scholarship on service clubs in important ways. "Serving the Nation" challenges the prevalent notion that service organizations such as Rotary International were successful instruments of American cultural and economic imperialism.¹⁴ As members of Lions and Rotary International, this study shows that Mexican members indeed embraced the key tenets of the "gospel of service," including capitalism, democracy, anti-statism, hemispheric cooperation, etc., all of which were pro-American values. However, as the following pages demonstrate, Mexicans did so in ways that meshed with local cultural and political conditions. As other researchers have also begun to find, US-interests overseas did not merely impose ideologies on

¹² The literature on the role of US organizations overseas is vast. A few influential examples are: Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (University of California Press, 2002); Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Thomas Richard Davies, *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014); Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2010); Soma Hewa and Darwin Stapleton, *Globalization, Philanthropy, and Civil Society: Toward a New Political Culture in the Twenty-First Century* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2005); excellent examples of European associations overseas are Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism, 1717-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (London: HarperCollins, 1998); Daphne A. Reid and Patrick F. Gilbo, *Beyond Conflict: The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 1919-1994* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1997).

¹³ A concise overview of the "transnational turn" is in Akira Iriye, "The Transnational Turn," *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 3 (June 1, 2007): 373–76.

¹⁴ This interpretation is advanced most by Victoria de Grazia's now classic study *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005); and also by Brendan Goff's excellent forthcoming book, *The Heartland Abroad: Rotary International and the Globalizing of Main Street* (Harvard University Press, Forthcoming); though the "international" side of service clubs is not the main focus in his book, Jeffery A. Charles to an extent also has a similar understanding of American influences abroad. *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); one exception is Jonathan Wiesen's work on Rotary in Nazi Germany. Although not explicitly an argument in his study, Wiesen reveals how German Rotarians embraced Rotary but used it in ways to come to terms with modern consumer society, international business, and the racist ideology under National Socialism. *Creating the Nazi Marketplace: Commerce and Consumption in the Third Reich* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), chap. 4. To be fair, the interpretation of American service clubs as having important cultural influences overseas is specific to the interwar period and early World War II years. However, this dissertation overlaps with those periods and continues into the Cold War era.

locals as if they were empty vessels. Mexican clubmen and women adopted, refashioned, or rejected altogether club ideas as they saw fit.¹⁵

Finally, this dissertation engages with the recent scholarship on the nature and longevity of Mexico's hegemonic-party rule.¹⁶ It adds to these debates by showing how it was possible for the post-revolutionary state to maintain power for over seven decades (1929-2000) without having an organization that could effectively channel the demands of the middle classes, such as there were for workers and peasants. That the PRI created the National Confederation of Popular Organizations (CNOP) in 1943 shows that the middle classes (however it defined them) indeed mattered to state and were understood to have a key role in the developing the country. But the CNOP was a massive and amorphous organization, gathering individuals affiliated to the PRI, from shoe shiners to bus drivers, women's leagues to intellectuals, and tenant unions to bureaucrats.¹⁷ "Serving the Nation" reorients this discussion by turning to the places where thousands of self-described middle-class Mexicans met weekly to network, discuss social and political issues, and organize to change their communities. I argue that service clubs afforded the middle classes an independent vehicle to negotiate, collaborate, and challenge the post-revolutionary state. Over time, channeling conservative middle-class interests through service organizations functioned as an escape valve, and may even have paradoxically contributed to the durability of the PRI.¹⁸

¹⁵ Historians of Latin America with a command of the Spanish and Portuguese languages have recently started to rethink the relationship between US state and non-state actors and Latin Americans. A few outstanding examples are Steven Palmer, *Launching Global Health: The Caribbean Odyssey of the Rockefeller Foundation* (University of Michigan Press, 2010); Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Harvard University Press, 2015); and Rebecca Herman Weber, "In Defense of Sovereignty: Labor, Crime, Sex and Nation at U.S. Military Bases in Latin America, 1940-1947" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2014).

¹⁶ Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, eds., *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Jaime M. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture during the Long Sixties* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Robert F. Alegre, *Railroad Radicals in Cold War Mexico: Gender, Class, and Memory* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

¹⁷ For an introduction to the development of the CNOP, see: Tiziana Bertaccini, *El régimen priista frente a las clases medias, 1943-1964* (México, D.F: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2009).

¹⁸ My interpretation differs from Soledad Loaeza's seminal book, which posits that the middle classes ultimately sought independence from the state. *Clases medias y política en México*; like this dissertation, Susanne Karin Eineigel's fine study offers a much more nuanced understanding of the middle classes from the late Porfirian era to the 1940s. See "Distinction, Culture, and Politics in Mexico City's Middle Class, 1890-1940" (PhD Diss., University of Maryland, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation draws primarily on the internal archives of the three main service organizations in Mexico: Rotary, Lions, and the Sembradores de Amistad (Sowers of Friendship). These rich repositories, which until now had not been consulted by historians, provided a unique lens through which to examine a specific segment of urban Mexican society during the post-revolutionary period. Most clubs I approached did not wish to share them to an outsider and others did not any have records at all. However, after multiple attempts and many rejections, I was fortunate to gain access to three excellent archives: those of the Puebla Rotary Club, the Lions Club of Mexico City, and the Sowers of Friendship in Monterrey. In Tijuana, members from the Rotary and Lions clubs kindly shared with me personal documents and photographs since their clubs had not kept any files. With these documents, I was able to reconstruct the socio-economic background of members and the changes over the span of five decades. Club rosters, for instance, indicated members' line of work or profession, level of education, affiliations to other civic organizations, religious groups, and (occasionally) to political parties. As officially apolitical and non-sectarian organizations, internal discussions on politics, religion, economics, and other sensitive issues were topics that clubs assiduously kept from the public eye. These themes, however, emerged in session minutes, correspondence, newsletters, and club bulletins.

I complemented my use of internal club records with government files in Mexico as well as in the United States. Municipal, state, and federal documents were useful for tracing the changing relationship between the clubs and the Mexican post-revolutionary state, as well as for their entrance into the political sphere. US consulate and embassy reports also provided useful information on the activities of service clubs and the extent to which they were promoting pro-American ideals. Finally, I made extensive use of regional and national newspapers from Mexico and also from US, especially those from border states. Periodical sources provided crucial information on clubs, their members, and also on the relations between clubs on either side of the border.

MEXICAN SERVICE CLUBS IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

Before turning to the Mexican case, it is important to understand the background of US service clubs. These originated in early 20th-century Chicago, at the height of the progressive era.¹⁹ In 1905, a young lawyer named Paul Harris invited three colleagues (a tailor, an engineer, and a coal supplier) to start a luncheon club that rotated among their workplaces—hence the name "Rotary." They decided to meet once a week to overcome the sense of alienation caused by Chicago's urban chaos so foreign to their small hometowns, and also to make business contacts. The "service" part of the club came when they decided to do something good for their community. The Rotary Club of Chicago's first act of service was to donate to the city much

¹⁹ This discussion is based on Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society*; and Brendan M. Goff, "The Heartland Abroad: The Rotary Club's Mission of Civic Internationalism" (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2008).

needed public restroom stalls. The appeal of Harris' club was almost immediate and Rotary soon extended to dozens of cities across the US. Noting its success, others sought to follow Rotary's example. The Lions Club was next, founded also in Chicago in 1917. By then, the Rotary Club had a headquarters and was already expanding beyond the US into Canada, Europe, parts of East Asia, and Latin America.



Figure 3: Public toilet stalls: The Rotary Club of Chicago's first public service project in 1907.

Source: <http://www.rotaryroom711.org/flushing-with-pride-rotarys-first-public-service-project-was-also-rooted-in-vocational-service/>

Although not initially a goal of Rotary, by the end of World War One, leadership was determined to spread the gospel of service, what scholars refer to as "civic internationalism."²⁰ That is, it meant to promote the American values of global peace, international cooperation, democracy, and economic growth. For Rotary International directors and members, economic benefits were not just a corollary of spreading democratic ideals and global peace—they were an integral part of the process. After Rotary reconciled its misgivings about inviting "exotic peoples" into the fraternity, it began in the mid-1910s an extension plan for non-western regions—provided they could pass as white or European, as in the case of Latin America beginning with Cuba, or progressive and industrious, in the case of Japan. For several decades, however, most countries in Africa and the Caribbean were not invited into the Rotary family. Following the Jim Crow laws in the United States, African Americans were also excluded from membership in Rotary and Lions until the Civil Rights movement.

By 1924, Rotary had organized clubs in most of the major cities or capitals of Latin America: (in order of appearance) Havana, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Valparaiso, Panama City, and Lima. Cuba, as the first Latin American country to welcome Rotary, had the most clubs of any country in the region with 20 throughout most of the

²⁰ See Goff, *The Heartland Abroad*, Forthcoming.

1920s. Mexico soon became a close second. Rotary clubs in Mexico increased from one in 1921 to 19 in 1927. The following year, in 1928, Mexico overtook Cuba on the club leaderboard, adding 18 more clubs (for a total of 37). Based solely on numbers, Rotary during its first decade in Mexico seemed to be headed in the right direction.²¹

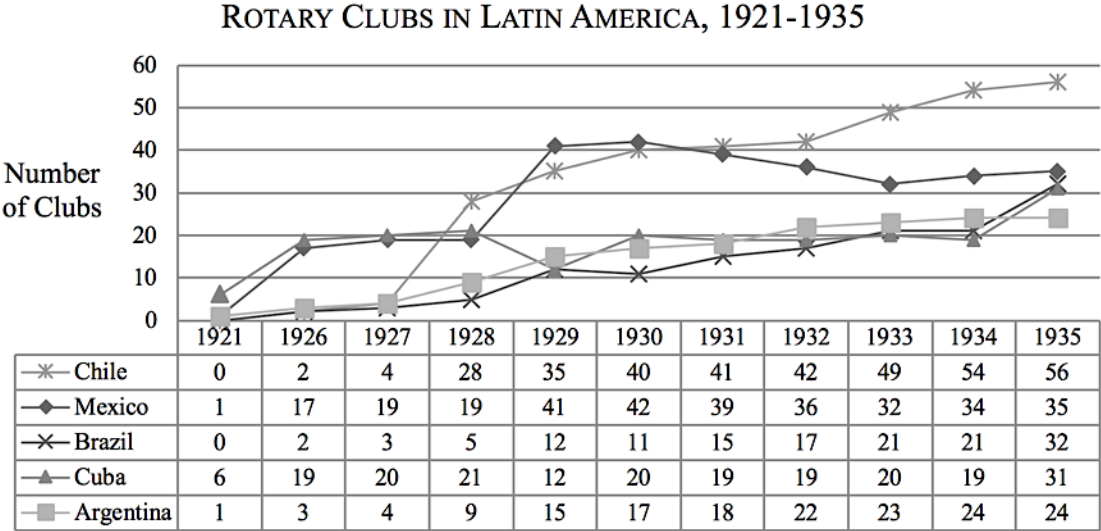


Table 1: Rotary Club growth in key Latin American countries between the years the first club in Mexico was formed (1921) and the international convention in Mexico City was held (1935)

Source: *Proceedings: Annual Convention of Rotary International* (1921, and 1926-1935)

Rotarians in the United States and in Mexico, however, expressed some concerns regarding the future of the organization during the 1920s. American members questioned whether the ideas of Rotary were actually taking root in Mexico. A top official and pioneer of Rotary in Mexico, Tom Sutton, commented in 1925 that "Many times as I visit Rotary clubs in the States I am asked, 'Tom, do those Mexicans understand Rotary? Do they practice Rotary? Are they real Rotarians?'" Opinions like these seem to have been informed more by racial prejudice than any other reason, including religion. Catholics in North America and Ireland had demonstrated that a good club member did not have to be a Protestant to embrace the gospel of service. The concerns of which Sutton spoke reflect the tension among American service club

²¹ *Proceedings: Fifteenth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1924), 6; *Proceedings: Eighteenth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1927), 6; *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1928), 6.

members who wanted to see their organization expand overseas, but were doubtful whether "other races" would embrace it.²²

Among Mexican Rotarians there were also questions about the stability of the organization. During a regional conference held in Mérida, Yucatan, the governor of that Rotary district admitted in 1930 that Rotary "had still not established deep roots" as clubs in other countries had.²³ Nevertheless, despite early tribulations caused by external factors (the Cristero Rebellion and the Great Depression) as well as acceptance by locals, by the mid 1930s Rotary in Mexico had achieved stability and was attracting new followers every year—a pattern that was repeating itself throughout Latin America. In fact, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Cuba reported positive net gains in number of clubs throughout the 1930s. Rotary in Chile did exceptionally well, outpacing other nations: in 1933 there were 49 and in 1935, 56 clubs, becoming the country with the highest number of Rotary clubs in Latin America (see Table 1 above).

Rotary appealed to Mexican businessmen for many of the same reasons that they drew men in other countries. They were hubs for networking, and cosmopolitan because of their global reach. But they were also "modern" and "progressive" compared to the voluntary associations that already existed in Mexico. The Freemasons, for instance, were secluded from the public, had secret handshakes, and practiced obscure rituals. Furthermore, Masonry was associated with anti-Catholicism and pro-state politics, which made it unattractive for many people. Catholic lay associations, however, were also problematic, as we'll see, because the government was so determined to disempower Catholicism. Belonging to a Catholic organization basically meant foregoing any possibility of influencing government.

The service club experiment in Mexico was a resounding success. By the end of the Second World War, clubs proliferated throughout the country. The two main organizations alone, Lions and Rotary International, accounted for over 550 clubs by the early 1960. But Mexicans were also joining other US-based organizations such as the Kiwanis, the Club 20-30, Sertoma, and the Junior Chamber International (JCI). As we shall see, Mexicans also founded their own "native" clubs, in the case with the Sower of Friendship Club (*Sembradores de Amistad*), which was the most successful within this genre.²⁴

²² *Proceedings: Sixteenth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1925), 140; Goff discusses at length the racial debates surrounding Rotary in Asia and Latin America. He finds that Rotary wrestled with how to appear progressive and inclusive to all peoples, while having to come to terms with members' racial prejudices both in the United States and abroad. Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 2008.

²³ "Informe del licenciado Carlos Sánchez Mejorada, Gobernador del Tercer Distrito de Rotary Internacional, a la Octava Conferencia del mismo, reunida en la Ciudad de Mérida," *México rotario: Revista de propaganda nacional, amistad y ética comercial*, Año 1, no. 3 (March 1930): 3.

²⁴ Establishing the national membership size from this many clubs over an extended period (five decades) is very difficult, given the fragmented information. Nevertheless, it is possible to gain at least a general sense of the number of actors this dissertation studies. For instance, the Lions Club (which was the largest and most popular club in Mexico) had in 1957 a total of 11,000 members. That number would ascend to 30,000 by 1974. Less information is available for other organizations, but in the case of Rotary

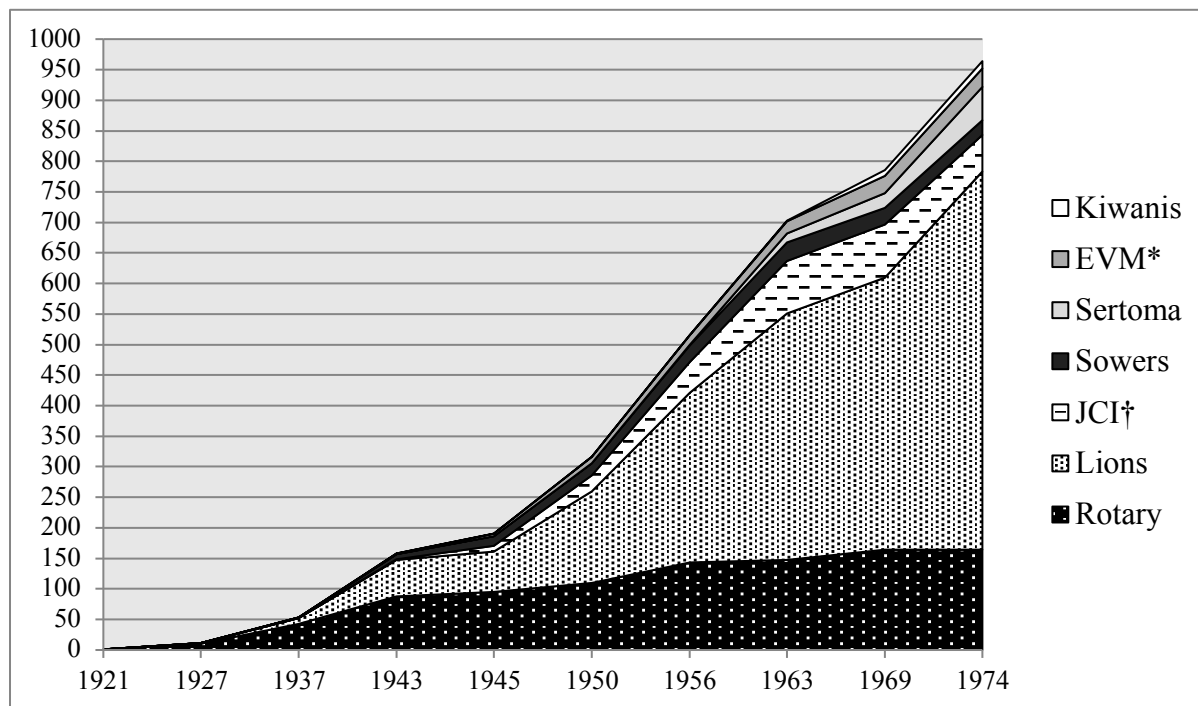


Table 2: Service club growth in Mexico, 1921-1974. Note that the two largest organizations were Rotary and the Lions clubs, with the latter by far outpacing the others after the 1950s.

Notes: *EVM: Ejecutivos de Ventas y Mercadotecnia (Sales and Marketing Executives International).
 †JCI: Cámara Junior Internacional (Junior Chamber International).

Sources: Data for the Lions: *El Informador*, January 13, 1935, 1; *Memoria de la XI Convención de Clubes de Leones (1945)*, 19; *Memoria de la XIV Convención de Clubes de Leones (1948)*, 26; *El Sol de Puebla*, July 25, 1952, 1; *Rugido*, January 1957, 11; *Leones: Órgano oficial del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México*, September 1, 1958, 11; *Leones: Órgano del Distrito B-3*, February 15, 1963, 7.
 Data for Rotary: *El Informador*, February 24, 1943, 11; Exp. Regimen Interior, Archivo 1950-1951, Vol. II, ACRP; Exp. 201, Archivo 1958-1959, Vol. IV, ACRP; *El Porvenir*, February 1, 1962, 32; *Annual Proceedings (1963)*, 234; *Annual Proceedings (1968)*, 348.
 Data for the Sowers of Friendship: *El Sembrador*, August 1946, 4; *El Sembrador (Revista Conmemorativa de la VII Convención)*, October 1951, 38, *Sembradores de Amistad*, September 1957, 1; and *Sembradores de Amistad*, July 1967, 1.
 Data for JCI: *El Siglo de Torreón*, September 14, 8; *El Siglo de Torreón*, October 23, 1947, 1; *El Informador*, January 10, 1965, 5-B, *El Informador*, September 19, 1965, 2.
 Data for Club Sertoma, see: *El Informador*, April 26, 1969, 8-A; for the EVM, see: *El Informador*, May 23, 1969, 3-A.
 Data for Kiwanis: *The Dispatch* (Lexington, N.C.), May 1, 1962, 9; and *El Informador*, March 2, 1966, 10.

and of the Sowers of Friendship, in 1962 each claimed a national membership of 4,500 and 1,600, respectively.

OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is comprised of five chapters and an epilogue, which follow a chronological order. Chapter One discusses the establishment of the two main international service organizations in Mexico: Rotary (1921) and Lions International (1933). It shows the appeal of these novel "modern" businessmen's clubs in Mexico, vis-à-vis masonic lodges, Catholic lay organizations, and similar groups. It argues that service clubs in the 1920s and 30s attracted a particular segment in society, often self-described as "the middle classes," which included entrepreneurs, professionals, managers, and industrial elites who shared similar cultural values and, most importantly, anxieties about the nature of the post-revolutionary state.

Chapter Two focuses on the Lions Clubs in Mexico. It shows that by the late 1940s the Lions became the most popular service club in Mexico, despite arriving over ten years after Rotary. It situates the growth of Lions International abroad, arguing that Mexico became instrumental for the organization's expansion into Latin America. This fact, however, was in spite of the conflicting relationship between the Mexican Lions and American Lions officials in Chicago. The success in Mexico was due to, first, a unique arrangement that allowed Mexican Lions to have a national headquarters in Mexico City. Second, the Lions in Mexico also flourished because many high-level officials from the post-revolutionary state joined their ranks. In doing so, the Lions became a "modern" site of sociability for members of the PRI in some states, partly replacing the antiquated and secretive Masonic lodges.

Chapter Three examines the interplay between service club political activism, the reformist presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40), and Rotary International's headquarters in the US. It focuses on the Rotary Club of Monterrey, which gathered the city's industrial leaders and some of the most vocal opponents of the Cárdenas administration and its statist policies. Monterrey is of particular significance because by the 1930s it was the powerhouse of heavy industry, and in the 1940s a key center for the newly founded National Action Party (PAN). The chapter discusses the events that led to the disbandment of the Rotary Club in 1936 following a disagreement with Rotary International's non-political intervention policy. Afterwards, the ex-Rotarians founded the only independent, nationalist, and pro-Catholic service club in Mexico: the Sembradores de Amistad (Sowers of Friendship). It shows how Monterrey's employers used the seemingly apolitical service clubs to challenge the state in a non-confrontational way, after attempting more direct and violent approaches. In addition, this chapter challenges the assumption that Catholicism was irrelevant to Monterrey employers.

Chapter Four describes two developments in the 1940s and 1950s. First, many service club members throughout Mexico were also affiliated with Catholic lay organizations, particularly the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Action. Second, service clubs increasingly collaborated on state-led programs to uplift local communities: the crusades for literacy, the construction of schoolhouses, and the "moralization" of public office and society. Although the Rotary, Lions, and Sowers of Friendship clubs all joined these state-led initiatives, they participated in ways that meshed with club members' particular cultural and political interests. The Sowers and Rotarians from the conservative city of Puebla, for instance, ran literacy schools taught by Catholic priests, while the Lions in general worked closely with the Secretary of Public Education. The chapter shows that the line between service and political action often became blurred. Although the state-led crusades gave voice and leadership to the middle classes

gathered in service clubs, the lack of state commitment (particularly to clean up corruption in public office) disillusioned club members with collaboration with the government.

Chapter Five examines the increased involvement of service clubs in the politics of education and radical student movements at the height of the Cold War during the "long 1960s." It focuses on two case studies: one involving various service clubs in Puebla and the other the Sowers of Friendship in Monterrey. Each one illustrates the mobilization of service clubs and parallel groups against leftist Secretary of Public Education officials and university student organizations. It shows that Rotary, Lions, and Sowers became mouthpieces of anti-communist discourse of both the Mexican state and US service club headquarters. The chapter reveals that service clubs and the population they represented (professionals, businessmen, industrialists, parents, and the self-described middle classes), could ally with the state, as long as it responded by maintaining a hardline against so-called radical elements. In other instances, however, the state-service club alliance was either tenuous or never fully achieved, as in the case of the Sowers. Finally, the Epilogue briefly discusses service club activism into the early 1960s. It shows that service clubs of all ideological inclinations rallied behind the government of Díaz Ordaz and its role during the 1968 student movement in Mexico City.

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CHAPTER 1
THE "MIDDLE-CLASS IMPULSE"
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
U.S.-SERVICE CLUBS IN MEXICO, 1920-1935

In Mexico throughout the early 1920s one could read in newspapers from across the country about the "dilemma of the middle classes." Articles and editorials discussed the plight of this segment of society, which complained bitterly over the high cost of living, the rise of powerful (and corrupt) unions, and the endless disruptive labor strikes. The emerging political regime flirted with leftist rhetoric and policies, overwhelmingly supporting the labor movement while criticizing the middle classes. As Minister of Interior, Plutarco Elías Calles in 1922 chastised the middle classes for holding on to their "bourgeois habits," a reference to their apparent disinterest in the political process. In this context, commentators wondered what place they should occupy in the revolutionary state's project. But who were these so-called middle classes the politicians and journalists talked about, and could they be organized?¹

This chapter advances two main arguments. First, although Rotary and Lions International were charitable institutions, ostensibly with non-political purposes, their message of anti-labor and class harmony appealed to middle-class individuals who were displeased with the post-revolutionary state. Second, I argue that service clubs began filling a void that few voluntary and state-created associations could. Rotary and Lions clubs, in other words, provided a crucial organizational and ideological framework to a particular segment in society (entrepreneurs, professionals, the middle classes, and elites), which shared what I call the "middle-class impulse," that is, a common set of political and cultural beliefs, as well as anxieties about the direction the post-revolutionary regime was following.

The chapter is divided in three parts. Part one describes the self-perceptions of the middle classes in 1920s and 30s Mexico and their misgivings about the post-revolutionary state. It shows also that in the absence of an organization that could group disaffected middle-class Mexicans, the recently arrived Rotary and Lions clubs (in 1921 and 1933 respectively) began to play an important organizing role. After prevailing over organizational obstacles, both service clubs then confronted a series of national and international controversies surrounding the Catholic Church and the anti-clerical politics of the post-revolutionary regime. The development of these events is explained in part two. The last section of the chapter details how service clubs solidified a place in Mexican society by hosting the Rotary and Lions International Conventions in Mexico City during the same summer. The two conventions, which took place in 1935, represented a unique forum in which the Mexican state and two international businessmen's

¹ "Solamente la clase media, dice el ministro Calles, permanece aún inactiva," *El Informador*, August 24, 1922; Calles' unflattering remarks about the middle classes notwithstanding, during his campaign for the presidency he courted this sector strongly and obtained the support of several political parties. See: Georgette Emilia José Valenzuela, *La campaña presidencial de 1923-1924 en México* (Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1998), 137 & 227.

associations offered different answers to some of the social, economic, and political challenges facing society.

PART I: THE MIDDLE CLASSES IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY MEXICO

As worker strikes spread in several cities during the early 1920s, newspapers unsympathetic to the labor movement condemned them for the "disgraceful excesses" they had committed. From Monterrey, to Puebla, Tampico, Merida, and Mexico City, unionized workers were either threatening to walkout or already on strike. One labor demonstration in particular caused a stir. On September 26, 1920, a contingent of 2,000 members of the Mexican Regional Confederation of Labor (CROM) staged a rally in the Zócalo to protest the rising cost of living and demand the enforcement of article in the Constitution (123), which protected workers' rights. What started out as a peaceful demonstration soon turned violent. The CROM followers stormed the National Palace, reached the presidential balcony and waved a red-and-black flag while shouting "*¡viva Lenin!*"²

In the aftermath of the CROM rally, a writer from the conservative newspaper *El Informador* of Guadalajara commented on the irony that protests were being directed against the same state that was favoring the working classes like never before. He noted also that the middle classes had unfairly become the target of criticisms by union leaders, who derided them for opposing the labor movement. In their defense, he argued that "the suffering middle class" had only "worked towards the improvement of society... These charges against them are undeserved."³

The journalist then began to count the exemplary qualities of Mexico's middle classes, in particular as they related to their disinterested role in society. To begin, he argued that they strived only for the country's "intellectual and material progress." They sought no personal gain, staying on the "sidelines of politics." Unlike the power-hungry politicians and labor leaders, the middle classes

promoted local anti-vice campaigns, they built orphanages and institutions for the handicapped, and raised funds for the poor; they sustained the Red Cross that help the ill and injured; they held campaigns to rid the streets of vagabonds and drunkards; they ran community literacy programs; they promoted cultural events...

² "Manifestaciones bolshevikis en muchas ciudades del país," *El Informador*, September 27, 1920; Pedro Castro, *Álvaro Obregón: Fuego y cenizas de la Revolución Mexicana* (Ediciones Era, 2009), 142; After the rally, CROM leaders apologized to the authorities for letting the event get out of their control. However, Attorney General Eduardo Neri blamed the leaders for the violence and announced the he intended to prosecute them. His reaction then prompted CROM followers to organize another protest against Neri. Refer to: "Se fragua en la metrópoli una gran huelga general," *El Informador*, October 10, 1920.

³ "Cuestiones obreras," *El Informador*, October 8, 1920.

The fawning list of attributes went on. "All of this enormous and transcendental work," he continued, "is carried out not by the working classes, but by their victims: the intellectual and industrious men of the middle class." According to this view, the middle classes embodied the unselfish pursuit for the common good—in other words altruism, a virtue both working classes and elites lacked.⁴

In addition to a strong sense of charity, commentators defined the middle classes by their occupations and how through them, they contributed toward the improvement of society. By and large, they were educated professionals, intellectuals, artists, businessmen, and administrators. In a separate editorial, a writer groused over the lack of experts and specialists, who traditionally came from the middle-class ranks. Instead, since the revolution, a motley group of poorly educated individuals were filling key positions in society. "We need the middle class," he argued, "in public policy, commerce, and in industry." Mexico was bereft of talented financial advisers, managers, accountants, teachers, specialists, and experts able to solve problems. "Despite the many merits a person may have as a revolutionary or as a party member," trained individuals were irreplaceable. Porfirian Mexico had them, the journalist noted, "but then came the revolution with all its radicalism and in one fell swoop it did away with them."⁵

Some recognized the need to organize the middle-class as a way to counter the state's mobilization of workers and its pro-labor policies. The problem was how to gather such a dispersed group of people. "We who fill the ranks of the middle class can no longer remain motionless," one self-proclaimed middle-class writer stated. The labor strikes and worker-led violence, he argued, evinced the need for an independent organization headed by "intellectuals who come from the middle classes." Although several explicitly named middle-class parties were organized in the years leading up to the 1924 and later 1928 elections, self-identified members of this class continued to feel marginalized. The idea of joining a state-sponsored organization was often rejected because, according to the writer, it would amount to "something too similar to the soviet system, which the middle class must avoid." Another commentator questioned "How can the syndication of the middle classes function if there is no equal justice, if the authorities are not impartial...?" Only by organizing themselves "would the middle classes fulfill their role as the directors of society."⁶

There were some who attempted to establish independent middle-class associations and unions throughout the 1920s. In 1927, for example, a number of mutual-aid societies from Torreón, Gómez Palacio, and Ciudad Lerdo merged into the "Mutualist and Fraternal Confederation." The self-proclaimed middle-class organization stated that it sought to protect the interests of the middle classes in the face of the growing radical labor movement. However,

⁴ "Cuestiones obreras."

⁵ "Los buenos empleados no se improvisan," *El Informador*, August 7, 1920.

⁶ Juan Fournier, "Organización de la clase media," *El Siglo de Torreón*, April 9, 1922; "La sindicalización de la clase media," *El Informador*, September 6, 1922; the organization of middle-class political parties in 1924 and 1928 is discussed in: Eineigel, "Distinction, Culture, and Politics in Mexico City," 66.

there is no evidence that would suggest that associations created in the 1920s were successful. Rather, they seem to have been ephemeral and largely isolated.⁷

At precisely the same time these ideological and political struggles between the so-called middle classes and the state were being played out, Rotary and later Lions club were beginning to appear in cities throughout Mexico. By the late 1930s, middle-class Mexicans with shared cultural values and similar political anxieties were gathering on a weekly basis in these novel service clubs. Although at that point service clubs were becoming a normal facet of urban Mexican life, a decade earlier the prospects of American service organizations settling in Mexico were less than certain. The following pages describes the organizational challenges that Rotary and Lions International faced prior to their eventual establishment.

ROTARY AND LIONS INTERNATIONAL IN MEXICO

Given the successes in Cuba after 1917, Rotary International (RI) officials viewed the expansion into other parts of Latin America with promise. The experiment in Cuba showed that the "Latin Races" could embrace the values of "civic internationalism" and expand the horizon of Rotary into the rest of the Americas. Two years after the Rotary Club of La Habana was organized, San Juan, Puerto Rico became the second Latin American city to form a club, followed by Montevideo, Uruguay in 1919. It was only a matter of time before Mexico would become part of the Rotary "family." As early as 1917, RI directors expressed their desire to see the first club in Mexico organized within the next few years. "We feel it certain" stated Chesley Perry, Secretary of RI, "that it will not be long before our efforts will produce one or more Rotary clubs in Mexico."⁸

Although there was interest among RI officials in expanding south of the border, racial prejudices toward Mexicans fueled hesitations among some American members. Rotarians needed to be convinced that Mexico was worthy of their organization. "Practically every other American will tell you, when he speaks of a Mexican," uttered one Rotarian speaker in 1919, "they are treacherous." "They will stab you in the back every time; they are just peons and 'greasers,'" he continued. However, after living and doing business in Mexico for nine years, he had come to appreciate and understand the country and its people. Now he was urging fellow Rotarians to "have a more sympathetic understanding of how these people live" and not, he

⁷ "Gestionase la unión de la clase media de la laguna," *El Siglo de Torreón*, July 13, 1927; notably, the federal government was interested in keeping track of the kinds of civic associations that were forming around the country. See: Memo to Presidente Municipal titled "Se le suplica ratifiquen, rectifiquen o amplien las direcciones contenidas en el pliego adjunto," September 26, 1923, foja s/n, exp. 12, sección sindicatos y asociaciones, fondo Ayuntamiento, Archivo Municipal de León.

⁸ Ironically, it was Secretary Chesley Perry himself who a few years prior had expressed strong misgivings about the "Latin Races." Perry's prejudice seems to have been informed by personal experience, serving in Havana in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 2008, 208; *Proceedings: Ninth Annual Convention of the International Association of Rotary Clubs* (Rotary International, 1918), 222.

pleaded, "gauge the Republic of Mexico by [Francisco] Villa and his gang." Ultimately, as was true for Cuba and other non-Anglo countries where Rotary had expanded into, business interests had the potential to eclipse racial biases.⁹

Despite the prejudices that some members harbored, there was clear interest in Mexico within the top level of the organization. Logistically speaking, however, there was a significant impediment beyond RI's control: the violence and political instability in Mexico. During the 1920 convention in Atlantic City, the Chairman of the Foreign Extension Committee stated RI's position on the matter. In essence, he argued that "until the political conditions [in Mexico] are satisfactory for stability, clubs should not be organized." The civil war of the Revolution made the endeavor of organizing clubs in Mexico both a difficult and dangerous operation.¹⁰

Through U.S. news outlets and testimonies from Americans in Mexico, reports of American casualties and property losses in Mexico were a cause for concern. Ira Jewell Williams, owner of the Boston-Panuco Oil Company, which managed oilfields in Tampico, Mexico, gave an account to the Philadelphia Rotary Club of the horrors he witnessed during the war. Scores of honest and hard-working Americans, he explained, "have been driven out, their farms and cattle and mines and industries destroyed." Hundreds of American civilians and troops had died in the attacks in Columbus, New Mexico by Villa's men and in El Carrizal, Mexico, Williams noted.¹¹

Other commentators offered Rotarians an even bleaker assessment of Mexico's situation. In 1920, around 500 Rotary members assembled in New York City hotel listened "with great interest" to a Methodist missionary based in Mexico. The American who had lived in Mexico for several years suggested that "if an end is not put to the civil war in Mexico, the Mexican people will soon be reduced to abject misery if not complete extermination." In his opinion, the only solution was for a foreign power to intervene and end the bloodbath, "preferably the United States."¹²

Once the war ended and conditions in Mexico had improved by 1920, Rotary went forward with the establishment of a club in the nation's capital. By the year's end, a group of about 30 began (mostly Americans and British) to meet regularly at the restaurant Sanborns, also

⁹ For the racist remarks, see: *Proceedings: Tenth Annual Convention of the International Association of Rotary Clubs* (Rotary International, 1919), 111; On business opportunities trumping racial biases, see: Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 2008, 209.

¹⁰ *Proceedings: Eleventh Annual Convention of the International Association of Rotary Clubs* (Rotary International, 1920), 251.

¹¹ By 1926, the Associated Press estimated 3,000 claims had been filed by Americans against the government of Mexico, totaling an estimated \$300 million USD. John Coryn, "Catholics Ask Mexican Truce in Church War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 19, 1926; Ira Jewell Williams, *Carranza: First Chief of the Army of Murderers of Americans. Remarks of Ira Jewell Williams before the Rotary Club of Philadelphia on September 21, 1920* (Philadelphia: Ira Jewell Williams, 1920), 4.

¹² "La revuelta acabará con nuestro país," *La Prensa*, February 1, 1920.

known as the *casa de los azulejos*. It would not be until April 1921, when they gathered at the University Club of Mexico to receive the official charter to the Rotary Club of Mexico City.¹³

Although the club was ready to be chartered since the end of 1920, RI decided to delay its inclusion. The headquarters' justification reveals the influence of politics within non-governmental organizations. The Extension Committee recommended that until Mexico's government was recognized by the United States and Great Britain, Rotary should not give the club official status. The decision to delay chartering Mexico's first club showed that, despite professing service, international cooperation, and a strict policy of non-political involvement, Rotary International could only welcome countries that were friendly toward American and British interests. It was not until General Álvaro Obregón was sworn into office in December 1920 and his administration gradually patched relations with both countries that the Mexican club was sanctioned officially.¹⁴

The formation of the Rotary Club of Mexico City seems to have spurred officials at the International Association of Lions Clubs in Chicago to follow their example. During the 1922 Lions convention in Oakland, California, William G. Higgins from the San Antonio, Texas Lions Club raised the question of expanding into Mexico. The board of directors welcomed the proposal and appointed him to direct the extension efforts. The endeavor into Mexico presented a set of organizational and budgetary problems for Lions International. Unlike Rotary, the Lions did not have a formal extension office and staff dedicated to Latin America. In fact, the organization lacked experience organizing clubs outside of the United States, despite the "International" in their title. The first non-U.S. club (in Ontario, Canada) was formed in 1924, two years after Higgins thought of an extension in Mexico. Nevertheless, a group of Lions officials were determined to spread Lionism to the Americas, beginning with Mexico.¹⁵

After several failed attempts to establish Lions clubs in northern Mexico, (including a short-lived club in Nuevo Laredo in 1927) the President of Lions International, Ray Riley (1929-30) and Higgins devised a strategy that would lead to sustainable clubs.¹⁶ They concluded that a "permanent organization could be effected only by beginning in the capital," an approach Rotary

¹³ For Rotary International's extension model beginning with a club in a nation's capital, see: Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 2008, 104; The anecdote regarding the contacting Anglos in Mexico taken from: Club Rotario Industrial Puebla, *Engrane: Club Rotario Puebla Industrial*, no. 26 (January 2011); *Proceedings: Eleventh Annual Rotary Convention*, 201.

¹⁴ "The December Board Meeting," *The Rotarian*, July 1921, 70; Upon coming to power, President Obregón moved to renegotiate debts and reparations to American interests. In return, Washington recognized the Mexican government. See: John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), especially 368-69.

¹⁵ Henry Simms, "History of the San Antonio Founder Lions Club 1915," San Antonio Founder Lions Club, accessed December 25, 2015, <http://safcl.org/history.htm>.

¹⁶ Gabriel A. Martinez, "How We Brought Lionism Into Mexico," *The Lion*, 1927, 15, 39. Accessed from: http://www.lionsclubs.org/cs-assets/_files/images/page-images/lions100/touchstone-stories/2-large.png. The exact date of the journal unfortunately does not appear on the site.

International had been employing for its extension program for years. In early 1931, Higgins traveled to Mexico City to contact American expatriates, including the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Dwight Morrow, and select businessmen. Seeking to establish a reliable group, Higgins contacted men who had been previously been members of Shriners International, the fraternal order linked to the freemasons. Within a few months, a small group of some 22 individuals appeared to show interest in forming a club. However, the group was highly disorganized and poorly linked to the headquarters in Chicago. In July 1931, the club secretary E.P. Loya confessed "we are entirely in the dark as to the procedure that we should follow."¹⁷

Lacking also was a firm commitment among the prospective Lions. In September, for example, Lions International received a letter from an American in Mexico City stating that he was not a member of the Mexico City Lions Club, "although I was invited to join." The writer concluded: "kindly remove my name from your mailing list," which suggests that prospective members were added to the club list hastily.¹⁸ In early 1932, the president of the un-chartered Lions Club of Mexico City Lions lamented "that everything has not been going as nicely" with the club as we would have hope for, but believed "that matters can be worked around to the point where [the] club will again become a real active club."¹⁹ After almost two years of attempts, the Lions Club of Mexico City was consolidated in 1933.

Once the organizational challenges for both Rotary and Lions were overcome, who would join and for what purposes? As described in the Introduction, a variety of social clubs, learned societies, fraternal lodges, and religious lay associations continued to be active in Mexico. What did Rotary and Lions have to offer that other voluntary associations did not? Why did they attract middle-class Mexican men and later women?

THE APPEAL OF SERVICE CLUBS

In early 1924, Manuel Ibáñez was on route back to his native Puebla after a trip to Europe. During a brief layover in New York, he found himself turning the pages of a newspaper in his hotel. An article about a "Rotary Club" in New York City caught his attention. The club had taken the initiative to carry out a series of city improvements that would benefit local residents. It surprised him that the club was not a religious or charitable institution, but rather an association of professionals and entrepreneurs. "Something like this is what we need in Puebla," he thought. After returning to his successful pharmaceutical company in Puebla, Ibáñez learned that a colleague in Mexico City was a member of the capital's Rotary Club. Ibáñez told him that

¹⁷ E.P. Loya, Secretary of the Mexico City Lions Club, to Lions International, July 25, 1931, exp. estatutos, Caja Archivero 1933-1936, Archivo del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México (hereafter ACLCM).

¹⁸ George Anderson, Assistant Secretary, Lions International, to E.P. Loya, Secretary of the Mexico City Lions Club, September 29, 1931, exp. estatutos, Caja Archivero 1933-1936, ACLCM.

¹⁹ *Official Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Convention: International Association of Lions Clubs* (International Association of Lions Clubs, 1935), 363.

he had talked about Rotary to his friends in Puebla and they were interested in forming a club of their own. Later in 1924, at an upscale restaurant (fittingly named "El Royalty") in Puebla City's central square, Ibáñez recounted how he came to know about Rotary to his fellow members as they received the charter for their club. The Rotarians of Puebla, he believed, could be proud they were now part of an international fraternity, committed to bringing "the best elements" together to serve Puebla.²⁰

The story of Puebla's first Rotary club shows that not all Mexicans became interested in service clubs through interactions with American or British expatriates. Some, like the wealthy Ibáñez, learned about service clubs while traveling abroad. More significantly, however, it perfectly illustrates a sentiment felt by many service club members in Mexico and in other countries. Membership in Rotary, Lions, and other international service clubs provided men with what Brendan Goff has called a form of "global citizenship," in which men from, regardless of race, could feel they were part of the "parliament of businessmen." "Citizens of the world," a President of Rotary once said, "come into personal contact with one another as fellow Rotarians."²¹

For professionals and businessmen around the world who could join, membership offered a sense of belonging to something larger, extending beyond local clubs, communities, and national boundaries. They were part of an international organization that worked to spread values of friendship, global cooperation, and service. As members of transnational organizations, Mexicans were in theory equals with their global peers. "Mexicans," wrote one member of the Mexico City Lions Club, had found "fellowship with men, fellowship that is international in scope and cares not what a man's race or creed may be." However, as we saw above, not all Americans saw favorably the idea of having Mexicans joining their organization. The inverse was also true when Mexican members wanted to rid clubs in Mexico of "Anglicisms" and other American influences.²²

²⁰ Manuel Ibáñez Guadalajara, "Mis recuerdos sobre la fundación del primer 'Club Rotario de Puebla'" (Puebla, México, undated but likely written between 1947 and 1948), Archivo 1947-148, Archivo del Club Rotario de Puebla (ACRP).

²¹ "The Heartland Abroad," 2008, 23; Rotary officers frequently used the idea being "citizens of the world" as a way to downplay the importance of nationality. For example, see: *Proceedings: Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1935), 38.

²² *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Lions Clubs Convention*, 344. As discussed in the Introduction, membership was restricted by race, both within the United States and abroad. African Americans could not join until the mid 1950s. Overseas, RI did not form clubs in Kingston and Port Au Prince because clubs in southern states pressured it "not to organize Rotary clubs in North America or in the vicinity of North America with members of Negro blood." See: Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 83–84; Second, Rotary International also limited membership to men until a 1987 Supreme Court decision ruled it unconstitutional. Women were only allowed to serve in an auxiliary capacity through their husbands. See: Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society*, 155–56. Lions International permitted women a few years earlier, in the 1970s, which I discuss in Chap. 3.

While both organizations professed inclusion and equality among all members, in practice service clubs reinforced existing social and racial hierarchies, which was a feature that made them appealing in Mexico. As Rotarians or Lions, middle-class Mexicans could claim a form of whiteness, vis-à-vis the Indian and mestizo, lower classes. In terms of social class, classification rules largely excluded working-class individuals, whom club members looked upon with contempt. With their transnational character, both service organizations promoted a way for the middle and upper classes from around the world to create a common front in opposition to the lower segments of society.

Service clubs were regarded as novel and cosmopolitan because of their global reach, but they were also seen as "modern" and "progressive" compared to the voluntary associations that already existed in Mexico. The Freemasons were highly secluded from the public, had secret handshakes, and practiced obscure rituals that often earned them the label of "worshippers of Satan." Service clubs were the opposite; they openly publicized club activities (civic parades, school inaugurations, charity drives, etc.), and as a general rule each had a committee in charge of public relations. Newspaper editors, journalists, and radio announcers were regularly present at club luncheons as guests, and were encouraged to chronicle their meetings.²³

In addition, service clubs attracted men who sought a group that was not linked not by political organization or ideology but rather by interests in business. Lions and Rotary were, after all, fundamentally associations for businessmen. The apparent non-political character of service clubs contrasted with other voluntary associations including the freemasons who were associated with post-revolutionary politics. They also differed from Catholic lay associations such as the Knights of Columbus that were knee-deep in anti-state politics. However, despite professing a policy non-political involvement, service clubs had the potential to become centers of political activism.

Members during the 1920s also claimed to value that these associations were not exclusive, elite clubs. Devoid of the pomp and ritz that characterized some Porfirian-era aristocratic societies, service clubs accepted men on the basis of their profession, not their wealth or class status—at least on paper. As one of the founding members of the Mexico City Rotary Club commented, "gone and forgotten are the Casino Nacional de México and the Jockey Club, save for antiquarians or the handful of refined individuals searching for refuge in aristocratic halls where they can display themselves." It was true that service clubs were not intended to be aristocratic clubs. However, as explained in the Introduction, club guidelines restricted the membership to individuals within the same profession, and used a supposedly meritocratic system to determine who were "the best elements" within their line of work. Defining "best" could of course allow for a different kind of exclusivity. Still, compared to the older social clubs, this feature made Rotary and other clubs more in demand from men seeking upward

²³ An example of a Catholic newspaper from Puebla accusing the Masons of devil worshipping: "Satanás y compañía," *El Amigo de la Verdad*, February 24, 1900.

mobility and prestige. Furthermore, unlike service clubs, there was nothing impeding a blue-collar worker from joining a Masonic or fraternal lodge.²⁴

While elite clubs were viewed as purely for leisure and contemplation, Rotary and Lions, on the other hand, had a practical and useful objective in society. One Rotarian from Mexico City in 1922 remarked that never before in his country had there been an association similar to these. "In Mexico, all we have known are the *tertulias*," referring to the literary societies of late eighteenth-century Spanish America and early independence. "But these new clubs," he continued "are of practical use, something unheard of until now." In theory, clubs were no longer about smoking cigars and drinking cognac while playing cards. In their official propaganda, gathering together entrepreneurs, professionals, and bureaucrats had social and moral purposes, from promoting material improvements in local communities, sponsoring programs for the underprivileged youth, to instilling ethical practices among fellow businessmen. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, however, clubs were not just about charity.²⁵

In addition, Rotary and Lions clubs were rich hubs for social networking. Publicly, clubs were supposed to gather men with purpose of doing charitable work. In return, members could establish beneficial relations. Within clubs men expected to make social ties that potentially would help advance their commercial and political endeavors. This feature was a mainstay of the early Chicago Rotary Club, which founder Paul Harris advertised as a way to distinguish his club from competing fraternal organizations, masonic lodges, social clubs, and other similar associations. In other words, rather than being the result of joining a voluntary association, making business contacts was the purpose, and to middle-class Mexicans it was appealing. In the official Rotary publication in Mexico, *México Rotario*, candidly stated that "The benefits of Rotary" involved fostering relations "with people one should get to know." By attending meetings and conferences, members could expect to "develop sincere and *beneficial* friendships."²⁶

Besides the links made within service clubs, individuals could also count on relationships with members of the local chambers of industry and commerce. In Mexico, both Rotary and Lions members were strongly urged also to join local chambers of commerce. In the case that a chamber did not exist, club members were encouraged to take the lead in organizing one. Rotarians not only considered it of utmost importance to be active in the chambers for the country's economic development. They also viewed it as "indispensable for the success of

²⁴ "El espíritu de club en México," *The Aztec Call, Rotary Club: City of Mexico*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (March 1922): 18.

²⁵ On tertulias in late colonial Spanish America, see: Victor M. Uribe-Uran, "The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin America during the Age of Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 2 (April 1, 2000): 425–57; "La medida de la civilización," *The Aztec Call, Rotary Club: City of Mexico*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (March 1922): 19–20.

²⁶ This feature of Rotary is from: Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 2008, 33. Emphasis on "beneficial" is mine. "Beneficios de Rotary," *México rotario: órgano del Club Rotario de la Ciudad de México* Vol. III, no. 3 (February 1926): 15.

Rotarianism" in Mexico. The assumption was that a denser network of people could produce more advantageous relationships.²⁷

If the cosmopolitan and prestigious nature of Rotary and later other clubs drew men with similar occupational backgrounds together, it was the shared set of political and cultural values as well as anxieties—what I call "the middle-class impulse"—around which these social networks coalesced. At the core of the middle-class impulse was a sense of urgency for restoring order in Mexican society, which was expressed by many service club members. The state that emerged from the embers of a decade of civil war actively courted the working classes and peasants for patronage through official labor unions. In the process, however, it neglected a particular segment of civil society, referred to at the time as "the middle classes." Not only did the "middle classes" find it difficult to identify with revolutionary regime's ideology, but also no effective organization existed that could incorporate them into the state apparatus.²⁸

Service clubs slowly began to fill this void. The issues involving the middle classes in post-revolutionary Mexico resonated in the rhetoric and actions of the clubs. In other words, the socio-political anxieties voiced by this segment of Mexican society were the similar to those discussed in club meetings, and were topics of debate at the international conventions among businessmen from around the world who shared dilemmas comparable to those of their Mexican peers.

"We are a center for disinterested work," declared Agustín Garza Galindo, president of the Rotary Club of Mexico City in March of 1922. Rotary was not a recreational club; it was an institution for unselfish men seeking to have a "positive influence" in business, education, and public affairs, such as "the promotion of a healthy environment for underprivileged youth." By the late 1920s, as the number of Rotary clubs in Mexico ascended to forty-two, Rotarians spoke at the national convention of having a greater role in society, especially to address "urgent task at hand" that was the "reconstruction of Mexico." In 1930, the president of Rotary in Mexico exhorted members to take the lead in their communities, organizing chambers of commerce, paving roads, building technical schools, clinics, and parks for children.

²⁷ "El rotarismo y la obra de reconstrucción nacional," *México rotario: Revista de propaganda nacional, amistad y ética comercial*, Año 1, no. 3 (March 1930): 2.

²⁸ A word on how society was distributed in Mexico during the 1920s and 1930s will help situate the context in which these ideas and events were gestating. Based on the 1921 census report, Mexico's total population was a little over 14 million, with close to 10 million (or 71 percent) living in rural areas. The remaining 4 million (or 29 percent) were an urban population. According to the 1930 census, the total number of inhabitants increased to 16.5 million, of which 11 million (67 percent) lived in the countryside and 5.5 million (33 percent) were located in urban centers. The group of people that concerns my study is a particular segment within the growing urban population, comprised of professionals and white-collar workers (what some may call "middle class") that was also expanding along with blue-collar workers. Though not meant to be an exhaustive cross section of society, the point here is to identify the individuals who populated service clubs and situate them in a broader demographic context. The two census reports are taken from: *Geografía e Informática (México) Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Estados Unidos Mexicanos: cien años de censos de población* (Aguascalientes: INEGI, 1996).

Improving their communities was certainly a key factor of clubs, but Rotarians in Mexico and abroad faced a more daunting challenge: establishing harmony between labor and capital, instead of a confrontational labor politics such as that embraced by the Mexican revolutionary governments. As Mexico was in its second year of ongoing strikes, Garza Galindo attended the 1922 international Rotary convention in Los Angeles. There he spoke to Rotarians from around the globe of the "tragic black and red flag flying to the wind in many a factory and shop," that troubled his fellow Mexicans. And even as numerous strikes continued, he assured convention goers "my country is not, you must know it, is not, nor will good Mexicans permit it, it is not, I emphatically assure you, a bolshevik nation (sic)." In his estimation, it was necessary for the employer class of the world to "have sincere cooperation, the spirit of service without selfishness, that is to say, the principle of Rotary."²⁹

The "principle" he referred to was a basic approach to the labor "problem," by now globalized. Essentially it maintained that Rotarians in their positions of authority in the workplace (either as managers or business owners) had a great responsibility to mediate the tensions between labor and capital. In the words of the Rotary Club of Merida president, "let us see in each of our employees a factor of production...Let us give him an equitable or even a generous compensation for his labor." Moreover, he noted that as leaders they should "offer him our trust and counsel and let us have sympathy for his sorrows as if they were ours and we shall make a collaborator out of every employee."³⁰ Cloaked in concern for worker welfare, Rotary's approach to the labor question was more paternalistic than compassionate. And rather than being a pursuit for social justice and equality, it was an effort at creating a harmonious relationship between workers and employers.

In a Mexico committed to labor mobilization and the use of strikes, this was a somewhat quixotic goal, but nevertheless, Rotary and later Lions clubs believed it was attainable, in part because they maintained that such relationships reflected a natural order that existed in society, while labor conflict was, by implication, unnatural. For the businessmen and professionals who formed the core of the clubs, their work was more than a medium for achieving wealth; it was a "means that Destiny or Providence has placed in his hands to enable him to serve society." If "destiny" had put them in positions to lead, then blue-collar workers, peasants, and the poor occupying the lower strata in society—also placed where they were because of "providence"—had to follow. As Manuel Ibáñez of the Rotary Club of Puebla put it in 1924, Rotary represented a new form of altruism that was both "practical" and "intelligent" because as professionals they were the "best elements of society" to lead. Ibáñez believed it was "necessary for the directing

²⁹ "Address of Rotarian Lic. Garza Galindo at Convention of International Rotary, Los Angeles, June, 1922.," *The Aztec Call, Rotary Club: City of Mexico*, Vol. 1, no. 8 (August 1922): 40–41.

³⁰ "El rotarismo y la obra de reconstrucción nacional."

classes, professionals above all, with the great light of truth and experience to show the way for the frightened, humble classes who do not know what path to follow."³¹

Service clubs emerged at a crucial moment in 1920s Mexico. A growing segment of society, beneficiaries of a period of global economic growth, nonetheless increasingly saw itself marginalized by the rhetoric and policies of the revolutionary state, which favored the laboring classes. Although clubs were ostensibly non-political, altruistic organizations—and indeed, this was part of their attraction—they served to gather like-minded individuals. As they began to meet in service clubs, men and women slowly were actively constructing an identity around their middle-class impulses. And in these modern and progressive spaces of sociability, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, industrialists, and many others found more than fellowship. Over time they found a possible vehicle to address their concerns.

CLUB MEMBER PROFILES IN 1920S AND 1930S

The following pages examine the social composition of six clubs in four cities: the Rotary and Lions clubs of Mexico City and Puebla, the Lions Club of Monterrey, and the Rotary Club of Tijuana, all of which were organized between 1921 and 1934. Club rosters (where complete) provide useful information on place of origin, in some cases level of education, and their line of work—better known within clubs as "classification." A prosopography of clubs founded between the 1920s and 30s will be useful for not only for profiling each club, but also for making comparisons in member composition in the following decades.³²

Despite being an import, U.S.-service clubs in Mexico were largely populated by Mexicans. The exception to this rule was the Rotary Club of Mexico City, which was also the first. Throughout most of its first decade of existence, American and British expatriates overwhelmingly populated the club. The original 1921 membership list consisted of 30, most of whom had Anglo surnames. In March of the following year, the club more than doubled to 63, but still only 11 members had non-Anglo last names. By August 1922, there were 83 Rotarians of whom 67 were either American or British. It is likely that RI's preference for non-Mexicans

³¹ Speech given by Manuel Ibáñez at Rotary Club of Puebla's inauguration, September 29, 1924, Archivo 1924, ACRP.

³² My sample consists of the following club rosters. From Mexico City's Rotary Club: "Membership of the Rotary Club, Mexico City," *The Aztec Call, Rotary Club: City of Mexico*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (March 1922): 21; For the Lions Club of Mexico City: Rodolfo M. Fernández, *Apuntes de ayer* (Mexico D.F.: Imprenta Anguiano, 1957), especially 66–68; For the Rotary Club of Puebla: "Manuel Ibáñez to Nelson O. Rhoades, Governor of the Third District," December 17, 1924, Archivo 1924, ACRP; the Puebla Lions Club: Jorge Efrén Arrazola, "Empresarios y clubes de servicio en Puebla (1924-1940)," in *Los empresarios mexicanos, ayer y hoy*, ed. Cristina Puga and Ricardo Tirado (México, D.F.: Ediciones El Caballito, 1992), 104–05; the Lions of Club of Monterrey: "Síntesis histórica-social del Club de Leones de Monterrey," in *Directorio del Club de Leones de Monterrey, 1958-59 y 1959-60* (Monterrey, N.L., México: Club de Leones de Monterrey, 1959); and for Tijuana's Rotary Club: Héctor Santillán M., "Historia del Club Rotario de Tijuana" (Tijuana, undated), Archivo del Club Rotario de Tijuana (hereafter ACRT).

was a calculated move: first establish a solid group with individuals previously exposed to service club culture and afterwards branch out with clubs in other cities with locals. Another possibility is that the concept of service clubs was still foreign to Mexicans.

Although a committed group was formed and functioned well, the overwhelming presence of non-Mexicans posed a problem for Rotary. Chicago realized that in order for Rotary's mission of international fellowship to gain acceptance and recognition in Latin America, it was imperative that locals comprise the majority. As was true when it considered entering Cuba, Rotary's "civic internationalism" demanded local representation for all clubs abroad. Put another way, in order not to appear as a new tentacle of American imperialism in Latin America, Rotary's legitimacy as an international non-governmental organization rested upon native men leading and populating clubs.

Soon after granting its charter, RI Headquarters made this clear to Mexico City's club president, F. W. Teele. It recommended that preference "be given to the native Mexicans" when considering new members. In addition, it emphasized that "the Rotary Club of the Mexico City (sic) must not be an American or British Colony Club—that it must not be used for the exploitation of American and British commerce," rather it should "be a Mexican Rotary Club for the benefit of the community and nation." Mexicans also felt this uneven representation. Rotarian Julio Garza Galindo, overcompensating for the lack of locals, described the Mexico City Rotary Club in 1922 "as Mexican as American or English, because it is an international club." The numbers and internal culture, however, suggested otherwise.³³

Among Mexicans, calls to eliminate the use of the English language from official literature and during sessions began to emerge. One member saw the use of English as a practice "inherited from an era in which Rotarianism was purely Anglo-Saxon." During the Mexico City club's first year, for example, only one meeting per month was conducted in Spanish. Most of the content of *The Aztec Call*, the official Mexico City organ, and in the club's internal bulletin were also primarily written in English. Rotary's official motto, "service above self" was widely used before the Spanish equivalent ("*dar de si, antes de pensar en si*") replaced it. Even club names appeared on letterheads and stationary in English (e.g. the Rotary Club of the City of Mexico or the Rotary Club of Monterrey).³⁴

The dynamic throughout most of the 1920s went contrary to Rotary International's vision of how overseas clubs should function. "Spanish language shall not be excluded," RI Headquarters wrote to president Teele. When possible, Chicago wanted meetings to be held in Spanish, "presided over by a native Mexican." Clubs in Mexico as in other countries were supposed to reflect the culture and profile of local businessmen. Overall it was a matter of time for locals to comprise the majority in clubs. By the time Mexico City hosted the 1935 Rotary

³³ For Teele's quote, see Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 2008, 94; "Address of Rotarian Lic. Garza Galindo at Convention of International Rotary, Los Angeles, June, 1922."

³⁴ "Informe del licenciado Carlos Sánchez Mejorada, Gobernador del Tercer Distrito de Rotary Internacional, a la Octava Conferencia del mismo, reunida en la Ciudad de Mérida."

international convention, Mexicans roughly represented 75 percent of the membership in the country.³⁵

Following a different path, the Lions Club had a roster that favored locals. Mexicans always comprised the majority and it was never a club for "transplanted Americans," as one historian has suggested. This pattern seems to have been the result of several factors. First, Mexicans had had a leading role in the foundation of the Lions organization in Mexico. Second, by the early 1930s Mexicans in general had become more familiar with American service clubs, making it easier to find locals who wanted to join. Third, and more significantly, the Lions actively pursued and succeeded at recruiting high-level politicians, a strategy not often used by Rotary in Mexico. The Mexico City Lions Club in its first couple of years included important names, such as former presidents Abelardo L. Rodríguez and Emilio Portes Gil, Puebla Governor José Mijares Palencia, the Secretary of the Economy, Francisco Javier Gaxiola, and a number of other elected officials.³⁶

Outside the nation's capital, foreigners (particularly Americans and British) were not very common during the early years of Rotary and Lions. The Rotary Club of Puebla (est. 1924) was mainly populated by Mexicans, with a couple of Spaniards and one French immigrant. The Rotary Club of Tijuana, founded in 1931, also had a majority of Mexicans (18) along with a mix of two Italians, five Americans, one Salvadorian, one Syrian, and a Chinese. Lions clubs located in the provinces followed a similar arrangement, though it was not uncommon to find all-Mexican clubs. The Lions Club of Monterrey, for instance, had exclusively Mexicans in its original roster, despite the proximity to the Texas border. In Puebla's Lions Club, Mexicans were the most numerous, though as with the Rotary Club, there were several Spanish immigrants, a handful of Americans (including the exceedingly wealthy William Jenkins), and a couple of French and German émigrés.

Both Rotary and Lions International welcomed the idea of having diverse clubs. More important for the headquarters, however, was gathering men from different occupational lines. As explained in the Introduction, the peculiarity of limiting membership based on occupation set service clubs apart from fraternal lodges and other voluntary associations. My sample here is again based on the 6 club rosters, with a total of 200 members.³⁷ For the sake of simplicity, I

³⁵ On the skewed use of English during the first year, see: Rotary International, "Rotary Club Notes," *The Rotarian*, June 1922, 319; Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 2008, 94–95; *Proceedings: Twenty-Sixth Annual Rotary Convention*, 150.

³⁶ Charles regarded Lions International outside of the United States as clubs for American expatriates. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society*, 132; Fernández, *Apuntes de ayer*. The Lions in Mexico is discussed in depth in Chap. 3 of this dissertation.

³⁷ These clubs are, the Rotary and Lions clubs of Puebla and Mexico City; the Lions club of Monterrey; and the Rotary Club of Tijuana. Club member lists were compiled from: Santillán M., "Historia del Club Rotario de Tijuana," undated manuscript, Archivo de Club Rotario de Tijuana; *Directorio del Club de Leones de Monterrey, 1958-59 y 1959-60*; "Manuel Ibáñez to Nelson O. Rhoades," December 17, 1924. Vol. Archivo del Club Rotario en su fundación, 1924. ACRP; "Membership of the Rotary Club, City of Mexico," *The Aztec Call*, August 1922, 54; "Membership list – Lions Club of

have placed the various occupations into four generic categories: (1) business owners, (2) management, (3) professionals, and (4) bureaucrats.³⁸

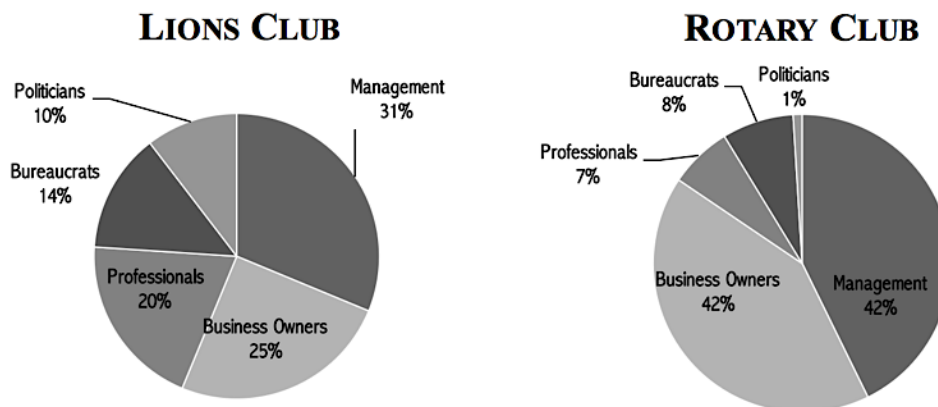


Table 3: Occupational distribution of Lions and Rotary Club Members in Mexico, 1920s-1930s.

Sources: see footnote 61.

By and large, both service clubs attracted more men with backgrounds in managerial positions and business owners than any other category. Individuals in these categories amounted

Mexico, D.F." October 12, 1932, Exp. Estatutos, Caja Archivero 1933-1936, ACLCM; and Arrazola, "Empresarios y clubes de servicio en Puebla (1924-1940)."

³⁸ I consolidated a very broad range of occupations and professions into four generic typologies. "Business owners" are individuals who were proprietors of their own company, agency, or store, regardless of size. Included also are partners or partial owners of businesses and shareholders. In "management," I gathered all those who are in upper and middle management. In the former, these were individuals usually overseeing operations or represented the interests of shareholders (for instance a chief executive or financial officer or a regional operations manager). The later included people employed as directors of human resources or of marketing. "Professionals" are those persons who held a university degree and worked in a particular field—a dentist, an accountant, a physician, a lawyer, or an engineer, for example. These could be owners of their own practice or office but this was not always the case. Under "bureaucrats" are all those who worked for the municipal, state, or federal government in either an elected office (a governor or mayor, for instance), those who were appointed (a secretary of agriculture or attorney general), or those who were employed in the public sector, such as a municipal court clerk or a staff manager at a public hospital. Some cases are not easily classifiable. For example, a "business owner" could be a partner but also have an upper-level managerial position in that company. In these cases, the partnership takes precedence over the actual position. Situations in which dentists and lawyers owned their own practices, I have grouped them under "Professionals." While I realize that these typologies are imperfect, this sorting allows for a more manageable and systematic analysis of members' occupations.

to 70 percent of the entire sample. For the Rotary, members who fell into these two categories equaled almost 85 percent of the total membership. For the Lions, there was a smaller proportion of members who were proprietors or in management, with 56 percent. However, the most striking difference between the two organizations was the balance between men in government bureaucracies and those working in the private sector. While close to 9 percent of the Rotary members had government positions, almost a quarter (24 percent) of Lions were government officials or bureaucrats. As I show in the following chapters, this penchant for attracting politicians led the Lions in Mexico to develop quite a distinct club culture from that of Rotary. These differences notwithstanding, service clubs in general had a strong appeal among businessmen and professionals.

PART II: ROTARY, THE "YANKEE-JUDEO-MASONIC-PROTESTANT INSTITUTION"

During the early years of Rotary International in Mexico, the organization faced strong criticisms from the Catholic Church and organized labor. In the context of a government friendly to labor, union officials saw the existence of (in their view) the pseudo-aristocratic Rotary club in Mexico as antithetical to the ideals of the revolution. At a CROM meeting in July 1923, union leaders protested to President Álvaro Obregón, upon hearing the rumors that Mexico City was among the candidates to host the 1924 international Rotary convention. One labor leader stated that the "silk-hatted, frock-coated Rotarian Fascisti (sic) from the United States were no less enemies of a socialistic revolutionary nation than the black-shirted Italians," in reference to Mussolini's fascist army (the "Blackshirts") marching on Rome in 1922 and ceasing national power. "It is like inviting a swarm of locusts to a freshly-planted cornfield," he sneered. At least for members of the CROM, it was evident that service clubs like Rotary were more than just philanthropic associations interested in community issues. Behind the image of professing service, Rotary clubs guarded the interests of groups that unions struggled against. To the satisfaction of CROM leadership, RI passed on Mexico's offer and instead decided to hold the convention in Toronto, Canada. For the time being, a Mexico City Rotary convention would have to wait.³⁹

Labor unions, ironically, were not the most emphatic critics of Rotary during the 1920s. Rather it was the Catholic Church. Shortly after expanding outside of the United States, Rotary International came under severe scrutiny by Catholic leadership in both Europe and in the Americas. Most historians who have examined the clash have argued that attacks on Rotary began in 1927 and were centered in Europe. However, a closer look at the case in Mexico shows that it happened earlier and was not exclusive to Catholics in Europe. As early as 1924, Catholic publications in several countries, including Mexico, printed defamatory articles against RI. In countries such as Spain and the Netherlands, joining a service club was strictly prohibited to Catholics, under penalty of excommunication. The contentions raised against Rotary in these journals reached the Vatican by 1927, where high-level clergymen began to debate them.

³⁹ Carleton Beals, "Carrying Civilization to Mexico," *The American Mercury* 1, no. 1 (January 1924): 230; "Enemies of Labor," *Time* 1, no. 21 (July 23, 1923): 16; "Mexican Labor Fights Reception to Italians," *The New York Times*, July 13, 1923.

Though largely resolved (temporarily) in 1930, the controversy had the potential to derail Rotary and other international service club's goals of expanding throughout world, especially in predominately Catholic nations.⁴⁰

Prelates from various parts of the globe accused Rotary of being a veiled freemason conspiracy. On the surface, Rotary was a businessmen's organization with philanthropic goals. Underneath, the church argued, the Rotary's founder Paul Harris and current directors were all masons, Protestants, and Jews bent on undermining the moral authority of the church. Clergymen denounced Rotary for preaching a "false morality" that was not based on Catholicism. They also were suspicious of the club's policy of religious indifference and the idea of a global brotherhood, all of which seemed akin to freemasonry. Further, the church condemned Catholic priests in Anglo countries for attending Rotary meetings or—worse yet—becoming members themselves.⁴¹

Though the supposed ties to freemasonry were central to its condemnations, the church also accused the club of being disingenuous for touting its commitment to charity—traditionally an activity carried out by the church. Rotary, they argued, in reality was a club for pseudo-aristocratic men seeking to climb the social ladder by making business and political connections. Through the Vatican's mouthpiece *L'Osservatore Romano* and the Jesuit *Civiltà Cattolica*, the church charged that by fostering networks between masons and the elites, Rotary was attempting to "rehabilitate freemasonry" from its state of "decadence." Similarly, the Spanish ultra-catholic *El Siglo Futuro* criticized their lavish dinner parties, expensive group tours, and for inviting mostly politicians and wealthy industrialists as guests of honor. "Rotary equals selectiveness," one article declared, "Rotary is for the chosen few." In the church's view Rotarians sought personal gain, not social justice.⁴²

Although the attacks during the late 1920s centered in Italy and Spain, developments in Mexico had a direct influence on these events. European priests were not the only ones condemning Rotary. In fact, the opinions of the Vatican towards Rotary were also based on

⁴⁰ Historian Victoria de Grazia has done the only analysis of the Catholic Church-Rotary controversy in English. However, she focuses almost exclusively on the events in Europe, overlooking important developments in the Americas, particularly in Mexico during the Calles years. See her book *Irresistible Empire*, especially p. 63; Surprisingly, the controversy with the Church is completely missing in: Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society*; as well as in Goff, "The Heartland Abroad," 2008; In Spanish, two pieces in particular are very instructive on this issue: Julio Ponce Alberca, "Notas para un estudio del rotarismo en España (1920-1936)," *Revista de historia contemporánea*, no. 6 (1995): 265–88; María del Mar González de la Peña, "Masonería y rotarismo en España," in *La masonería en la España del siglo XX*, ed. José Antonio Ferrer Benimeli (Toledo, Spain: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1996).

⁴¹ Antonio María Sanz Cerrada, "'ABC' y nosotros," *El Siglo Futuro*, January 2, 1928; Antonio María Sanz Cerrada, "La tendencia de 'ABC' y la buena fe de El Siglo Futuro," *El Siglo Futuro*, January 3, 1928.

⁴² Antonio María Sanz Cerrada, "¿Qué es el 'Rotary'?", *El Siglo Futuro*, February 20, 1928; Antonio María Sanz Cerrada, "Los rotarios," *El Siglo Futuro*, March 29, 1928.

pieces written by Mexican clergymen strongly opposed to Calles' anti-clericalism and his alleged connections with Rotary. In 1925 Joaquín Cardoso, a Jesuit priest from Mexico, was among the first to publicly "expose" Rotary's secret connections with masonry. The Catholic firebrand from Puebla, also directed the journal *El mensajero del corazón de Jesús* (The Messenger of the Heart of Jesus). As the head of *El Mensajero* Cardoso contributed to the Catholic cause during the Cristero revolt.⁴³

By far the most heated exchanges between Rotary and the church appeared in newspapers from Spain. From 1927 to 1929, the hardline Catholic organ *El Siglo Futuro* published dozens of anti-Rotary editorials, to which writers sympathetic to Rotary responded in Madrid's daily paper, *El ABC*. Writing the verbal barrage against RI was a Franciscan cleric named Antonio María Sanz Cerrada, also from Mexico. The exiled Sanz Cerrada is credited for starting in Spain the campaign against the "Yankee-Judeo-Masonic-Protestant institution" that was Rotary. Sanz Cerrada was especially critical of all things American, including Rotary. News that Rotary was responsible for bring the YMCA to Mexico and for supporting Calles's anti-clericalism was ample proof for Sanz Cerrada that the US club should be banned. "[Americans] have filled us with their jazz-band and other jungle noises...they have taught us to chew gum like ruminants," Sanz Cerrada grumbled, and "they have brought us Rotary clubs whose moral code aims to displace catechism and the Gospel."⁴⁴

Rotary was well aware of these attacks and reacted quickly to disprove them. Perhaps not coincidentally, the president of Rotary International who resolved the controversy in 1929 was, in fact, a Catholic living in Mexico. Israel Bird "Tom" Sutton, an American, was a founder and active member of the Rotary Club of Tampico, Mexico. As president of Rotary International (1928-29), disproving the suspicions of Vatican was his highest priority. The future of Rotary in Catholic countries depended on it. He was joined by scores of Catholics around the world who were Rotarians but dissented from the opinions of zealous priests and the Vatican. In particular, Irish Catholics emphatically rejected the criticisms against Rotary. Speaking at the 1928 national Rotary conference in Ireland, a club official stated that the claim that Rotary "professes an absolute laicism or a universal religious indifference or a political indifference is a cruel libel."

⁴³ *Proceedings: Sixteenth Annual Rotary Convention*, 559; For a brief biography of Cardoso, see: *Guía de los archivos históricos de la Universidad Iberoamericana* (Universidad Iberoamericana, 1994), 71–72.

⁴⁴ Sanz Cerrada also used the pseudonym "Fray Junípero," after the eighteenth-century Franciscan missionary in California. For the "jazz-band and other jungle noises" line, see: Fray Junípero, "Mesa revuelta," *El Siglo Futuro*, February 25, 1928; the "Yankee-Judeo-Masonic-Protestant-institution" quote is from Sanz Cerrada, "Los rotarios"; In Europe, rumors surrounding alleged links between YMCA and Calles in Mexico spread quickly. For instance: R. Jacquin, "Rotary et franc-maçonnerie," *Revue apologétique* 48, no. 520 (January 1929): 719; Recent examinations of this controversy by Spanish historians include: González de la Peña, "Masonería y rotarismo en España," 41; Felipe Alonso Barcena, *Los rotarios: sus tendencias en el orden social, moral y religioso* (Madrid: Razón y Fe, 1929), 218; the incident between the Vatican and Rotary was widely covered in the U.S. press. For instance: "Vatican Spurns Rotary's Plea to Remove Ban," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23, 1929; and it was also covered by the Irish press "Vatican Bans Rotary: 'Subservient to Freemasonry,'" *The Irish Times*, February 25, 1929.

"I am satisfied," he continued, "that no Rotarian in this country could endorse such a statement as that which I refer to—and there are many devout Catholics in our clubs," which was met with thundering applause.⁴⁵

After meeting personally with church officials in the Vatican, Sutton succeeded in convincing them that Rotary International had no connection with freemasonry. The organization also did not intend to interfere with the principles of the Catholic Church. Although reconciliation between Rotary and Vatican had been achieved, Catholics' distrust continued beyond 1929.⁴⁶ Under Francisco Franco, the government of Spain equated Rotary clubs with masonic lodges and outlawed both of them over suspicions they were a threat to his rule. In Argentina, Catholic firebrands like father Armando Tonelli continued to campaign against Rotary International in his country well into the 1940s. With the exception of Spain, Rotary International weathered the storm, continuing its activities in Catholic countries. In Mexico the organization survived the first decade despite the alleged links with Calles's anti-clericalism, Protestantism, and the masons.⁴⁷

The polemic still affected some clubs in Mexico, especially those in more conservative cities. The Rotary Club of Puebla, for instance, was founded in 1924, but by 1930 the club was dissolved. It is plausible that the economic depression affected this and other clubs in Mexico. However, one of the original Puebla club members placed the blame elsewhere. In the club's early years, Rotarian Manuel Ibáñez noted that they had "to struggle against an avalanche of prejudices and false assumptions that, for reasons I do not understand, truly caused a conflict against us, making us appear like masons or members of a new religion." While club records and local papers are silent about what exactly the "conflict" involved, it is clear the issue with the church was related to the club's dissolution. Members of Rotary clubs in other cities also expressed similar sentiments. At the 1930 national convention in Merida, the president of Rotary of Mexico told conventioners that the "incomprehension" by members of the clergy was still generating "hostility." Although the dispute had been clarified with the Vatican and prelates in Mexico did not condemn Rotary, he noted that some parish priests continued to "harbor these

⁴⁵ "Rotary's Annual Conference: Dinner and Speeches at Killarney," *The Irish Times*, September 27, 1928.

⁴⁶ This reconciliation coincides with broader changes within the Vatican. With the agreements of the Lateran Treaty in 1929, the Papacy recognized Italy's civil government (albeit a fascist one). John F. Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914-1958*, Oxford History of the Christian Church (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 140–45.

⁴⁷ Sutton's report on the talks he had with the Vatican is in: *Proceedings: Twentieth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1929), 53–54 & 483; "Vatican Drops Plan For Ban on Lay Rotarians," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1929; "Rotary's Chief Calls Visit to Rome Success," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 12, 1929; Tonelli (an outspoken anti-mason and anti-Rotary cleric) wrote a lengthy, scathing criticism against Rotary in Argentina. Armando Tonelli, *La verdad sobre el Rotary Club* (Buenos Aires: Menald, 1946).

sentiments towards Rotary." It is quite possible that local clerics feared Rotary would lure men away from Catholic lay associations.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, Rotary International in Mexico gradually was taking root in cities of varying population sizes. On the eve of the Great Depression, the number of clubs in the republic climbed to forty-two, reaching the top of the Latin American list. A few years later, Lions International began its expansion in Mexico. By the mid-1930s, a pattern was emerging: businessmen, professionals, wealthy industrialists, and bureaucrats were increasingly joining the service club ranks, and within these organizations a unique community was developing. Where else in Mexico could this segment of the population meet to exchange ideas and reinforce their group identities? The level of acceptance that service organizations were achieving was demonstrated with the 1935 Rotary and Lions international conventions held in Mexico City.

PART III: THE 1935 MEXICO CITY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

In 1935, Mexico City became the venue for two major service club conventions. Rotary International's was held from June 17 to 21, while the Lions had theirs between July 23 and 26. It was remarkable that the international service clubs considered Mexico as a serious candidate, given its continuing political and social instability. The bid made by the Lions Club of Mexico in July 1934 to the Chicago headquarters was almost unimaginable—after all, the all Mexican Lions clubs had been chartered only a few months prior. In spite of this, Lions International accepted the proposal in an almost unanimous vote. LI saw this as a golden opportunity to expand into Latin America. Rotary of Mexico presented their proposal in 1934. After carefully studying bids made by Rotary of Cuba and Mexico, Chicago agreed to give Mexico City the honors. Notably, this decision was made in the face of the decrease in Mexican clubs from 42 in 1929 to 32 in 1933.⁴⁹

Holding the conventions in Mexico was beneficial for most parties involved. For Mexico and the United States, it offered an opportunity to foster closer relations between the two countries. It gave Presidents Abelardo L. Rodríguez and Franklin D. Roosevelt (and multiple governors, mayors, and representatives from both countries) a reason to exchange friendly telegrams and invitations to the event. Regular citizens also partook in the fraternal bonding. The Lions Clubs of Wisconsin, for instance, sent President Cárdenas a "big wheel of cheese" as a gift and symbol "of our love and friendship." For Mexicans in the tourism industry, it was a boon. The conferences opened the door to over 10,000 visitors eager to spend on hotels, trains, taxis, restaurants, guided tours, souvenirs, and trinkets at bargain prices. The convention planners aimed to impress visitors, and one way was by having the resplendent Palacio de Bellas

⁴⁸ The story of Puebla's failed Rotary Club is from: Ibáñez Guadalajara, "Mis recuerdos sobre la fundación del primer 'Club Rotario de Puebla'"; on the Merida conference "Informe del licenciado Carlos Sánchez Mejorada, Gobernador del Tercer Distrito de Rotary Internacional, a la Octava Conferencia del mismo, reunida en la Ciudad de Mérida."

⁴⁹ "Mexico Meeting Opposed: Lions International Is Urged to Cancel Convention There," *The New York Times*, March 13, 1935.

Artes (Fine Arts Palace) serve as the convention center. If the events were a success, Mexico could continue to attract tourism. As one journalist from the *Los Angeles Times* put it: "1935 may go down in Mexican history as the real beginning of the 'Tourist Epoch.'"⁵⁰

Service club officials in Chicago saw Mexico as a gateway to further expanding into Latin America and the Caribbean. Lions International's extension committee considered that holding an international convention south of the border would "serve as official recognition" of the "vast area between the Rio Grande and the Panama Canal," where Lionism could expand. "With this formal recognition," the committee noted, "Lionism will undoubtedly spread rapidly to the four corners of Central America." This assessment proved to be right on the mark. After the Mexico City convention, the next thirteen countries to join the Lions "family" were all from the Caribbean and Latin America.⁵¹

The conventions themselves were significant in several ways. First, they symbolized the culmination of efforts from Mexican and American businessmen to establish a service club culture and obtain recognition. Second, they can be seen as an example of American institutions working to disseminate U.S. culture and interests in the region, a process that has often been called "Americanization." Third, the Rotary and Lions conventions are also significant because they embody a transnational space where ideas are exchanged between men from different parts of the world—what others have termed "cultural contact zones." In this sense, Mexicans did not just consume service club ideology; they were active participants in the construction of it. Finally, and more importantly for this story, the meetings offered a rare forum in which two distinct social actors, the post-revolutionary state and the service organizations, offered largely different paths toward addressing some of the most pressing national and international issues.

Event coordinators estimated that over 5,000 visitors from each club would make the journey. Mexican and U.S. transportation companies like National Railway of Mexico, Pan American Airways, and various cruise liners saturated club publications and major American newspapers with advertisements. "A real vacation cruise is in store for Rotarians," stated an American Express Travel advertisement. Another read: "Don't let lack of time keep you away from the Rotary Convention...fly 'via Pan American.'" Convention organizers and travel agencies also offered a variety of information to the inexperienced traveler. Several months in advance, *The Rotarian* began publishing survival Spanish lessons with phonetic pronunciation guides. "Highly useful" expressions from the basic, "grah'-see-ahs" (*gracias*), to the more

⁵⁰ The "big wheel of cheese" anecdote was taken from: *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Lions Clubs Convention*, 320–21; For a detailed analysis of the rise of tourism in Mexico, see: Dina Berger, *The Development of Mexico's Tourism Industry: Pyramids by Day, Martinis by Night* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁵¹ To be precise, from 1935 to 1946, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela, British Honduras, Peru, the West Indies, Bermuda, and Ecuador joined in this order.

advanced, "¿dohn'-day ays-tah' lah ays-tah-see'-ohn'?" (*¿dónde está la estación?*) were included in the series.⁵²

The anticipation notwithstanding, the Lions and Rotary headquarters still had some persuading to do among American members to attend the convention in Mexico. With rumors of political instability and religious conflict, was it safe to bring one's family? Was it worthwhile? A poor attendance at either convention would be bad publicity. One district governor of Rotary in an article reassured members that "If you have any fears whatsoever about a visit to Mexico, dispel them... Today, Mexico is as peace-loving a nation as one will find." In Mexico, he continued, "visitors travel in complete safety."

Hyperbole and far-fetched promises were not uncommon in promotional articles and advertisements. Convention planners assured a *New York Times* reporter that "five days of an unprecedented series of festivities" were in store for the "largest group of visitors ever to come to Mexico."⁵³ A Rotary district governor went as far as to "guarantee good weather."⁵⁴ Visitors were also promised there was more to Mexico than "hot tamales and bandits." There was culture, which was a concept that few people suspected Mexico had, according a *The Rotarian* article. There were the pyramids of Teotihuacán, colonial architecture, bullfights, beautifully painted murals, exotic plants and food, and "beautiful women" in abundance.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the Mexico City Lions and Rotary clubs along with local authorities worked to receive the thousands of visitors who would flood the street of the capital. Under President Abelardo L. Rodríguez, the government employed 15,000 workers to hasten improvements on the highway connecting Mexico City with Laredo, Texas. In a joint effort, railway companies on both sides of the border improved service lines linking New York, Ohio, Baltimore and other cities with Mexico. In Mexico City, major avenues were broadened and city police cleared downtown streets of "a small army of thieves, beggars and other undesirables."⁵⁶

⁵² "4,500 Rotarians Meet Tomorrow in Mexico City," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16, 1935; "Lions to Take Special Train to Mexico City," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 7, 1935; John D. Clark, "Let's Start Our Spanish Now!," *The Rotarian*, November 1934; "Spanish Lesson No. 8. . . Courtesy," *The Rotarian*, June 1935; "The Quickest Way to the Convention," *The Rotarian*, February 1935.

⁵³ "Catholics Demand Liberty in Mexico," *New York Times*, June 17, 1935.

⁵⁴ Ernesto J. Aguilar, "One Week Isn't Enough," *The Rotarian*, April 1935.

⁵⁵ René Harnoncourt, "Mexico - Every Man an Artist," *The Rotarian*, April 1935; "México Romántico," *The Rotarian*, February 1935.

⁵⁶ The highway from Laredo to Mexico City was not completed in time for the Rotary convention in June. "Mexico Prepares for Influx of Tourists with Two World Gatherings Next Year," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1934; "Mexico Welcomes Chiefs of Rotary," *The New York Times*, June 11, 1935.

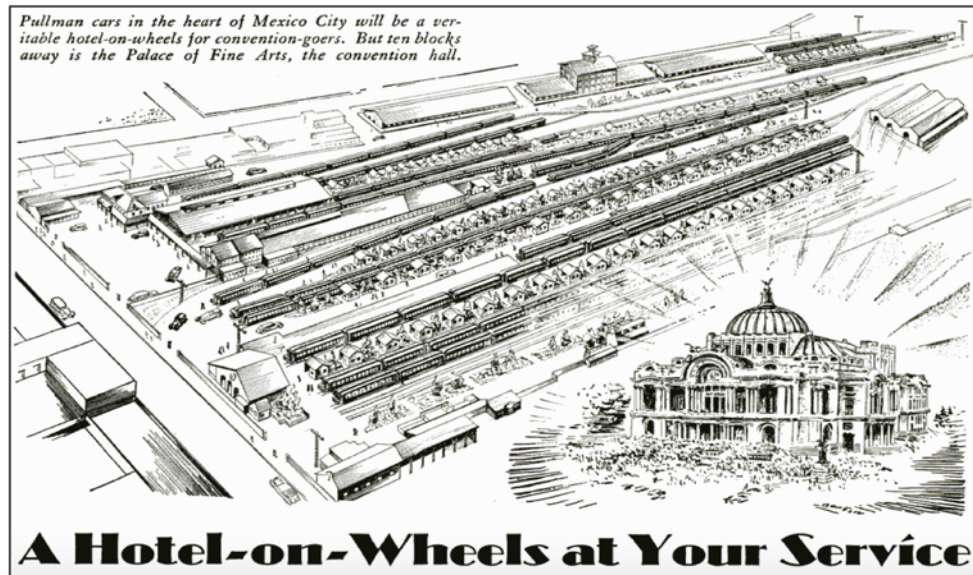


Figure 4: Advertisement of the "Pullman City" in Rotary International's official publication.

Source: "A Hotel-on-Wheels at Your Service," *The Rotarian*, January 1935, 31.

Perhaps the most widely advertised feature to be inaugurated for the conventions was the "Pullman City" located at the Buenavista train station. The station, a few blocks from the convention area, was transformed into a makeshift hotel. Although hotels in Mexico City were preparing for the influx of tourists, there was still a shortage of rooms. As a quick and less costly solution (calculated at 500,000 pesos), the National Railway of Mexico expanded the capacity of Buenavista to park over 240 Pullman cars where thousands of visitors could stay. The station building itself was transformed into a lobby and lounge. Forty-four dining cars would function as restaurants. Between the queues of the cars were built more than 100 services buildings with bathhouses, beauty parlors, barbershops, and laundry facilities that were connected by cement walk ways covered by canopies. The "city on wheels" was landscaped with flowers and trees to resemble the "tropical setting of all Mexican houses." With these amenities, convention promoters guaranteed Lions and Rotarians comfort and convenience "in the heart of primitive country."⁵⁷

As the conventions approached, a political crisis emerged out of a new wave of labor strikes. On June 12, former President Calles condemned the union leaders, calling them agitators, and criticized the administration for condoning them. While careful not to directly accuse Cárdenas of the unrest, it was implicit and widely understood by the general public that Calles opposed his labor policies and his choice of a national labor leader, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who effectively replaced the Calles-connected Luis Morones. Cárdenas reacted

⁵⁷ *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Lions Clubs Convention*, 11; Louis S. Hungerford, "A Hotel-on-Wheels at Your Service," *The Rotarian*, January 1935; Diana Rice, "Land Cruises' by Train," *The New York Times*, February 24, 1935.

quickly, declaring support for the striking workers. He then forced *callista* cabinet members to resign, eroding once and for all the influence of the long-time strongman.

The news of the crisis reached convention directors just as they were stepping off the train in Mexico City. RI feared the worst: a coup d'état on the eve of the convention. And yet there was also the belief among observers and event planners that the presence of thousands of Rotarians from around the globe with media attention would help defuse the situation. The political crisis between Cárdenas and Calles was averted, though likely having little to do with the convention. Calles dismissed the rumors of a conflict and vowed not to interfere in political matters. Convention directors from both Rotary and Lions could breathe easily—at least for the moment.⁵⁸

As the Calles-Cárdenas controversy subsided, "the Great Trek of 1935 from the United States to Mexico" (as some called it) had begun. Dozens of trains, aircrafts, and cruise ships carrying scores of Rotarians from all corners of the world were on route to the convention. Trains coming from the American east coast hit a snag on the way, as they crossed into Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. A massive storm caused a delay that lasted almost an entire day. Twelve trains carrying conventioners, including U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and Rotary member, Josephus Daniels, were marooned and needed to reroute via Matamoros.⁵⁹

There was excitement among members of the Mexico City Rotary Club as fellow Rotarians began to pour into the city. Forty-one countries were represented with over 5,300 Rotarians in addition to their wives and children. *The Rotarian* called it "the largest convention in its history," which was not true. The previous year's convention (held in New Jersey) attracted twice as many as the Mexico convention, with about 9,900 attendees. The distribution was also skewed. The American delegation represented 74 percent (3,992) of the total attendance. Mexican members accounted for another 20 percent (a little over 1,000). The remaining 6 percent was dispersed among the 39 other countries. A notable absence was the Irish from the Britain-Ireland delegation. Close to 200 Irish and British members had attended the previous year's convention. In Mexico City, the same delegation only had 14 registered members.⁶⁰

Most travelers stayed at the Pullman City. Local authorities collaborated with the event planners, assigning a special group of police officers fluent in different languages to assist tourists in the Bellas Artes area. Guías de México and Tribus de Exploradores Mexicanos (Mexican youth scouting organizations) able to speak other languages also volunteered. To indicate which other language they could communicate in, officers and scouts wore a small British, French, Italian, or Japanese flag on their left arm or lapel. The news that President Cárdenas would be making the inaugural speech at Bellas Artes also generated much expectation among the conventioners.

⁵⁸ "4,500 Rotarians Meet Tomorrow in Mexico City."

⁵⁹ "The Great Trek" line comes from Newton H. Bell, "Let's Go to Mexico!," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*, June 30, 1935, 26.

⁶⁰ "Rotary-Conscious City," *The Rotarian*, July 1935.

Then, on June 15, two days before the first day of convention activities, there was a shooting two blocks from Bellas Artes. For unknown reasons, the paramilitary group, Camisas Rojas (Red Shirts), gunned down several individuals allegedly from the Mining School. After the attackers fled the scene, the remaining students organized an ad hoc protest. "Death to Calles!" and "Death to Garrido," they yelled blaming the governor of Tabasco and leader of the Camisas Rojas, Tomás Garrido y Canabal—a Calles supporter—for the assault. The students then gathered in the steps of Bellas Artes and made an appeal to some 500 Rotarians who listened and took pictures. "Understand the true situation of the country," one student leader asked. "Let the world know we live miserably, governed by one man, Calles." Although Cárdenas had asserted his authority by imposing the resignation of *callista* cabinet members, Calles remained in Mexico and locals believed he continued to wield some power. It would not be until April 11, 1936—the following year—when Cárdenas expelled him from the party and sent him into exile.⁶¹

The following morning there was another demonstration. Without official permission, a group of 15,000 Catholic men and women marched through downtown Mexico City, demanding religious freedoms. The Catholics began their walk at the Zócalo, or central square, and made their way to Bellas Artes, while they sang the Mexican national anthem and held signs that read: "we are not enemies of the government." Upon reaching the convention area, several orators addressed the Rotarians in English. One of the speakers stated that because of the Rotarians' presence in Mexico, the government had not sent in the police to repress them. "We want you to know we are fighting for religious liberty and liberty of conscience," one leader declared. He then continued to grouse over the state-imposed socialist education and demanded the return of confiscated church property. Another speaker criticized U.S. ambassador Daniels for expressing a "deep admiration" of Calles' social and public education reforms, which incensed Catholics. "We are friends of the American people," he declared, "but not of Daniels."⁶²

There was clear trepidation among the foreign onlookers even as armed soldiers kept watch on the events from a short distance. American reporters in the crowd overheard some conventioners asking each other, "will there be a revolution?" Many Rotarians, however, applauded the speeches in a sign of support. After the last peroration, the Catholics continued their peaceful demonstration, now heading towards Pullman City. As they marched, the group chanted in unison, "*¡viva Cristo Rey!*" ("long live Christ the King!"). American journalists later commented that the fact that the protests had occurred without violence was sign that Mexico was headed in the right direction, towards peace and reconciliation.

The summer of 1935 was a momentous time for the Mexican service clubs and for the international associations in general. During these roughly two weeks, well over 10,000

⁶¹ "Students Condemn Calles," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1935; Jürgen Bucheau has an excellent account of the conflicts between Calles and Cárdenas. *Plutarco Elías Calles and the Mexican Revolution* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), chap. 7.

⁶² For Daniels' controversial comments on Calles and education in Mexico, see Josephus Daniels, American Ambassador, to Romeyn Wormuth, American Consul, October 24, 1934, file 4, box 646, Josephus Daniels Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter JDP-LOC); and in Josephus Daniels, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomat* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1947), 519.

Rotarians, Lions, and family members from various parts of the world came to Mexico City. The conventions gathered visitors from abroad but included also as guests of honor Mexican politicians, including President Cárdenas. The nation's capital, then, was "where friends met," according to an article in *The Rotarian*.⁶³

For the international service clubs, the events in Mexico represented several "firsts." It was the first convention in Latin America. It was the first convention in a non-English or non-French-speaking country. Finally, it was the first time the service clubs organized a conference in a developing nation after a revolution with leftist tendencies. Expectations for both Mexico City conventions were high, and the clubs of the nation's capital were conscious of it.⁶⁴

The general population in the capital, which at the time hovered around 1.5 million, viewed the conventions as an opportunity to showcase Mexican culture, hospitality, and attract international tourism. For the recently formed service clubs in Mexico it was a moment to consolidate their place in the broader society. It was essential to obtain recognition from the public and government as reputable institutions that were part of a broad international organization. Not only would this give them prestige, it would also grant them credibility as institutions addressing social issues. Although their ostensible purpose was charity and a strict policy of non-political involvement, becoming key institutions in their communities would open the possibility for clubs to harness social, cultural, and political influence.

The club conventions were also significant because they provided a forum for thousands of middle-class and elite businessmen and professionals from all over Mexico to discuss the most pressing issues facing the nation. In the context of the post-Depression, governments around the world were still scrambling for solutions to the economic crisis. Who was to lead in these times of uncertainty? The state? The private sector? These questions were relevant in Mexico as in other recovering nations. But there were many other issues that were unresolved in Mexico. Years of political divisions, rebellions and revolution had left a legacy of political violence; fierce Catholic opposition to socialist education prevented consolidation of the revolutionary state; and labor strikes bred distrust of unions on the part of the middle and upper classes, even as the state cultivated workers desperately damaged by the crisis of capitalism. Furthermore, Mexico was on the brink of yet another armed conflict between supporters of President Cárdenas and former head of state Calles (mentioned above). Although not all of these politically charged questions were addressed during the conventions, many were. Service club leadership, in fact, "encouraged participants to split wide open all manner of controversial problems." As we shall see, the remedies to these discussed during the conferences by the state and the service clubs varied considerably.⁶⁵

On the opening day of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Rotary International Convention, President Cárdenas gave his welcome address before 5,000 Rotarians, family members, and

⁶³ Leland D. Case, "Simpático at Mexico City," *The Rotarian*, July 1935, 33.

⁶⁴ Before 1935, Scotland and Belgium had hosted Rotary conventions and Canada both Lions and Rotary meetings.

⁶⁵ Case, "Simpático at Mexico City," 38.

journalists. Although he was speaking to a purportedly non-political, philanthropic organization of businessmen, Cárdenas used this international forum to explain the recent political controversies that rattled the country and how his administration would move forward. Only an hour before his arrival, Cárdenas had named his replacement cabinet members. The president, whose speech was translated to English, offered a cordial welcome to his audience and voiced his respect for their organization, which stood for goodwill "beyond race divisions and [borders]."⁶⁶

Cárdenas then devoted the rest of his speech to lay out the aims of his presidency and of the Revolution. In doing so he hoped that Mexico, a nation of "democratic and republican structure," would be "better known and understood" by the international community. He argued it was urgent to attend to the "inferior economic position" in which millions of Mexicans were living. "That is why many of us have taken up as the banner and end of our lives, the liberation and the betterment of our Indians and mestizos," he stated. "Hence the apparently strange phenomenon of our politics and the justification of laws," referring to the pro-labor policies, socialist education, confiscation of church property, and land distribution, which were talked about by foreign observers.

The Revolution aimed to redress each of these issues, Cárdenas explained, first "with agrarian laws endeavoring by every means to obtain the salvation of the oppressed and of the exploited." Second, "with labor laws that seek to remedy, as those of the most cultured countries of the world, the conflicts between capital and labor." Third, he continued, "with educational systems which have been transformed to be useful to the classes most in need." Cárdenas concluded that his presidency was driven by "a desire and an urge for universal peace which constitutes the supreme finality of Mexico," and so he welcomed "with the greatest satisfaction our guests who bring us a message of peace." The audience responded with applause. Upon finishing, President Cárdenas took his leave, while the convention events commenced.

The following month came the Lions convention. President Cárdenas had been invited but was unable to attend. In his stead went the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, José Ángel Ceniceros, Attorney General, Antonio Villalobos, former President, Emilio Portes Gil, and the Governor of Puebla, José Mijares Palencia—the last two of whom were Lions members. The representatives of the Mexican government largely reiterated the key themes raised by Cárdenas, including seeking peace, better relations with the United States, and more importantly the central role of post-revolutionary state in addressing the social inequalities in Mexico. At the core of their message was the argument that the state should protect and elevate the socio-economic and political condition of traditionally disenfranchised groups—indigenous peoples, the working classes, and peasants. The post-revolutionary state would achieve this, again, through state-mandated education, labor reforms, land distribution, and by incorporating workers and *campesinos* into the state apparatus.

The Rotary and Lions conventions offered their audiences a markedly different solution to the problems in society. By and large, three overarching themes were prevalent throughout

⁶⁶ All quotes from Lázaro Cárdenas are in: *Proceedings: Twenty-Sixth Annual Rotary Convention*, 21–22.

keynote speaker addresses, roundtable discussions, and sessions. One was the promotion of friendship and goodwill among communities and between nations. A second theme was to encourage ethical business practices, such as consumer protection, better employer-employee relations, fair competition, and so forth. In other words, many advocated for a "friendlier" form of capitalism that was necessary to avoid the pitfalls of classical liberal economics. Finally, both conventions advanced the belief that businessmen, industrialists, and professionals ought to have a larger role in society, beyond the realm of business. As the most educated and economically stable segment of civil society, it made sense to service club members that they participate in improving their communities.

Promoting cooperation across nations was fundamental to Rotary and Lions clubs. Friendship was necessary for social harmony and economic growth. Lions director Alexander T. Wells explained it as "the Spirit of Cooperation" that was "vital as a stabilizing influence throughout and among the nations." Cooperation between the United States, Mexico and the rest of Latin America became more important in the aftermath of the Great Depression. President Roosevelt was particularly interested in furthering the image of the United States as a friendly neighbor rather than the hemispheric bully. At the Lions Convention, ambassador Daniels underlined that the days of a "misapplication of the Monroe Doctrine" were now replaced by Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy. This discourse was also echoed in Mexican service clubs and throughout the conferences. A Lions director reminded his audience that, "We are neighbors. Let us be good friends." Rotary's founder, Paul Harris, went even further saying "there are no fortifications on the border line between the United States and Canada" nor between "the United States and Mexico...Why should there be? In the name of God, we are neighbors."⁶⁷

Cooperation among and within nations had a practical, economic purpose. Peace led to better relations, which then opened the doors to more trade opportunities. Out of unity would come "peace and *prosperity* which is so ardently and universally being sought for and desired," according to a Lions International official. Mexican club members held this belief as well. Rodolfo M. Fernández, promoter of Lionism in Mexico, argued that lack of solidarity among nations only hampered "economic potentialities" and expansion. Among friends, it was assumed, there should be no betrayals or unfair business deals—in other words, a strong sense of ethics was necessary.⁶⁸

Elevating the ethical standards of businesses was fundamental to the service club ideology. One of Rotary International's stated objectives, which was a topic of discussion at the Mexico City convention, held that the club's purpose was to foster and encourage "High ethical standards in business and professions...and the dignifying by each Rotarian of his occupation as an opportunity to serve society." The goal was to remake the image of business and commerce from being solely a means to riches, to providing an opportunity to serve. Ethical practices with

⁶⁷ *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Lions Clubs Convention*, 20, 22; For Paul Harris' speech, see: *Proceedings: Twenty-Sixth Annual Rotary Convention*, 36.

⁶⁸ Emphasis on "prosperity" is mine. *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Lions Clubs Convention*, 18, 21.

consumers, competitors, and workers would contribute toward economic growth, which in turn would bring stability and peace in society.

At the Lions convention, a presenter claimed that "Lionism" rejected the maxim, "Let the buyer beware" and other "false creeds," which caused consumers to distrust businesses. The Lions of Mexico officer, Rodolfo Fernández proudly stated that the organization had "brought a new order of things into the social and commercial life" to Mexico. Unfair practices with competitors, such as price gouging and monopolizing markets, would also affect business and consumers alike. Along a similar vein, a Rotary member from Louisiana noted "If you will buy your merchandise right and sell it right, give service, you will win out."⁶⁹

Both Lions and Rotary also exhorted members to have cordial relations with their employees, rewarding them with "fair" wages and benefits, which would avoid confrontations with powerful labor unions—something that business owners in Mexico could easily relate to. At the Rotary convention, one speaker rhetorically asked, what better institution than Rotary to improve employee relations and "have a fairer and therefore a more stable foundation for society?" Implicitly, this ideology maintained that ethical and more humane practices could help avoid the global instability caused by cutthroat capitalism. And in this equation the state was not an essential component.⁷⁰

Lastly, several convention roundtables advanced the argument that entrepreneurs and professionals should have a leading role solving society's issues through charity and service. This did not preclude service clubs to collaborate with the state programs, though it did seek for the private sector to have greater involvement. In other words, redressing the problems afflicting society should not be exclusively the state's responsibility. Members held the belief that service clubs were beacons of moral rectitude. A delegate from Uruguay, for instance, stated that Rotary was recognized in his country as an "impartial public forum," and as such "was an ideal place for the presentation of ideas or suggestions of general interest." Likewise, Vincent C. Hascall at the Lions convention noted that men around the world had begun to "realize that they have some responsibility to the community in which they live." A multitude of charitable activities gave clubs opportunities to lead local improvement projects, from youth programs, and building schools and roads, to supporting soup kitchens and free health clinics. As non-partisan, disinterested, voluntary associations, (the argument went) Rotary and Lions clubs were the most appropriate to intervene in resolving social problems. They were above the dishonest world of politics. Inherent in service club ideology was the notion that governments and politicians were inefficient and easily corrupted. The service clubs' solution to the "middle-class impulse" and Mexico's social issues stood in stark contrast to the remedies offered by Cárdenas.⁷¹

⁶⁹ *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Lions Clubs Convention*, 310, 346.

⁷⁰ *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Lions Clubs Convention*, 311, 346; *Proceedings: Twenty-Sixth Annual Rotary Convention*, 125–26, 267–69.

⁷¹ *Proceedings: Twenty-Sixth Annual Rotary Convention*, 58–59; *Proceedings: Nineteenth Annual Lions Clubs Convention*, 25–26.

CONCLUSION

This chapter described the motivations and developments that permitted two U.S.-based international civic organizations to expand into Mexico. In the process, examining the story of these seemingly non-political voluntary associations reveals important facets of post-revolutionary Mexico. First, as I argued, international service clubs frequently became involved in politically charged issues that linked Mexico, the United States and the greater Atlantic world. These philanthropic organizations, in other words, had more politics than meets the eye. Second, under the guise of charity, service clubs gathered disaffected businessmen and professionals, affording them a non-confrontational way to challenge the state. Third, and more importantly, the establishment of American service clubs began to provide Mexicans with a critical organizational and ideological structure that was entirely independent of the state. Within these spaces of sociability, Mexicans were not only gathering with other self-described middle-class individuals, they were actively constructing a middle-class identity. Over time, service clubs had the potential to act as vehicles to advance specific political, social, and cultural interests of their members, a development that I continue to explore throughout the rest of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2
LEONISMO MEXICANO: LIONS CLUBS,
THE MEXICAN STATE, AND THE FUTURE
OF SERVICE CLUBS IN LATIN AMERICA, 1930-1945

After listening to reports of France's imminent capitulation in June 1940, Melvin Jones, the founder of Lions International, gave his views on the role of service clubs at a Lions convention held in Indiana. To highlight the democratic values Lions clubs instilled, Jones stated proudly that they had been "persuading the members to unite voluntarily for the good of the whole body," in contrast to Hitler and Mussolini, who were uniting their citizenry by force. Jones vowed that Lions would continue cooperating with the government and the FBI "to help destroy the fifth column elements" that aided the fascist cause. He then quoted Hitler saying that Germany did not need to fight United States directly. Instead, Germany "could destroy the United States by taking away our markets in Europe and South America." Jones was certain, however, that Americans could count on the support of 140,000 Lions members dispersed throughout the continent in Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and the US, and in the Far East, in China.

Among these countries on the Western Hemisphere, Mexico was the most important for the American Lions Club leadership, who saw their southern neighbor as a crucial component in the propagation of Lionism throughout Latin America. Eventually this would be the case. By 1949, Mexicans were gathering in 170 Lions clubs, leading Latin American countries in club count (Cuba was second with 95). Towards the end of the 1940s, the Lions were the most popular service organization in Mexico, overtaking Rotary in terms of both membership and number of clubs (see Table 2). This was a remarkable development given Rotary began its extension program in Mexico over a decade earlier. But the success of Lionism in Mexico vis-à-vis the Lions in Latin America (and compared to Rotary in Mexico) belies the chaotic and conflictive road the Lions International headquarters and *leones mexicanos* traveled through. Jones' rally call in Indiana, though impassioned and nationalistic, had left out an important detail: the headquarters of Lions International (LI) had just a few weeks earlier severed relations with the Lions clubs of Mexico. This omission was deliberate—the details were embarrassing for both Lions in the United States and in Mexico. But the split between the Mexican Lions and LI allowed the Lions clubs in Mexico adopted a distinctive identity, different from what LI envisioned, and different from other service clubs in Mexico.

This chapter explores the tumultuous relationship between the Lions clubs of Mexico and the Chicago headquarters. Part I situates this story in a global context, arguing that during the Second World War Latin America was instrumental in the growth of American service clubs abroad. Rotary International, which led the overseas expansion by far, was losing ground in Europe and East Asia. Lions International, though not in Europe, sought to tap into the potential Latin American market, beginning with Mexico. The second part delves into the problems that LI and Mexican Lions confronted along the way. I demonstrate that there was a peculiar arrangement that allowed the establishment and success of Lionism in Mexico and that this arrangement was, ironically, the source of years of conflict with LI. To anticipate my argument, Lions clubs in Mexico became, in a sense, "more Mexican" than American Lions envisioned.

Part III then examines the similarities and differences between the Lions, Rotary, and Sowers of Friendship clubs. The main argument in this part is that the social networks that Lions established created strong links with the post-revolutionary state.

PART I: LIONS INTERNATIONAL AND LATIN AMERICA'S POTENTIAL, 1930-1945

By the end of the Second World War, American service organizations had achieved a remarkable expansion of clubs throughout the world. In the United States, too, Rotary, Lions, and several other clubs were gathering businessmen for lunch or dinner meetings in cities and towns across the country. The explosive growth of service clubs in the United States and overseas paralleled a global pattern in which civil society was increasingly joining voluntary associations of all kinds and for people of all walks of life—as social scientists have shown, most famously Robert Putnam in his *Bowling Alone*.⁷² The peculiarity of service organizations, however, was not just that they were voluntary, but also international. The growth of Rotary and Lions in Europe, Latin America, and East Asia was such that it would outpace and outnumber clubs and membership within the United States by the 1960s. After the perceived victory of the "American way" in World War II, this phenomenal international expansion of service clubs seemed almost inevitable; however, this was not the case.⁷³

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Rotary and Lions International faced multiple obstacles in their expansion plans prior to the 1940s, beginning with the First World War and later the opposition from Catholic states in the 1920s. Then the Depression of the early 1930s also had disastrous effects on service clubs, particularly in the United States. After the crash of 1929, membership dropped: the Lions went from about 80,000 in 1930 to 75,000 just four years later; in this same period, Rotarians dropped from 124,000 to roughly 103,000. Nevertheless, service clubs in the United States rebounded and exceeded previous levels by the end of the 1930s. Paradoxically, outside of the United States the Depression did not have as negative effects on Rotary club growth as it did in the US. In aggregate terms, the number of clubs abroad grew each year during the early 1930s, albeit at a slower pace. Yet the greatest challenge to the future of American service clubs as international organizations in the 1930s was the rise of fascism, which had begun to affect the already existing Rotary clubs in Europe and Asia—a development that was closely watched by directors from Lions Club International as they sought to expand overseas.⁷⁴ In the next two pages, I will briefly recount the decline of Rotary in Europe and Asia in order to understand how these events influenced Lions International's

⁷² Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) see his discussion on pp. 53-55 and in particular Figure 8. A more recent summary of the growth of civic associations in the first half of the century is in: Davies, Thomas, "Civil Society History VI: Early and Mid 20th Century," in *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society*, ed. Helmut K. Anheier and Stefan Toepler (Springer Science & Business Media, 2009), 361–70.

⁷³ Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society*, 140.

⁷⁴ Charles, 104, 107.

emphasis on Latin America.

Beginning in the mid-1930s, the outlook for Rotary clubs in several European and East Asian countries was anything but promising. "When I assumed office," admitted RI's president, Walter D. Head, in 1940, "nobody could have foretold that the outbreak of war was so close at hand. When it did come, it brought forth a variety of new and perplexing problems, not least of them the possibility and probability that we would lose more clubs in different parts of the world."⁷⁵ Between 1937 and 1943, fascist regimes across the map were outlawing Rotary clubs and other voluntary associations, starting with Germany. The Third Reich first attempted to ban Rotary as early as 1933 because the state considered them and the Freemasons "international secret societies that were under Jewish influence."⁷⁶ In exchange for maintaining the legality of their clubs, Rotarians in Germany pledged loyalty to the Nazi state.⁷⁷ This agreement turned out to be short lived. In October 1937, the government ordered the final dissolution of Rotary clubs—Austrian clubs followed shortly after.

Italian Rotary clubs fell under the hammer of fascism the following year. This was in spite of Rotarians in Italy openly applauding Mussolini's policies. As Victoria De Grazia notes, Italian Rotary "cultivated close relations with the Fascist regime, taking great pride in being able to say that Mussolini, as the head of the government, was its protector."⁷⁸ Ironically, Rotarians continued to express their support of *il Duce* even after the state curtailed citizens' rights to form voluntary associations. The National Council of Italian Rotary in late 1938 issued a statement that read: "considering that as a consequence of the present cooperative constitution of the State the coöperation of the Italian Rotarians for the attainment of the above-mentioned object is already entirely expressed through the various cultural and social organizations of the regime now serving the country and civilization, Resolves that the Rotary Clubs of the District be dissolved."⁷⁹

⁷⁵ *Proceedings: Thirty-First Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1940), 317.

⁷⁶ Wiesen, *Creating the Nazi Marketplace*, 124.

⁷⁷ Wiesen, 125.

⁷⁸ de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 55.

⁷⁹ "Clubs in Italy Disbanding," *The Rotarian*, January 1939, 45.

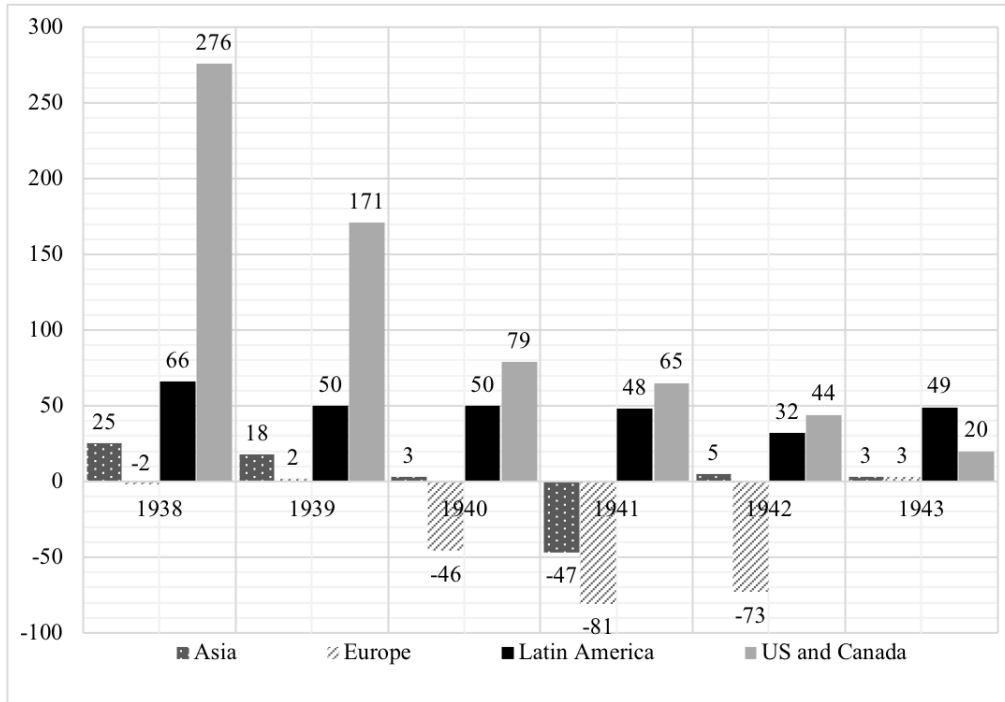


Table 4: Rotary International Net Club Growth, 1938-1943. "Net Growth" was defined as the total number of new clubs formed, minus the total number of clubs that were dissolved in a year.

Sources: *Proceedings: Annual Convention of Rotary International, 1938 – 1943.*

In Spain, Rotary clubs and masonic lodges were also banned during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Although Spanish Rotarians were by and large politically conservative and Catholic, the US service organization was never fully embraced by the Catholic Church in Spain—as was saw in the previous Chapter.⁸⁰ According to one author, Rotary's promotion of freewill, tolerance, and individualism were also anathema to *franquismo* and its anti-liberal ideology.⁸¹ RI would not return to Spain until the Franco's death in 1977. Other European countries with Rotary clubs faced a similar doom, as the war rolled through the continent.

This trend was not exclusive to Europe, however. Japanese and Manchurian Rotary clubs, which had been active for twenty years, were dissolved late 1940. Rotary's district governors in Japan made the announcement, stating that "Although we believe that the Rotary principles and spirit are beneficial to the State and society we deem it necessary to revise the structure of our federation and sever ties with foreign organizations in view of the situation at

⁸⁰ Alberca, "Notas para un estudio del rotarismo en España (1920-1936)," 275–76.

⁸¹ Joan-Francesc Pont Clemente, "La política anti-rotaria del franquismo" (Barcelona, Les Corts Rotary Club, 2010), <https://jfpont.files.wordpress.com/2007/12/la-politica-anti-rotaria-del-franquismo-rotary-club-21-4-2010.pdf>.

home and abroad."⁸²

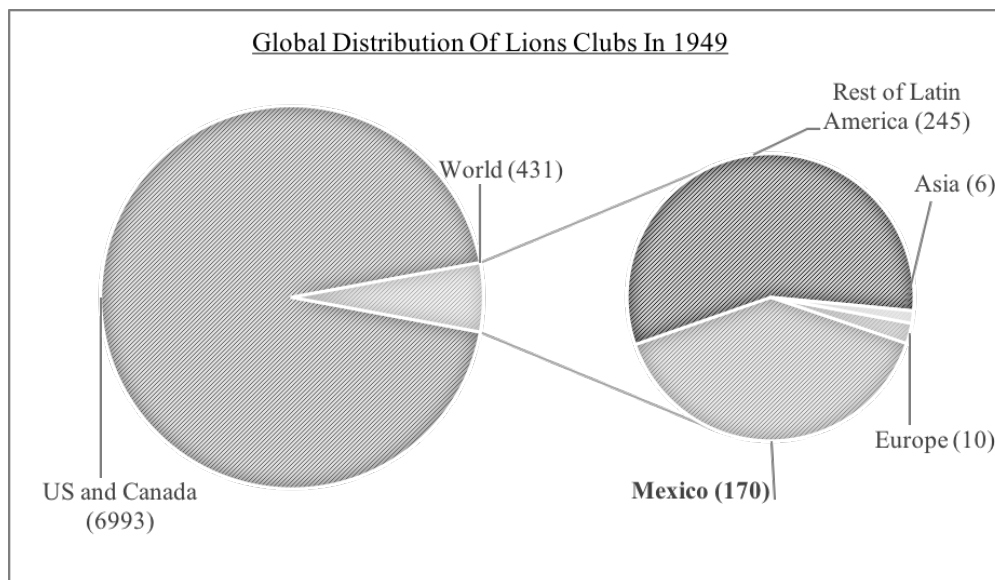


Table 5: Global Distribution of Lions Clubs International, 1949.

Source: Robert J Casey and W. A. S Douglas, *The World's Biggest Doers: The Story of the Lions*, 255.

Notably, as Rotary charters were being terminated in Europe and East Asia, Latin American Rotary and Lions clubs were increasing. In fact, during the Second World War, the only geographic region that registered a net increase outside of the United States and Canada was Latin America. In 1943, Latin America had already outpaced the net increase of new Rotary clubs in the US/Canada area, 49 to 20, a remarkable feat for a developing region still emerging from an economic crisis. Lions International's greatest expansion was also in Latin America, with Mexico figuring most prominently. On the eve of the European conflict, LI had clubs in eight countries of which six were Latin American: Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Guatemala. By 1949, Lions were active in twenty-four countries; sixteen of these in Latin America with a total of 415 with Mexico contributing the largest portion: 170 clubs.⁸³

Seen from this global perspective, the expansion of service clubs in Latin America carried considerable significance for both the Lions and Rotary headquarters in Chicago. And club leadership was well aware of the trend occurring in the hemisphere. In his annual report, the president of RI stated in 1942 that "It was expected that nearly all of the new clubs in 1941-

⁸² "A Radiogram from Tokyo," *The Rotarian*, November 1940, 64.

⁸³ Robert J Casey and W. A. S Douglas, *The World's Biggest Doers: The Story of the Lions* (Chicago: Wilcox & Follett Co., 1949), 124.

42 would be organized in the United States, Canada, and Ibero America [sic]."⁸⁴ That year, of the 95 new charters issued, 22 were in Brazil. With war hindering growth in Europe, RI redirected (temporarily) its efforts to the Western hemisphere. Both Lions and Rotary saw the war as an opportunity to encourage cooperation and understanding in the Americas. Rotary, for instance, launched in 1941 a 15-minute weekly radio show, simultaneously broadcast in stations throughout the region, called "The Americas Speak." Lions International, for their part, promoted pro-US hemispheric solidarity by distributing propaganda from the United States Office of War Information to all clubs in the region.⁸⁵

The growth in Latin America was important to the service club headquarters, but it was also of interest to the United States Department of State. During the war, US embassies throughout the region kept an eye on the activities of Rotary and Lions as potential beacons of pro-US support. The United States was particularly interested in Argentina where the newly established military junta had yet to declare itself on the side of the Allies forces. In 1943, for example, Robert Edward Schneider, a lecturer at the Argentine-North American Institute of Cultural Exchange in Córdoba, reported to the US Embassy that he had been admitted into the Rotary Club, occasionally giving talks on US education and history during the sessions. "I am beginning to feel," Schneider noted, "that the contacts I make indirectly as a member of the Córdoba Golf Club and Rotary Club, are no less valuable in my work" than his other activities.⁸⁶ Since the 1930s, the US Embassy in Mexico also monitored the dinner sessions of both Lions and Rotary clubs, which occasionally would appear in the reports of the American consuls.⁸⁷

Not all Latin Americans, however, were enthusiastic about US service clubs having chapters in their countries. Some within the Catholic Church continued to harbor mistrust toward these organizations. After the military coup of 1943 in Argentina, the clergy began to openly attack non-Catholic associations, especially American ones. US foreign service agents in Buenos Aires reported, for example, that there was an increase in Catholic publications critical of a range of clubs, from gymnastics and fencing clubs to Rotary and the "Y."⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *Proceedings: Thirty-Third Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1942), 181–82.

⁸⁵ *Proceedings: Thirty-Third Annual Rotary Convention*, 210; Casey and Douglas, *The World's Biggest Doers: The Story of the Lions*, 214.

⁸⁶ Robert E. Schneider to Dr. Hayward Keniston, US Embassy, November 16, 1943, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Argentina, 1940–1944, <http://worldscholar.tu.galegroup.com/tinyurl/4xv9i4>.

⁸⁷ Rotary Club of Monterrey Celebrates Two-Hundredth Anniversary of Washington's Birthday, February 20, 1932, 812.42611/48; Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1930–1939, M1370, roll 49; Robert E. Schneider to Dr. Hayward Keniston, US Embassy.

⁸⁸ Arguably, the most direct attacks came from Tonelli, *La verdad sobre el Rotary Club*; for US Embassy dispatches reporting on anti-Americanism in Argentina: Memo: Catholic Influence on New Regime In Argentina, December 14, 1943, 24–25, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Argentina, 1940–1944, World Scholar: Latin America & the Caribbean, <http://worldscholar.tu.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6ksQdX>; Serapio Lucero, "¿Qué es una 'institución'?",

Despite the critics, service clubs continued to attract Latin American men to join. While armies were marching across Europe and East Asia, Rotarians and Lions in Latin America were attending weekly luncheons and dinners. Club officials in Chicago and in Latin America were proud that their organization was promoting peace and harmony, not only locally, but internationally between neighboring countries. One Rotarian from Argentina recalled that during his visit to the Rio de Janeiro Rotary Club, he was "brought to tears" when the president of the Brazilian club, in a gesture of friendship between the two nations, kissed the Argentine flag before the assembled Rotarian. Similarly, in 1941 the president of Rotary International was pleased to report that "in the negotiations for the treaty determining the boundary between Colombia and Venezuela four of the central figures were Rotarians."⁸⁹

Although Lions International had a limited presence in Latin America compared to Rotary, the organization was also promoting continental solidarity and fellowship in a variety of ways. One was through its official Spanish publication, *El León*, which was distributed in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Mexico and parts of Central America beginning in 1937. In 1940, LI also held its second international convention in a Latin American city, Havana, Cuba, as did RI that same year.⁹⁰

In this process, Mexico was strategic for Lions International's expansion plans in Latin America. If Lionism took root in Mexico, Central and South America would certainly follow. In 1950, Mexico had some 170 Lions clubs (becoming more numerous than Rotary) and leading other Latin American countries with Lions.⁹¹ This was a remarkable development given that RI began its extension program in Mexico over a decade earlier than Lions. The success of Lionism in Mexico, however, was possible *despite* a tumultuous relationship between Lions International and *leones mexicanos*, as the section below will show.

PART II: LIONS INTERNATIONAL AND *LEONES MEXICANOS*

As discussed in Chapter One, unlike Rotary International, the Lions' incursion into Mexico in the late 1920s was plagued with complications that led to failed attempts. Lionism developed only after the responsibility of forming new clubs was delegated to the Mexico City Lions Clubs in 1933. Even then, however, the expansion of Lionism in Mexico for the next decade and a half was rife with disorganization, misunderstandings, and conflict with the

Nuevo Orden: Semanario Político, October 8, 1941, 4, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Argentina, 1940–1944, World Scholar: Latin America & the Caribbean.

⁸⁹ Cupertino del Campo, "El internacionalismo y el nacionalismo dentro de Rotary," *El Rotariano Argentino*, no. 219 (May 1945): 5–6; *Proceedings: Thirty-Second Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1941), 318.

⁹⁰ Casey and Douglas, *The World's Biggest Doers: The Story of the Lions*, 105–6.

⁹¹ Casey and Douglas, 255.

Chicago headquarters and among the Mexican Lions themselves.

Compared to other countries in which Lions International had an extension program in the early 1930s, Mexico's was somewhat peculiar. Mexico (and Canada) had its own "central office" in Mexico City in charge of chartering new clubs and mediating between the Chicago Lions office and local clubs. The agreement to have Mexico do its own extension work was formalized with a contract between the Lions Club of Mexico City and Lions International. From the perspective of LI, this was meant as a temporary solution while it organized a permanent staff and funds to take over the extension program in Mexico. To the Lions of Mexico, it was initially also seen this way—although their opinion on this matter would soon change.⁹²

The temporary agreement was completed without clear guidelines nor a timetable for LI to take over extension duties. Nevertheless, the Mexico City Lions Club went forward and created in 1934 the National Association of Lions Clubs of Mexico (NALC). The association, despite its fancy name, was no more than a handful of Lions members (virtually all from Mexico City) who comprised the board, a secretary, and a small budget. Although limited in resources in the early years, the NALC continued to function and expand until 1983 as Mexico's Lions headquarters. By the time the 1935 Lions International Convention in Mexico City approached, the NALC had organized 8 Lions clubs and the Mexico City Lions had the largest roster in the entire Lions world.⁹³

The fanfare and enthusiasm generated by the 1935 convention, however, was short lived. Within months after the event, several Lions clubs either reported poor member attendance or were on the brink of losing their charter. In November 1935, one NALC official, Alejandro Fernández Bravo, visited Guadalajara in order to check on the local club's status. He scheduled all 20 Lions for a meeting but, although everyone agreed to attend, no one arrived. Perplexed, Fernández Bravo decided to meet personally with each member separately. The consensus was that members were unhappy with the club president, Xavier G. de Quevedo, whom they viewed as a "domineering" tyrant, "wanting to do everything his way."⁹⁴ Others stated that the club had been "formed artificially and not out of conviction," a problem seen before among Lions clubs in Mexico (see Chapter One). Three members confessed that they "had joined almost forcibly on the night of the [club's] inauguration and did not really like Lionsim and no longer wanted to go to the meetings." Fernández Bravo returned to Mexico City disappointed at the reality that a new club in Guadalajara needed to be organized. "It pains me to say," he told NALC directors, "that

⁹² Melvin Jones, Secretary General, Lions International to Joe Fernández, Mexico City Lions Club, May 24, 1933, exp. estatutos, Caja Archivero 1933-1936, Archivo del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México.

⁹³ *Anuario leonístico mexicano: ejercicio social 1949-1950* (México, D.F.: Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, 1950), 149–50.

⁹⁴ Xavier G. de Quevedo was a well-known businessman in Guadalajara, having been president of the chamber of commerce three times (1932, 1940, and 1948). See: José María Muirà, ed., *Historia de Jalisco*, vol. IV (Guadalajara, Jalisco, México: Gobierno de Jalisco, Unidad Editorial, 1980), 528.

absolutely no one wishes to continue in that club."⁹⁵

Other Lions clubs seemed to be in a similar situation. Wishing to avoid the fate of the Guadalajara club, which was dissolved in 1936, the leadership of the National Association programmed visits to clubs in Toluca, Cuernavaca, and Puebla. Their hope was to "rekindle" among members the "energy of lionism" and encourage cooperation.⁹⁶ The Lions Club of Toluca, for instance, lacked leadership. The club president had recently resigned and the club had not organized new elections to fill the vacancy. In the opinion of one NALC agent who visited Toluca, the Lions club there was "disorganized" and seemed to possess "little spirit and no unity." The follow year, the Cuernavaca Lions Club was the latest to become inactive.⁹⁷

Facing different issues, the Lions Club of Puebla became involved in an embarrassing scandal that reached Mexico City. In May 1939, newspapers from the capital reported that a party celebrating the crowning of Lions Club of Puebla's princess "ended like the Rosary of Amozoc," a popular saying meaning that a gathering, meant to be festive, ended in violence.⁹⁸ A guest at the party, in a state of inebriation, hurled lewd remarks at the princess. Incensed, her companion retaliated with a slap to his face. An all-out brawl between two groups of men ensued and, according to the reporter, within "a few moments, there were no chairs or tables standing." The fight continued outside of the venue and afterwards the police arrived, taking several handcuffed to the station.⁹⁹

The tumultuous start of Lions in Mexico prompted discussions between Lions International and the National Association as to how address the expansion issues and ensure the organization's future. By 1937, it became clear to NALC directors that it did not have the resources to lead on their own an extension program that could produce the results that all desired. During the Lions International board of directors' meetings in Chicago in November 1937, two different solutions to Mexico's problems were discussed. One, suggested by the US office, called for LI to completely take over the extension work in Mexico, thereby dissolving the National Association. Lions International sought to standardize its extension program

⁹⁵ Acta del Consejo de Administración de la Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones, December 9, 1935, Volumen 1935-1938: Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana (hereafter ANCL), ACLCM.

⁹⁶ Acta de la Mesa Directiva de la Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones, June 8, 1936, Volumen 1935-1938; ANCL, ACLCM.

⁹⁷ Acta de la Mesa Directiva, June 8, 1936; Volumen 1935-1938, ACLCM.; Acta de la Junta Directiva de la Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones, September 3, 1937, Volumen 1935-1938: ANCL, ACLCM.

⁹⁸ The complete saying from Puebla goes: "acabó como el rosario de Amozoc, a golpes y farolazos." According to local lore, an 18th-century Easter celebration in the town of Amozoc, Puebla was soured when two large processions clashed. Jorge Mejía Prieto, *Albures y refranes de México* (Panorama Editorial, 1985), 40.

⁹⁹ Lions Club of Puebla to José Gómez Ugarte, Editor of *El Universal*, May 18, 1936, exp. Clubes de la República, Caja Archivero 1933-1936, ACLCM.

outside of the US, following a similar approach taken by Rotary International. Based on this plan, there ideally would be only one headquarters (Lions International), with clubs throughout the globe organized in smaller districts, without intermediary associations like the NALC in Mexico.¹⁰⁰

The second plan, proposed by the founder and president of Mexico's NALC, Rodolfo M. Fernández, entailed having both the US and Mexican headquarters collaborate with the extension program. It required LI to provide financial backing and some staff support, while the NALC would do the ground work and continue to have an overseeing role within Mexico. Although Mexican Lions recognized the place of LI, Mexican directors thought that their "personal connections" were invaluable in expanding Lionism in Mexico and in maintaining active clubs. In this respect, Mexican officials were rather explicit that they did not want NALC and its authority to disappear. Rather, they urged LI to "[legalize] the status" of the National Association. "Lions of Mexico will not favor surrender of their identity and will not be enthusiastic about what they might consider absorption by Lions International" because "they are naturally loath to surrender any part of their identity to any other organization anywhere."¹⁰¹

Fernández couched his arguments as a cultural and racial issue and as a question of national sovereignty. "The characteristics of the Anglo Saxon and Latin races differ in wide degree in many particularities. The races do not think alike," argued Fernández. For the "Latin races" it would be more "natural," he continued, "to accept counsel of those bound to us by ties of kinship rather than blindly follow the leadership of more remote associates." Furthermore, the president argued that "the pride of the Latin" rested partly in the "ability to solve his own problems." To be sure, this was a peculiar if not groundless argument, given that Rotary in Mexico had been successful for years without a central headquarters.¹⁰²

Mexican leadership also envisioned the NALC having a larger role within the future of Lionism in Latin America. Specifically, Fernández and other directors suggested that the association have a permanent role in forming new clubs throughout the region. With LI's clear interest in obtaining a strong presence in Latin America, Fernández made the case for granting NALC the responsibility for editing the official Lions International publication in Spanish that would serve as a medium to teach members the ideology of Lions International. Until then, LI had relied on translating *The Lion*, the official organ in the US and Canada, from the English and sending it to clubs in the Spanish-speaking world as *El León*. According to Fernández, circulating translated "propaganda" would decrease its effectiveness and Latin Americans would lose the benefits.

In Mexico, the NALC since 1935 had been publishing their own magazine (also under the title *El León*), which they argued had enjoyed much success in Mexico and even "in Pan-

¹⁰⁰ Brief from Rodolfo M. Fernández, (undated but likely July 1940), Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹⁰¹ Rodolfo M. Fernández, President, National Association of Lions Clubs (Mexico), to Melvin Jones, Secretary General, Lions International, November 22, 1937, Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹⁰² Rodolfo M. Fernández to Melvin Jones; Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

American countries," referring to clubs in Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama, and in the United States that received the publication. He suggested renaming the publication as *Pan-American León* to appeal to the broader region. According to Fernández, because of common cultural traits among Latin American Lions, a publication in Spanish would be "generally accepted without reservation, which cannot be said for a foreign publication." While his argument was based on the assumption an American organ would be considered foreign and a Mexican-printed one would not, it reflects clearly the interest of NALC directors in having an influential role in propagating Lionism throughout Latin America.¹⁰³

At the end of the 1937 board meetings in Chicago, both LI and NALC settled on a temporary solution that they would share the burden of the extension program in Mexico. To the dismay of Mexican Lions, the responsibility for publishing the Spanish-language organ was given to the Lions of Puerto Rico—likely because LI could manage Puerto Rican clubs better than Mexican ones. More importantly, the question of the future of the NALC was left unresolved. In the meantime, to assist the extension program, LI agreed to send an American Lion to form new clubs under the instructions of NALC. The agent, Vernon H. Galloway, had experience pioneering Lions clubs in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia with limited success.

Galloway arrived in 1938, working exclusively in northern Mexico where he chartered one club in Chihuahua. However, his stint in Mexico was unexpectedly cut short and he was recalled by LI, justified vaguely by "differences arising among the Lions of the State of Texas."¹⁰⁴ With his work left unfinished, the NALC directors expected that the Chicago office would send someone in his stead. Weeks became months and a year passed without a replacement for Galloway, leaving LI's extension work in limbo. The Mexican Lions, meanwhile, continued to work on forming new clubs but were becoming impatient at what they viewed as a lack of commitment from the American headquarters.¹⁰⁵

THE NATIONALIZATION OF THE OIL CONTROVERSY

As extension work in Mexico carried on at a slow pace in the late 1930s, controversies at the international level entered the fray. In Europe and East Asia, Rotary was being outlawed by fascist regimes. In Mexico, President Lázaro Cárdenas in 1937 gave political asylum to the communist Leon Trotsky, raising suspicions in the United States of its southern neighbor "going red." Then, in March 1938, Cárdenas expropriated the oil industry that had been under American, British, and Dutch ownership since the Porfirian era. Mexicans of all sectors, from peasants to service club members and chambers of commerce, celebrated the decree. The decision that was widely hailed in Mexico as a national triumph, however, was condemned in the

¹⁰³ Rodolfo M. Fernández to Melvin Jones; Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹⁰⁴ Report "Mexican Lionism and the International Contract" by the National Association of Lions Clubs of the Republic of Mexico, August 27, 1949, Volume 1949: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹⁰⁵ Brief from Rodolfo M. Fernández, Volume 1940; ACLCM, 4.

United States, the U.K., and the Netherlands, with the latter two severing diplomatic relations. Lions members in Mexico were among the first to offer the president their support. After visiting the Brownsville Lions Club in April 1938, the district vice-governor of the NALC, Carlos F. Hernández, declared to journalists that "Cárdenas has the full support of the entire nation" and assured Americans that Mexico would "pay every cent of the expropriations."¹⁰⁶

The response from NALC had more to do than simply national pride—there was also a personal connection. The president of Lions of Mexico, Rodolfo M. Fernández, was formerly employed by the Huasteca Petroleum Company in Tampico, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey. After the nationalization and the creation of the state-owned oil company, *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX), Fernández was appointed as a top adviser and representative for PEMEX at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C.¹⁰⁷

Months after the oil expropriation, LI Secretary General, Melvin Jones, circulated in his monthly newsletter to the International Board of Directors (among whom sat Rodolfo M. Fernández) a controversial newspaper article on the topic of Mexico's oil industry. The author of the piece was Mark Sullivan, a well-known journalist from the *New York Herald* and political pundit who on previous occasions had described Mexico as a threat to US national security.¹⁰⁸ Sullivan's article chastised the Mexican government for bartering oil with "Nazi-fascist authoritarian nations." "American-owned Mexican oil wells," argued Sullivan, "are now a part of the strength of the Nazi-fascist nations and the Nazi-fascist ideology." Washington's "inaction about Mexico" had also sent an encouraging message to communists by condoning the state seizure of private property. He further suggested that Americans should punish Mexico with "firm methods."¹⁰⁹

Fernández considered the article "denigrating and offensive," and characterized Jones' decision to forward it to the members of the board as "insensible and undiplomatic."¹¹⁰ Its circulation not only was an indirect criticism of his country, Fernández also considered that it reflected a prejudice toward Lions of Mexico. In response, Fernández penned a lengthy memorandum to LI directors, which he questioned whether there was a "subtle connection between this sponsoring of Mark Sullivan's [article] and the lonesome position we [Lions] seem

¹⁰⁶ "Mexico Backs Cardenas, Lions Leader Declares," *Brownsville Herald*, April 27, 1938, 11.

¹⁰⁷ Rodolfo M. Fernández to Carlos Paz, May 19, 1942, exp. Clubes Estados Unidos, Caja Archivero 1941-1942, ACLCM; Fernández, *Apuntes de ayer*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Sullivan was one of several American journalists during the 1920s and 30s who wrote sensationalistic pieces that characterized Mexico as a threat to the US for allowing Japanese immigrants to settle in border states. The fear was that Japanese would launch an attack on the US Southwest. Mark Sullivan, "Mexico Seen as New Portal for Unwelcome Japanese," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, April 19, 1924, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Sullivan, "Mexican Spectacle," *Washington Post*, February 16, 1939, 11.

¹¹⁰ Rodolfo M. Fernández, Presidente, Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de México, to Ramiro Collazo, Gobernador de Distrito de los Leones de Cuba, May 22, 1939, Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

to occupy in Mexico" vis-à-vis Lions International. Referring to the neglected status of the extension program in Mexico by LI, Fernández wondered whether they were "victims of a malicious whispering campaign designed to discredit our Lions of Mexico as well as our government and Nationals?"¹¹¹ Seeking to clear the reputation of his government, Fernández later sent LI directors a copy of a check worth one million dollars issued by the Mexican government to the United States as compensation for American-owned lands that had been expropriated.¹¹²

The letter by Fernández elicited replies from LI board members, including Jones who explained that it was not his intention to portray Mexico or the NALC negatively. Rather, it had been his policy to send news articles on general affairs to keep board members informed on a variety of topics. Since this one had to do with Mexico's oil industry, he "certainly thought [Fernández] would want to see it." However, Jones did not distance himself from the content of the article, stating that LI was "not endorsing or condemning what Mark Sullivan had written."¹¹³ In fact, on previous occasions Jones had expressed concerns to LI directors about the political situation in Mexico, fearing that it may be "going Nazi — is Red, or Pink."¹¹⁴ The vice-president of LI, Alexander T. Wells, denied any ill intention or prejudices towards the Lions of Mexico organization. Wells did concede that regarding the "oil controversy" there was "no need for us, as Lions, to get into any discussion upon that subject," implying that it was not the business of LI to take sides on politically-charged topics.¹¹⁵

Though the article was apparently sent without wanting cause a discussion about the impending global war or whether or not the nationalization was "good" or "bad," it prompted Lions directors nonetheless to consider the political implications. Some American Lions, surprisingly, expressed sympathy toward the situation in Mexico, as was the case of Henry T. Bowers who told Fernández he had "the deepest interest in Mexico" and in its effort to "break the yolk of impoverishment." "As a matter of fact," Bowers affirmed, "I have been a socialist (no secret) since my high school days" and "knew Eugene Debs well," leader of the Socialist Party of America. Referring to critics in the United States toward policies in general favoring the working classes, Bowers noted that it was "Too bad the great middle class can't understand that

¹¹¹ Alexander T. Wells, 1st Vice-President, International Association of Lions Clubs, to Rodolfo M. Fernández, President, National Association of Lions Clubs of Mexico, May 11, 1939, Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹¹² Melvin Jones, Secretary General, Lions International, to Rodolfo M. Fernández, Director, Lions International, June 28, 1939, Volume 1939: ANCL; "Compensation for Expropriated Lands," *The American Journal of International Law* 32, no. 4 (October 1938): 181–207.

¹¹³ Melvin Jones, Secretary General, Lions International, to Rodolfo M. Fernández, President, National Association of Lions Clubs (Mexico), May 1, 1939, Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹¹⁴ W.G. Higgins, District Governor, Mexico Lions, to Melvin Jones, Secretary General, Lions International, May 12, 1939, Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹¹⁵ Alexander T. Wells, President, International Association of Lions Clubs, to Rodolfo M. Fernández, President, National Association of Lions Clubs of Mexico, Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

their prosperity rests upon the working class."¹¹⁶

The district governor of Lions in Mexico and close friend of Fernández, W.G. Higgins, wrote to his LI directors to clear the air. "President Fernández," he reminded them, "is in the service of the [Mexican] Government." Higgins—an American from Texas—told Melvin Jones that he firmly believed that Mexico was not in danger of falling to communism, much less fascism. "I imagine," he wrote, "there is more Communism [sic] in the United States of America today than in Mexico." He thought that in Mexico "the pendulum [had] reached its extreme" with the election of Cárdenas, but was now "swinging back" to the center. Of all the presidential candidates in Mexico for the 1940 elections, Higgins noted, "only one of them is considered Red. The others are all conservative." (Likely Higgins was referring to Francisco Múgica, as the potential leftist candidate, and Ávila Camacho, Juan Andreu Almazán, and José Vasconcelos as the conservatives.) More significantly, Higgins believed that Lions International was "missing an excellent opportunity to step in and take a lot of credit for successfully resisting Communism" in Mexico.¹¹⁷

The Mexican Lions directors were able to see the incident as an unintentional mistake, but it left an unpleasant memory among Mexican Lions—one they did not soon forget, as a club history published in the 1950s reflected.¹¹⁸ And while the incident may have been embarrassing to LI, the failure to draft a new contract favorable to NALC was more problematic in the long run. In June 1939, the Chicago office informed the Lions of Mexico that financial limitations prevented it from contributing to the extension program as they had promised. The Mexican Lions saw this as conclusive proof that LI directors were "side-stepping the issue" and had "no intention of fulfilling their promise" two years after they made it. In a letter to Higgins, Fernández believed that the situation impaired the growth not just of Lions of Mexico, but of Lions in the world. "As an International Director, my situation is very embarrassing," stated Fernández. Weeks before the Lions International convention in Pittsburgh, Fernández resigned from his position as a board director of LI. Additionally, he informed the Chicago headquarters that the Lions of Mexico would not send a delegation to Pittsburgh in protest against the ambiguous status of the NALC created by LI. The news was not well received by Chicago, souring relations even further.¹¹⁹

Several months later, LI retaliated. On April 23, 1940, the president of LI, Alexander Wells, sent a curt letter to the Mexican Lions, informing that LI cancelled and annulled the contract with NALC. The basis for the break was a balance of payments, which seems to have been more of a justification to end ties, given the events that preceded, and since there was no

¹¹⁶ Henry T. Bowers, Director, Lions International, to Rodolfo M. Fernández, Director, Lions International, May 3, 1939, Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹¹⁷ W.G. Higgins, District Governor, Mexico Lions, to Melvin Jones, Secretary General, Lions International; Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹¹⁸ Daniel Leyva Martínez, *El Leonismo mexicano y el contrato internacional* (Mexico D.F.: Abastecedora de Impresos, S.A., 1955); *Anuario Leonístico Mexicano*, 204.

¹¹⁹ Rodolfo M. Fernández to W.G. Higgins, July 13, 1939, Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

prior notice of the overdue payments.¹²⁰ Individual letters were also mailed to all Lions clubs in Mexico, which included an additional proposition from Lions International that the NALC letter did not have:

The severance of the relation between the two corporations does not mean that we have severed our interest in the Lions and Lions Clubs of Mexico. We respectfully extend to all Lions Clubs of the Republic of Mexico, a sincere offer of fellowship and association with all the other Lions Clubs of the world. It should be, and is, our hope that an affiliation and association with each other may be arranged sometime in the near future.¹²¹

LI was leaving open the possibility of incorporating all Lions clubs in Mexico and, in essence, eliminating the NALC. Reflecting LI's interest in shedding the Mexican headquarters, the president of LI wrote to the Juárez Lions Club that Rotary International had "a much larger number of clubs than Lions Clubs in Mexico," and "apparently functioned quite successfully without a National Association of Rotary Clubs," implying that Mexican Lions did not need a headquarters like the NALC.¹²²

The NALC rejected the severance letter "fundamentally for lack of right" of LI's president and secretary general since the decision was made without the consent of the International Board of Directors. The presidents of the Monterrey and Mexico City Lions also penned replies to LI. The Monterrey club claimed that LI had no right to contact directly with clubs in Mexico since club charters were "given to us by the National Association of Lions Clubs of Mexico."¹²³ The Mexico City club president charged Wells and Jones with showing not only "hostility to Mexican Lionism but it seems [their] purpose is to destroy and discredit Mexican Lionism." People in Mexico and abroad will see these developments, he warned, and will "think that Lionism is a farce, a money-making proposition, imposition and domination."¹²⁴

Rumors of the severance reached individuals outside of the Lions family. And with the United State fighting a war against fascism, it did not take long for some to speculate on the cause of the break. The district governor of Lions in Mexico, Higgins, warned the LI president

¹²⁰ Alexander Wells, President of LI, to Rodolfo M. Fernandez, President of Lions Clubs of Mexico, April 23, 1940, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹²¹ Alexander T. Wells, President Lions International, to Horacio Casasús, President, Lions Club of Mexico City, April 23, 1940, exp. Oficina Internacional (correspondencia), Caja Archivero 1939-1941, ACLCM.

¹²² Alexander T. Wells, President Lions International, to Juan J. Vega, President, Lions Club of Juárez, May 18, 1940, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹²³ Lic. Joaquín Garza y Garza, Presidente, Club de Leones de Monterrey, to A.T. Wells, President of International Association of Lions Clubs, May 24, 1940, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹²⁴ Lic. César Córdova, Immediate Past President, Lions Club of Mexico City, to Alexander T. Wells, President of International Association of Lions Clubs, June 5, 1940, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

that at least one journalist had learned of the incident and "wants to know what connection the break has with the expulsion of the Masons, Rotarians, etc. from Germany and Italy."¹²⁵ In a similar tone, the Lions of Mexico City also emphasized the implications of the severance given the curtailment of civil liberties in Europe. They accused LI of trampling over the club's basic values of fellowship, cooperation and service, which "the world so much needs for its spiritual peace, particularly in these times when dictators intend marching roughshod over, and destroying, everything: friendship, words of honor, international treaties, diplomatic covenants, etc."¹²⁶

The sudden break also raised doubts in Mexico about the spirit of Americans' so-called Good Neighbor Policy. We are "fellow-Lions of a friendly neighboring country who esteem your country and yourselves," the Mexico City club president reminded LI.¹²⁷ Even among American Lions, some shared a similar sentiment. A Lion from Washington, DC, Robert McKeever, criticized the decision by LI, noting that "there has been a complete lack of diplomacy in the abrupt handling of the situation." "I still do not understand it nor approve it," he wrote.¹²⁸

As a result of cutting ties with LI, Mexican Lions lost an additional privilege: the right to attend the upcoming 1940 international Lions convention in Havana, Cuba. This was ironic since the convention was scheduled in a Latin American city (for the second time), and the most numerous delegation in the region (Mexico) was not invited. To the Lions of Cuba, it was an outrageous situation they scrambled to fix, even against the will of the Chicago office. The governor of the Cuban Lions district, Ramiro Collazo, urged his fellow Mexicans to come to Havana, even in the face of the severance. He assured them that Cuba welcomed their Mexican brothers "with open arms; who in my opinion have the right to attend."¹²⁹ The Lions of Mexico saw the invitation as a gesture of true fellowship and stirred a sense of pan-Latin American solidarity. It is a "very special invitation by our fellow-Lions of Cuba," Fernández noted, "to which [sic] we are united by racial ties."¹³⁰ In defiance of LI, the Lions of Mexico accepted the invitation and sent an "unofficial" delegation of 268 Lions and relatives to Cuba.

It is worth noting that the Lions of Mexico obtained the support of the Cárdenas

¹²⁵ W.G. Higgins to Alexander T. Wells, June 11, 1940, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹²⁶ Lic. César Córdova, Immediate Past President, Lions Club of Mexico City, to Alexander T. Wells, President of International Association of Lions Clubs.

¹²⁷ Lic. César Córdova, Immediate Past President, Lions Club of Mexico City, to Alexander T. Wells, President of International Association of Lions Clubs.

¹²⁸ Robert L. McKeever to Rodolfo M. Fernández, July 3, 1940, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹²⁹ Rodolfo M. Fernández, Presidente, Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de México, to Ramiro Collazo, Gobernador de Distrito de los Leones de Cuba; Volume 1939: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹³⁰ Rodolfo M. Fernandez, President, National Association of Lions Clubs (Mexico), to Robert L. McKeever, July 19, 1940, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

administration, which provided them with a navy gunboat for transportation as well as some funds to cover expenses.¹³¹ "This is the answer of the Mexican Lions to the attitude taken by the International!" Fernández exclaimed to his American associate, Higgins.¹³² Although the Mexican Lions were not allowed into the official convention assemblies, the Cuban Lions made sure they participated in the parade of Lions delegations. The event, held in Havana's historic Centro Gallego theater house, provided a climactic moment that the Mexican Lions did not forget. The Mexican contingent, in their full *charro* suits and accompanying women in *china poblana* dresses, upon reaching the judges table, were greeted by the thunderous applause and *¡vivas!* from their Cuban hosts who declared them the "winners" of the parade. It was a symbolic and moral victory for the Mexicans.¹³³

Shortly after the Havana convention, LI president Wells' term finished and the NALC resumed contract negotiations with Chicago. The next president of the US Lions headquarters, Edward H. Paine, did not share the same opinion regarding Mexico as his predecessor. Paine believed that LI and NALC could coexist, as they had been since the original contract was established in 1934. During his tenure, new agreement was reached (though not adopted until 1946), which would allow the NALC to carry out its directing role in Mexico. In addition, LI agreed to provide financial assistance to the Mexican office.¹³⁴

However, this was not the end of the existential debate over the Mexican headquarters. Even after the new contract was signed, some high-level LI officials continued to urge Mexico for the elimination of the NALC. The vice-president of LI, Clifford D. Pearson, was one of them. During his visit at the Lions of Mexico National Convention in Guadalajara in 1945, Pearson had the audacity to tell a hall full of Mexican Lions that "I want to say without reservations, that you must fuse with us." Mexico was the only country of the "that has not been able to fuse completely" with LI, he stated.¹³⁵ Yet for the time being the NALC could carry on in its administrative role in Mexico without controversies—until the 1960s, when new contract discussions reemerged.

Although the interactions with Lions International had been complex and at times acrimonious, the experience had important lessons for Mexican Lions. On the one hand, by leading the extension work without financial and logistical support from LI, it established a lasting precedent: the consolidation and expansion of Lionism in Mexico was the product of

¹³¹ Francisco Trejo, Secretario General del Patronato de Turismo, to Secretario de Hacienda., July 11, 1940, exp. 101/06/14, caja 45, fondo Secretaría Particular del Secretario de Hacienda y Crédito Público, AGN.

¹³² Rodolfo M. Fernandez, President, National Association of Lions Clubs (Mexico), to Robert L. McKeever, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.

¹³³ Leyva Martínez, *El Leonismo mexicano y el contrato internacional*, 31–32.

¹³⁴ Leyva Martínez, 34–35.

¹³⁵ *Memoria de la XI Convención Nacional, Celebrada en Guadalajara, Jal., los días 2, 3, 4 y 5 de mayo 1945* (Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, 1945), 59.

Mexican efforts, not American. On the other, the frictions with the Chicago office inevitably made Mexican Lions seek solidarity among themselves. This created a sense that it was truly "their" Lions organization, in the service of Mexicans. Lionism, or more appropriately, *leonismo* had taken roots.

PART III: *LEONISMO MEXICANO*

The stubborn resilience of the Lions National headquarters in Mexico City created organizationally a different kind of Lionism vis-à-vis the rest of the world and the other service clubs in Mexico, Rotary and the Sowers of Friendship. At the same time, this also created a service club culture that was also different from its peers. Mexican Lions referred to (and still remember) Rodolfo M. Fernández as the "founder, organizer and soul of *leonismo mexicano*." He is to "*Mexican Lionism*, what Melvin Jones is for North American Lionism," in the words of the club's official history.¹³⁶ The nomenclature of "Mexican Lionism," versus the original, international one, was a conscious decision based on racial and national distinctions Mexicans considered was real and valid. What made *leonismo mexicano* different? What similarities did it have with Rotary and the Sowers clubs? Finally, what were the long-term implications of a Mexican brand of Lions clubs?

As I have shown in the previous section, the development of the Lions extension program in Mexico, was carried out entirely by Mexican Lions without the assistance of the Chicago headquarters. This fact helped create a uniquely "Mexican" identity to the Lions clubs. The continual frictions and misunderstandings with the LI office helped solidify this identity. Incidents such as the Havana convention, in which Mexican Lions went in defiance of LI further added to this nationalistic aspect of the Lions. They also consciously blended Lionism with their notion of Mexican identity, in line with that of the post-revolutionary state's (which I will address in greater detail below). For instance, the Lions adopted the *charro* uniform for men and the *china poblana* dress for wives and daughters as the "official" garment used by Lions during international conventions.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *Anuario Leonístico Mexicano*, 201.

¹³⁷ This decision, however, was not universally accepted by all Lions. Some criticized the lack of inclusion of opinions from others clubs. See, for instance, the protest from: Lions Club of Veracruz to National Association of Lions Clubs of Mexico, July 15, 1940, Volume 1940: ANCL, ACLCM.



Figure 5: Picture of the first delegation of Lions from Mexico in their *charro* suits at the International Lions Convention held in Grand Rapids, Mich., in July 1934. The fourth (from left to right) sitting down is Rodolfo M. Fernández and to his left is W.G. Higgins.

Source: Rodolfo M. Fernández, *Apuntes de ayer*, 30.

The trajectory taken by the Lions of Mexico and its record with Chicago clearly influenced their identity. And yet, as service clubs based on the philosophy of Lions International, the Mexican Lions still shared many goals and characteristics with their counterparts, the Rotarians and Sowers of Friendship. To be sure, there are some important differences, both of which are worth examining.

SERVICE CLUBS AND FAMILY

By now it should be evident that service clubs around the world ostensibly gathered men with the intention of helping their communities through promoting charitable acts. Rotarians had the international mission of helping end poliomyelitis, while the Lions of aiding those with vision impairments. As I have established in the previous chapter, men also joined because of the potential networks and connections that could develop in these spaces of informal camaraderie. Rotary and Lions clubs in Mexico and abroad also shared an interest in involving members' relatives in club life, albeit reflecting the gendered and patriarchal culture of service clubs.

The bylaws of both international organizations allowed the inclusion of women and later children through subgroups dependent upon the guidance and authority of the male members. In the United States, women's auxiliaries were referred to as "Rotary-Annes" and "Lionesses,"

while their Mexican counterparts were the "*damas rotarias*," the "*damas leonasas*," and the "*damas sembradoras*," in the case of the ladies of the Sowers Club. At the Lions Club of Mexico City, the wives were organized in a committee and assigned to provide support in activities in which their maternal instincts could best work (or so men assumed). "No one but you [*damas leonasas*]," wrote the president of the Lions Club of Mexico City, can guide our sons and daughters "with the care and tenderness that only a woman is capable of transmitting."¹³⁸ Accordingly, the Lionesses were in charge of donating clothes and food for disabled children at local hospital and orphanages.¹³⁹ In a similar fashion, the wives of Rotary club members served primarily to assist in charities that related to children from poor families. The *damas rotarias* in the city of Puebla, for instance, raised funds to serve daily breakfasts to impoverished public school students and donated "gift baskets" that included toys and basic groceries.¹⁴⁰

While the inclusion of women under gendered assumptions was similar in both organizations, the Lions case was different, not only within Mexico but compared to the United States. Because the Lions of Mexico were a separate organization affiliated to Lions International through a contract, the bylaws regulating clubs in Mexico were not the same as those in the United States. LI statutes allowed female relative involvement as "essential cogs," that is, as secretaries, or in auxiliary committees, but not in independently chartered clubs for women—a policy in the US that did not change until 1975 when Lioness clubs were officially granted charters.¹⁴¹ Women in the United States were restricted from gaining full affiliation in either Rotary or Lions clubs until a 1987 US Supreme Court decision ruled it unconstitutional to limit membership based on sex.¹⁴²

In Mexico, *damas leonasas* began calling for the formation of self-governing Clubes de Damas Leonas since the 1940s, to which Lions of Mexico headquarters acquiesced, perhaps surprisingly for a country whose culture is commonly associated with conservative gender roles

¹³⁸ Comunicación de la Mesa Directiva del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México sobre la formación del Club de Damas Leonas, September 24, 1951, exp. Club de Damas Leonas, Archivero 1951-1952, ACLCM.

¹³⁹ Lydia V. de Haber, Asociación de Damas del Club de Leones, to Gral. Ramón Iturbide, January 22, 1945, exp. Comité de obras benéficas y de servicios sociales, Caja Archivero 1941-1942, ACLCM.

¹⁴⁰ "Reparto de canastillas," *La Opinión*, December 27, 1945, exp. Reseñas de periódicos; Archivo 1946-1947, Vol.II, ACRP; "Comité de damas rotarias," *La Opinión*, January 14, 1946, exp. Reseñas de periódicos; Archivo 1946-1947, Vol.II, ACRP; Photograph of Rotary Club of Puebla with Gov. Carlos I. Betancourt at Escuela Fray Pedro Gante, May 23, 1946, exp. Reseñas de periódicos; Archivo 1946-1947, Vol.II, ACRP.

¹⁴¹ "What Are Lionesses," *Lions Clubs International - MD 105 Lioness* (blog), accessed July 17, 2018, <http://www.lionessclub.org/what-are-lionesses/>; Lions Clubs International, "History of Women in Lions," (Power Point Presentation, n.d.), https://www.lionsclubs.org/resources/all/ppt/history_of_women.pptx.

¹⁴² Lewis F. Powell Jr., Board of Directors of Rotary International et al. v. Rotary Club of Duarte et al. (Supreme Court of the United States 1987).

and a male dominated society. Decades before Lions clubs in the US allowed women to form their own clubs, Mexican women were already leading their own clubs. By 1945 the NALC had granted charters for female clubs, several of which were located in northern Mexico: Tijuana, Cananea, Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo, Tampico, but also in central Mexico: Veracruz, and two in the state of Guerrero.¹⁴³

The women's achievement of having a self-governing club was not without its detractors. Opposition to the formation of Lioness clubs in Mexico came, ironically, not from the men, but from other women, as was the case in the Mexico City Lions Club in 1951. "We do not want the independence to manage ourselves," stated a Lion's wife, "because we only want to fulfill our roles as wives of the *señores* of the Lions Club, and we do not seek representation at district or national conventions with voice and vote; we wish to leave it all to our husbands." Notably, the women cited the constitution of Lions International to support their arguments that the Lioness Clubs contradicted its statutes—even though the men's clubs were governed by the NALC's constitution. In a well-written and logically argued declaration, the women presented 14 points in which either the LI laws had no provisions for separate women's clubs or the problematic precedents forming these would set.¹⁴⁴

Disingenuously, these ladies, who demonstrated they thoroughly understood the legal terminology of the LI bylaws, feigned ignorance—clearly as a rhetorical device. "We who sign do not understand the legal precepts that govern the Lions Clubs...but are sure our husbands (*señores esposos*) know them well," they claimed. The ladies ended their five-page declaration by stating "As you can see, although we understand nothing of these legal aspects, with just one quick read of the statutes...we have found a series of contradictions." The controversy stirred by the women brought an end to Mexico City's Lioness Club. On other cities, however, women's Lions clubs continued to be active.¹⁴⁵

The Lions shared with Rotary and the Sowers the goal of instilling values among the youth. Since the 1930s, Lions clubs in Mexico had a "Youth Department" for their adolescent sons and daughters to join. The youth groups and their activities were guided by a "code of morals" and under the close supervision of adult members. The groups would organize a variety of youth activities in a "safe environment" devoid of alcohol, including dances, excursions, dinners, and tea parties. Through the wholesome social and recreational activities, the groups instilled obedience, civics, and to an extent religious piety: "I must love God, my parents, my

¹⁴³ Letter from Club de Damas Leonas of Mexico City to all members, 1951, exp. Club de Damas Leonas, Archivero 1951-1952, ACLCM; "Informe que rinde la Mesa Directiva de la Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana," in *Memoria de la XI Convención Nacional, Celebrada en Guadalajara, Jal., los días 2, 3, 4 y 5 de mayo 1945* (Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, 1945), 16–20.

¹⁴⁴ Ángela C. de Clemente to Salvador Franco Urías, Presidente Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México, October 5, 1951, exp. Club de Damas Leonas, Archivero 1951-1952, ACLCM.

¹⁴⁵ Ángela C. de Clemente to Salvador Franco Urías, Presidente Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México.

country," stated the youth code.¹⁴⁶

The adult Lions organized the groups in a way that young girls and boys were taught the importance of service and fraternalism, following the footsteps of their parents. Through seminars and other activities led by the adults, the organizations nurtured leadership and cultural refinement, which were informed by notions of class and gender. For instance, the boys, who seen by their parents as future managers, businessmen, or politicians, were taught to how speak in public and studied "sociology," a catch-all for anything relating to social issues. The girls, on the other hand, were taught nursing and art history, skills considered appropriate to their gender and expected roles as either housewives, caregivers, or teachers. After finishing their nursing training, the girls would provide community service at the vision clinic sponsored by the Lions club.¹⁴⁷

RELIGION AND POLITICS

The place of religion and politics was another difference between the three service organizations during the 1930s and 1940s. While the bylaws of each institution established that the clubs were non-sectarian and barred any political involvement (even discussions), this principle varied in its application, depending on the club. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Sowers of Friendship made Catholicism central to their club identity, eventhough they claimed to be a non-religious club open to all beliefs. The Lions and Rotarians in Mexico, on the other hand, did not officially embrace any religion. Nevertheless, this did not mean that individual members themselves were not religious—quite the contrary.

Often, members' personal beliefs or the observation of Catholic customs became visible within the club. For example, Lions club bulletins would publicly congratulate a fellow member whose daughter had celebrated her First Communion. In other cases, Lions would interpret their service to the community as a divine mandate, as the president of the Ciudad Juárez Lioness Club stated: "love God over all things" as well as "your neighbor as yourself," a reference to the Great Commandment in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew.¹⁴⁸ To be sure, the blending of religiosity with service was not exclusive to Mexico. In the United States, Lions International did not officially endorse any faith, but saw no problem beginning every international convention event with a prayer led by a reverend.

A similar pattern occurred in Rotary Clubs in Mexico. A Rotarian from the city of

¹⁴⁶ "Código de la moralidad juvenil para ser un ciudadano útil y ser feliz," in *Memoria de la XI Convención Nacional, Celebrada en Guadalajara, Jal., los días 2, 3, 4 y 5 de mayo 1945* (Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, 1945), 6.

¹⁴⁷ "Por qué fue fundado el Departamento Juvenil?," *Rugidos Juveniles: Órgano del Departamento Juvenil del Club de Leones*, July 25, 1939, exp. Comité de Acción Cívica, Caja Archivero 1939-1941, ACLCM.

¹⁴⁸ *Memoria de la XI Convención de Clubes de Leones (1945)*, 51.

Pachuca, for example, wrote an article in the Rotary organ, *Revista Rotaria*, in which he opined that the Rotary club's goals of charity and friendship were akin to God's Commandments. The Rotarian, named Prudencio Lara Bustos, was a Catholic priest who founded chapters of the Unión Femenina Católica Mexicana (UFCM), the Vela Perpetua, and other lay associations in the state of Hidalgo.¹⁴⁹

Officially, politics had no place in service clubs. What was meant by "politics," however, varied significantly depending on the opinions of members and the local context of the club. As I illustrated in the case of Monterrey, neither Lions nor Rotary clubs considered marching on the streets against "radical" labor unions, publishing anti-communist messages, or calling for the removal of a US ambassador to be political acts. Rather, in their view, as leaders of the community seeking its general welfare, it was within the moral prerogative of the clubs to carry out these actions. The Sowers of Friendship, as we also saw, did not consider it political to deride liberalism and socialism as causes of social decay or to champion *hispanismo* as the true path for Mexico. Nor was it problematic to denounce Lázaro Cárdenas as a "communistic" dictator.

During dinner sessions of the Lions Club of Mexico City and other locations, members could also approach topics such as the need to amend the constitution, without considering it "political." In October 1941, when the Secretary of Education, Octavio Véjar Vázquez, requested opinions regarding whether or not to reform Article 3 from members of the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM, the PRI's predecessor), senators, and civil society in general, the Lions of Mexico City also offered their perspectives. Leading the discussion was César Córdova, who spoke at length during a dinner session before his fellow Lions members. He prefaced his thoughts with a word of caution. "Lionism, as a thinking segment of society" should engage issues that "relate to culture, the elevation of our country and its harmony." However, he cautioned that this needed to be done carefully. Within the club "political, religious, and sectarian issues should not be touched," Córdova clarified. When Lions give their opinion, "it should be done with an honest vision, loyal and sincere," willing to "cooperate...with the current Government."¹⁵⁰

As for Article 3 of the constitution, Córdova argued that it needed to be cleansed of the "socialist" content. Although "Christ was the first socialist of which legend tells us," he suggested, people had altered the humane purpose of socialism, turning it into something "alarming"—including having boys and girls attend school together. Since the application of the article under Cárdenas, coeducation became official policy in public schools. "The immoralities are alarming," Córdova stated, especially "among the docile female youths" who fall victims of the "ill understood coeducation." His objections to the article, however, had apparently nothing

¹⁴⁹ Prbo. Prudencio Lara Bustos, *El cristianismo y los principios rotarios*, August 28, 1946, exp. Trabajos; Archivo 1946-1947, Vol. II, ACRP; José Antonio Félix Castillo, "Sacerdotes Ilustres: Prudencio Lara Bustos," *Pescador*, December 2012, 31. I go into greater detail on the topic of Catholicism in service clubs in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁰ César Córdova, Puntos de vista presentados por el suscrito, a la asamblea Leonística del 30 del actual, respecto al Artículo 3o. Constitucional, October 27, 1941, exp. Cooperación Moral Ante las Autoridades, Caja Archivero 1941-1942, ACLCM.

to do with a religious view. Rather, he argued that ideas foreign to Mexico had "poisoned children with doctrines that are contrary to family, household, and sacred maternity." Public schools needed to be non-ecclesiastical, encourage academic freedom, seek parents' involvement, and private institutions needed to be allowed in Mexico. "We must do something!" he urged his fellow Lions: "It is necessary to contribute toward public and familial peace. It is imperative that [the Lions of Mexico] coordinate ideas," and provide "*apolitical* cooperation to the National Government."¹⁵¹

Córdova's impassioned speech was liked to so much by the Lions of Mexico City that copies of it were forwarded to clubs around the country. Several applauded his initiative and the basic argument of his message. The Lions Club of Veracruz wrote that it "unanimously agreed to support [Cordova's] call," while the Lions of Saltillo congratulated him for speaking as a Lion on behalf of parents "who disagree with the content of that article." Other clubs, like the Lions of Parral, Chihuahua made copies of his speech to distribute them to acquaintances. The Lions also agreed to write directly to the Secretary of Education, requesting that the article be amended.¹⁵²

PROFILE OF THE LIONS

An aspect that made the Lions in Mexico distinct from others was the social composition of most clubs. By the 1940s, the Lions of Mexico in general were much larger clubs than the other service clubs. Rotary clubs followed a strict policy of RI that limited membership by "classification" (meaning profession or line of business), which was monitored by district governors in Mexico. The Lions, both in the United States and Mexico, did not have a system as rigid as Rotary. As a result, the Lions in Mexico after the 1940s tended to have bloated rosters. Internationally, the Mexican Lions clubs were occasionally among the largest in the world. In 1958, the Monterrey Lions was the most populated club with 683, followed by Mexico City with 438 members.

The Lions' selection process suggests that, more than a candidate's line of work or his wealth (which were considered), it was his moral and professional *reputation* that mattered. Arturo Martínez Mihcaus, a candidate who sought membership into the Lions of Mexico City, for example, was a real estate investor with both successes and failures in his business interests. References regarding his personality and reputation, however, were the key concern to the committee reviewing his application. "It is said he was too liberal with his finances" and occasionally gave houses as gifts, "especially to women," the report read, which recommended

¹⁵¹ Emphasis mine. Córdova.

¹⁵² José Rojas, Lions Club of Veracruz, to Lic. César Córdova, Lions Club of Mexico City, November 11, 1941, exp. Cooperación Moral Ante las Autoridades, Caja Archivero 1941-1942, ACLCM; Telegram from Lions Club of Parral, Chihuahua, to Lions Club of Mexico City, November 22, 1941, exp. Cooperación Moral Ante las Autoridades, Caja Archivero 1941-1942, ACLCM; Pedro Quintanilla, Lions Club of Saltillo, to Lic. César Córdova, Lions Club of Mexico City, November 7, 1941, exp. Cooperación Moral Ante las Autoridades, Caja Archivero 1941-1942, ACLCM.

not to offer him membership. Another candidate, Manuel Requena, was a graduate from Cornell University with a degree in civil engineering. After running an unsuccessful family business that ultimately went bankrupt, Requena was unable to repay his outstanding accounts. The committee concluded that he "was a person who was careless with his credit," and for that reason denied him entry. As long as a candidate had a "clean" social reputation and good business record, membership could be offered.¹⁵³

As discussed in Chapter One, service clubs around the globe targeted professionals, business owners, and managers to join their ranks. In Mexico, the same practice was followed by club leadership; however, relatively speaking, the Lions tended to recruit more politicians holding office in regional or federal governments as well as military officers—a pattern not common among Rotary clubs nor Sowers of Friendship. Since the early stages of Lions extension, the Mexican headquarters pursued contacts in government offices. The NALC, for instance, relied on the ties of a fellow Lion member from Veracruz, Carlos Saiden, who "was good friends" with the governors of Yucatan, Tabasco, Chiapas, and Campeche. According to Saiden, he was confident he would be "able to establish clubs" in the state capitals with the assistance of his friends in politics.¹⁵⁴

The Puebla Lions Club also reflected this pattern. It had as members (honorary or active) former governors José Mijares Palencia and Maximino Ávila Camacho (brother of Manuel, President of Mexico), and several state representatives. The Mexico City Lions Club by far had the most impressive roster. Between the 1930s and 1950s, the club had as members the Secretary of Economy Francisco Javier Gaxiola, the Secretary of Education Jaime Torres Bodet, and former presidents of Mexico Abelardo L. Rodríguez, Emilio Portes Gil, and Miguel Alemán Valdéz while he was serving his term in office. There were also a few high-ranking officers of the Navy and Army. Although in some cases, like Alemán Valdéz, these high-level politicians were more honorary than actively involved members, the Lions of Mexico City nevertheless were proud their roster had government VIPs. Other individuals, like the founder of Lions in Mexico, Rodolfo M. Fernández, although not a politician, was a high-level employee in PEMEX who was loyal to the government (recall the Mark Sullivan incident above). Having members of the post-revolutionary regime as fellow Lions, however, did more than enhance the prestige of the organization—it had material and political implications.

THE LIONS OF THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY STATE

The result of having a centralized Lions Club in Mexico, and of promoting sociability with the political elite, was a service organization that was far more supportive of the post-revolutionary regime—especially compared to the Sowers of Friendship. This dynamic was apparent not only in the Mexico City club, but in others throughout the republic. After Ávila

¹⁵³ Membership candidacies for 1940 in Exp. Propositiones de ingreso desechadas; Caja Archivero 1939-1941, ACLCM.

¹⁵⁴ Acta de la Mesa Directiva, June 8, 1936; Volumen 1935-1938, ACLCM.

Camacho launched a countrywide literacy campaign and encouraged national unity in wartime Mexico (more on this below), one Lion from Ciudad Juárez celebrated the president's efforts and made clear that it was their duty as Lions to be in "Solidarity with the politics of the President of the Republic, General Manuel Ávila Camacho, who will go down in history for his two main directives: the principles of national unity and of education in Mexico."¹⁵⁵ This openly supportive attitude from the Lions continued after Ávila Camacho's administration. During Miguel Alemán period in office, (1946-1952) the president of the Lions Club of Mexico City referred to his fellow Lion and president of Mexico in rather grandiloquent terms. "The arrival of the dynamic and university educated *señor Lic. Don Miguel Alemán*," he stated, who had "the vision of a statesman and a sincere smile was necessary to steer so aptly the destinies of Mexico."¹⁵⁶

The personal connections with government officials had the potential to translate into material benefits for the club, as occurred during the Havana Lions International convention in 1940. As mentioned above, the Mexico City Lions Club obtained from the Navy transportation to Cuba aboard a Mexican Navy vessel. And while the Lions paid for most of the travel expenses, a substantial portion of 40,000 pesos was covered by the Secretary of Treasury and Finance. The Secretary of Tourism, Francisco Trejo, also assisted them on the condition that, while in Havana, the Mexican Lions delegation act as representatives of the tourism office, encouraging the other 12,000 Lions at the convention to travel to Mexico. "Without mistake," the head of tourism noted, "the American Lions are potential tourists whom Mexico can win over, if we can entice them to visit us again."¹⁵⁷

As an autonomous service club, however, the Lions of Mexico City also functioned as an interest group, and it attempted to use the ties with the state in ways that benefitted its members. During the Ávila Camacho presidency, for example, the club formed a special "Committee for Moral Cooperation with the Authorities." Through this committee, the Lions seemingly aimed to provide "moral" support to the government's wartime efforts. The committee, in fact, hoped for a direct line of communication with the executive branch to express the concerns of Lions. Its first order of business in 1941 was to urge the federal government to secure imports from the US, which Mexican factories urgently needed for domestic production. Leading the call for machinery and equipment were Lions Antonio Ruiz Galindo (owner of a furniture factory) and Francisco Doria Paz (textile industrialist and founding member of the independent Employers' Union, the COPARMEX).¹⁵⁸ The committee was ultimately granted a meeting with the Secretary of Treasury Francisco Javier Gaxiola (a former Lion), the Minister of Foreign Relations, Ezequiel Padilla, and with the President himself to make their case. Although the Mexican government was in no position to change the policy of the United States, it is significant nonetheless that the club could establish a line that sought to influence the highest office in a

¹⁵⁵ *Memoria de la XI Convención de Clubes de Leones (1945)*, 84.

¹⁵⁶ Speech by Dr. Enrique Ruiz Hurtado, President of the Mexico City Lions Club, November 17, 1949, Exp. Progamas Sesiones-Comidas; Archivero 1949-1950, ACLCM.

¹⁵⁷ Francisco Trejo, Secretario General del Patronato de Turismo, to Secretario de Hacienda.

¹⁵⁸ See Introduction of this dissertation.

country.¹⁵⁹

THE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION CLUBS

The closeness between the Lions of Mexico and the state was noticeable also in the wartime policy of President Ávila Camacho. After Mexico declared war on the Axis nations in 1942, the government issued an appeal to Mexicans, to come together in this time of global crisis. In particular, Ávila Camacho asked rival political factions to make peace—recall that the election results of 1940 were bitterly contested by supporters of Juan Andreu Almazán, who argued they had been rigged in favor of the official candidate, Ávila Camacho. In recent years, the country had also witnessed conflicts between Catholic rebels opposing the anti-clericalism of the state, during the Second Cristero War (1934-1940).

Accordingly, the Ávila Camacho state organized a campaign called "*Acercamiento Nacional*" (roughly the "National Coming-Together" or "National Rapprochement") in September 1942, which former presidents Adolfo de la Huerta, Plutarco Elías Calles, Emilio Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, Abelardo L. Rodríguez, and Lázaro Cárdenas were called upon to attend. All six famously shared the stage with Ávila Camacho outside of the National Palace before thousands of spectators and members of the press in a symbolic event meant to show unity and an end to political divisions. At the beginning of the ceremony, as expected, Calles and Cárdenas refused to shake hands—"only a simpleton would expect Don Plutarco suddenly to acquire the attributes of Saint Francis of Assisi, or General Cardenas to be transformed over night [sic] into Saint Antonio of Padua," noted an American journalist.¹⁶⁰ The sight of six former presidents together nevertheless was a powerful one that would have been unimaginable just a few years prior.

¹⁵⁹ Susan Gauss explains this issue with imports from the US. See: *Made in Mexico*, 178–79.

¹⁶⁰ "United for Mexico," *Des Moines Register*, September 28, 1942, 10.



Figure 6: Manuel Ávila Camacho giving his speech calling for national unity. He is flanked by former presidents, Lázaro Cárdenas (to his *left*) and Plutarco Elías Calles (to his *right*).

Source: <http://fotohistoria-s.blogspot.com/2010/11/unidad-nacional-una-imagen-de-los.html>.

Historians have largely looked at this event as it relates to the Mexican wartime efforts and Ávila Camacho's opportunity to reconcile political factions.¹⁶¹ There was another element to his policy of *Acercamiento Nacional*, however. With the war as the justification, the post-revolutionary state sought also to unite Mexicans and mobilize civil society to carry out activities that would improve their communities. The government then created various National Rapprochement Committees that would organize each "sector" in society. There was one for labor, the national press, industry, commerce, and one for civic associations ("*agrupaciones cívicas*").

To lead Mexico's civic associations, the director of the National Rapprochement committees selected Horacio Casasús who, according to the announcement, was a "prominent member of numerous civic associations." But what figured most prominently in his résumé was that he was the "Governor of the southern territory of the National Association of Lions of the Republic of Mexico," in the words of the Mexico City newspapers.¹⁶² Notably, leading the National Rapprochement Committees, who selected Casasús, was former president of Mexico and also a fellow Lion, Abelardo L. Rodríguez.

To achieve Ávila Camacho's goal of mobilizing civil society, Casasús and his

¹⁶¹ See: Monica A. Rankin, *¡México, La Patria!: Propaganda and Production During World War II* (University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 145–46; Halbert Jones, *The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico: World War II and the Consolidation of the Post-Revolutionary State* (UNM Press, 2014), 105–6.

¹⁶² In addition to being a high-ranking Lions, Casasús was also member of the Jockey Club of Mexico City, had investments in tourism, and was a member of the Hotel Owners Association of Mexico as well as the Mexican Automobile Association. See: "Varias comisiones designan el C. de Acercamiento Nacional," *El Nacional*, August 19, 1942, 2.

collaborators suggested forming service-like clubs, open to adult men and women throughout Mexico. They called them National Rapprochement Clubs (Clubes de Acercamiento Nacional). Casasús used the Lions as a template to form the National Rapprochement (NR) clubs. The organizational structure closely resembled that of the Lions Clubs of Mexico—particularly its hierarchical bureaucracy. In Mexico City was located the "Central Committee" that functioned as the national headquarters, much like the NALC. In each state capital, there would be an NR club in charge of organizing and managing clubs in smaller cities and towns; state clubs would, in turn, report to the Central Committee. The parallels between many of the purposes of the Lions and the state-created NR clubs were evident as well.

Similar to the Lions, the NR clubs were intended to organize a variety of events for the moral, educational, and material improvement of local communities. These included: all-day excursions, luncheons, *fiestas*, art exhibits, and sporting events. NR clubs also would lead fundraisers to build public libraries and schools, organize job fairs and conferences on topics from public hygiene to temperance, and so forth. Much like the international service clubs, these state-created associations sought to encourage agricultural, commercial, and industrial productivity through courses they would teach and printed materials. Also like the service clubs, these were intended for citizens to participate in a non-political and non-religious purpose. The rules stated: "These clubs are not and should not be considered political or sectarian organizations." Furthermore, the clubs were barred from "becoming involved in political struggles."¹⁶³

If the NR clubs replicated many of the Lions clubs' features, as associations encouraged by the government they also sought to advance key the goals of the post-revolutionary state. "The objective of the National Rapprochement Clubs shall be," the committee announced, "to strengthen the fraternal relations among all Mexicans without class or creed distinctions" and to "eliminate irrational provincialisms, hatred, and bitterness" in society. The motto chosen for the clubs clearly reflected Ávila Camacho's purpose: "By getting to know each other, we become a nation." The country in time of war needed "good citizens who know how to honorably cooperate with the authorities," stated the NR directing committee.¹⁶⁴ Clubs would encourage the teaching of civic education in schools as a way to promote loyalty to the state.

The understanding of proper civics, however, was projected through a highly gendered and patriarchal lens. A prosperous and united Mexico required "truthful, resolute men" who, as natural heads of households, could ensure the "integration of the Mexican family." The nation needed in addition women on board this project and the NR clubs could assist by "Teaching Mexican mothers to carry out their maternal obligations." Where possible, under the guidance of men, a female version of the NR clubs could be formed, called the Women's National Rapprochement Clubs (Clubes Femeniles de Acercamiento Nacional), not unlike the Clubes de Damas Leonas. Establishing these, the committee suggested, could "arouse or enhance" women's "domestic education" through classes on nursing or anything else that can "make

¹⁶³ "Constitución y estatutos de los Clubes de Acercamiento Nacional," *El Nacional*, August 21, 1942, 5–6.

¹⁶⁴ "Constitución y estatutos de los Clubes de Acercamiento Nacional."

women's knowledge more useful." The NR clubs were advised also to have a leadership role with Mexican youth. "Instilling in the young the spirit of hard work," stated the directing committee, is "indispensable for the formation of Mexican managers and leaders." Finally, indigenous people in Mexico were still left out of mainstream society. The NR clubs would be in charge of leading a campaign to "Strive for the indigenous peoples to identify with the rest of the country," (not the other way around).¹⁶⁵

Despite the noble goals and hopes for the NR clubs, evidence suggests that they never gained any traction. Among its achievements was the creation of a national holiday still observed today: Teacher's Day, on May 15. In this sense, the National Rapprochement Clubs were a resounding failure. Evidence suggests that few joined the state-sponsored, quasi-service clubs.¹⁶⁶

Nevertheless, NR clubs are significant for two reasons. First, these were state-sponsored associations modeled after the Lions clubs of Mexico. Service clubs by the early 1940s were seen as having potential to actually unite civil society in a supposedly non-political and non-religious space. Second, examining the architects of the NR clubs, namely Horacio Casasús, we are able to see the close ties that the Lions of Mexico established with the post-revolutionary state. In comparison to the Sowers of Friendship and Rotary clubs, the Lions of Mexico, it seems, were more available and willing to collaborate with the government. As we shall see in the next chapters, this pattern was not a blip; rather, it was the beginning of a tendency to engage with political issues among Lions clubs and later other service clubs, which continued for decades.

CONCLUSION

On the eve of the Second World War, the future of American service clubs seemed anything but certain in many parts of the globe. Right-wing authoritarian regimes in Europe and East Asia were placing restrictions on civil freedoms, and Rotary clubs along with other voluntary organizations were either disbanded or went underground. As these public spheres (in the Habermasian sense) contracted, Latin America seemed to offer hopeful prospects for individuals looking for sociability in service clubs. As this chapter has shown, the international headquarters viewed expansion in the continent as the most viable path during the global conflict of the 1930s and 40s. In this regard, the destiny of the service club movement was linked with the fate of the middle class, as Charles Marden suggested in 1935—although not to the middle classes under the boot of fascism.¹⁶⁷ Mexico in this process had a key role. While in occupied

¹⁶⁵ "Constitución y estatutos de los Clubes de Acercamiento Nacional."

¹⁶⁶ "Iniciativa para honrar a las maestras el día quince," *El Nacional*, May 11, 1943, 5. As for NR clubs in the country, I was only able to find traces of two clubs: one in Mexico City and another in the state of Sonora.

¹⁶⁷ "The destiny of the service club beyond the immediate future is linked with the fate of the middle class," wrote Charles Marden in 1935. In his study of Rotary, Lions, and Kiwanis clubs, the American sociologist was the first to note a paradoxical relationship between the expansion of service

France Parisian Rotary members meet in secrecy in hotels and brasseries to avoid notice from the Gestapo, Mexican men and women were filling the halls of Lions, Rotary, and Sowers of Friendship clubs every week, toasting, and debating how to address the wrongs of society—at times in dialogue with the state.¹⁶⁸

The story of the Lions presents a different brand of the service club culture that developed in Mexico. Of course, there were important parallels with the other service clubs, especially in the ways gender and patriarchy informed members' understandings of social order and progress. The spirit and identity of the Lions in Mexico was largely defined by its tense relationship with the Chicago office and by the vitality of Lions of Mexico's national association. The dynamic between the two organizations (Lions International and the National Association of Lions Clubs of Mexico) suggests there were very clear limits to the ability of American institutions to influence Latin Americans. Put bluntly, there was more "Mexicanizing" of the Lions concept, than Americanization of Mexican Lions.

From its early stages, Lions of Mexico was quick to establish ties with individuals connected to the state (regionally or at the federal level), becoming, in some cases, instrumental in the founding of clubs. The comparisons with Rotary and the Sowers of Friendship make this affinity of the Lions with the state more evident. This, however, did not mean that Rotarians and even Sowers could not collaborate and create connections with the post-revolutionary state. As the remaining chapters will show, in the years following World War II, the Mexican state and service clubs were increasingly willing to broker alliances with the state.

clubs and the emergence of fascism. On the one hand, Marden along with other social scientists regarded the service club movement as essentially a middle-class phenomenon. On the other, he noted also that fascism was being interpreted by contemporary observers as a middle-class revolution. Both "movements," he thought shared an affinity with the middle classes. By this logic, Marden wrote, a fascist state "would appear to leave middle class associations [sic], such as the service club, untouched or even strengthened." "In a fascist order," he predicted, "the service club would, no doubt, be tolerated," but with the caveat that "its role as civic booster and community leader would be more than ever subservient to the small dominating group." Charles F. Marden, "Rotary and Its Brothers; an Analysis and Interpretation of the Men's Service Club" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 1935), 157–58.

¹⁶⁸ I borrowed this anecdote of France from de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 74.

CHAPTER 3
BECOMING SOWERS OF FRIENDSHIP:
THE ROTARY CLUB OF MONTERREY
AND THE CARDENISTA STATE

The year 1936 was significant for service clubs in Monterrey, Nuevo León. The new administration of Lázaro Cárdenas had vowed to support the labor movement in the northeastern industrial city, which business owners believed had been infiltrated by communists. This came after Cárdenas implemented a compulsory "socialist" educational curriculum in schools throughout Mexico. Both of these policies were strongly criticized by the Rotary Club, many of whose members were influential men in business and industry. Thus, when the US Ambassador to Mexico and longtime member of the Rotary Club, Josephus Daniels, stated that he did not consider Mexico to be threatened by communists, the Club was incensed by his comments. The Monterrey Rotarians reached out to Rotary International (RI) in Chicago, asking it to demand that Daniels be recalled from his post. RI refused, citing its policy against political involvement. In protest, the 65 members of the Rotary Club of Monterrey renounced their membership and disbanded the club. Determined to continue their challenge against the post-revolutionary state, the former Rotarians formed their own club instead: the Club Sembradores de Amistad (the Sowers of Friendship Club), becoming the first and only independent, nationalist, and pro-Catholic service club in Mexico. By the 1950s, the Sowers of Friendship had expanded into multiple Mexican cities, preaching anti-statism, capitalist development, and an alternative to the post-revolutionary state's embrace of *indigenismo* as a source of national identity: *hispanismo*, which centered on glorifying Mexico's cultural and historic bonds with Spain and Catholicism.

The case involving the Sowers of Friendship Club in Monterrey sheds new light on the nature of *regiomontano* (as locals from Monterrey are called) identity and the reasons behind employer opposition to the post-revolutionary state. Historians have attributed this elite's opposition to the state to government intrusion into local labor issues and, to a lesser extent, on elections. Employers in Mexico's key heavy industry center, the narrative goes, were concerned primarily with their business affairs, suppressing radical labor, and thwarting the influence of state-backed unions. They were pragmatic, influenced by American values, and driven by the desire to accumulate wealth.¹⁶⁹ Other historians have argued that religious concerns figure little into their calculations. Unlike the more "traditional" and Catholic cities in Mexico, such as Puebla or Guadalajara, Monterrey was essentially secular. In their colossal factories filled daily by rivers of blue-collar workers, paternalistic employers used modern managing approaches from their Protestant American neighbors, over Catholic-inspired unions. "Religion," in the words of

¹⁶⁹ In his examination of the Monterrey elite, Alex Saragoza writes that by the 1920s *regiomontanos* had developed into "the standard-bearers of a capitalist opposition to the state." Implicit in this view is that accumulation of wealth was at the core of *regiomontano* identity and of their struggle against with the state. *The Monterrey Elite and the Mexican State, 1880-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 206.

one historian, "played little discernable part in the local's sense of regional identity."¹⁷⁰ Once implemented, the anti-clerical policies under Calles (1926) that wreaked havoc in the center-west of Mexico "barely caused a ripple in more secular Monterrey."¹⁷¹ To the extent that Monterrey is identified with Catholicism it was after the 1930s, when employers began "promoting it as an ideological antidote" to lure popular support against post-revolutionary state policies.¹⁷²

But the emergence of the pro-Catholic Sowers of Friendship in the 1930s makes it clear that this instrumentalist view of Catholicism in Monterrey is inadequate. Instead, it allows us to see Monterrey as a stronghold of Conservative politics from the early post-revolutionary period. Thus, the foundation of the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM) staffed by Jesuit educators in the 1940s, and the city's role as a key center for the conservative National Action Party (PAN), can be seen as having to a certain extent been galvanized by the transformation of the non-religious (and perhaps, at least by implication, even vaguely pro-Protestant) Rotary Club into the openly-Catholic Sembradores.

This chapter focuses on the individuals who came to found the Club Sembradores de Amistad during the confrontation with Cárdenas in 1936. The story of the Sowers is significant because it, first, shows how conservative middle- and upper-class Mexicans organized to challenge government policies in a non-confrontational way under the guise of philanthropic civic associations. Conservative political and cultural ideas in Mexico, then, were produced and circulated in seemingly apolitical spaces of sociability, not just in political parties such as the PAN. Second, it demonstrates that religious sensibilities mattered to *regiomontano* employers not simply as a tool for garnering popular support. It argues that, in addition to state intrusion into labor and local politics, the state's anti-clericalism and compulsory secular education were also elements of fundamental disagreement with the post-revolutionary state. Finally, the dynamic between Monterrey club members and the Rotary headquarters in the US shows there were significant limits to the ability of this American institution to influence local club policy in Mexico. Quite the contrary, Mexican clubmen controlled service clubs and advanced their own agendas.

PART I: CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY, KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

A key, though largely misjudged, aspect of service club members in Monterrey was their relationship to the Catholic Church, particularly through lay associations. In fact, in order to understand the importance of the Lions and Rotary (and later of the Sowers of Friendship) in the northeastern city, it is vital to comprehend the importance of the first US-imported association that attracted businessmen: the Order of the Knights of Columbus. Before the first Rotary and Lions clubs had been established in Monterrey (1922 and 1934, respectively), the Knights of

¹⁷⁰ Michael Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 131.

¹⁷¹ Snodgrass, 131.

¹⁷² Snodgrass, 56–57; Susan Gauss also makes similar claims in *Made in Mexico*, 215.

Columbus, was the most influential businessmen's association in Monterrey. Since its founding in 1921, the Knights assembled the most prominent industrialists and upwardly mobile *regiomontanos* for reasons that drew them later to Rotary and the Lions, including to advance their professional goals and carry out acts of charity. Notably, as the Knights became entangled in anti-state activism, some individuals left the organization and joined Rotary in the 1920s or the Lions in the 1930s. The main difference with service clubs, however, was that the Caballeros de Colón drew men primarily around their shared religious belief in Catholicism.

In common parlance, natives of Monterrey are typically described by Mexicans from other regions as "*codos*" (that is, overly frugal), pragmatic, self-restrained, and hard working. A lesser known characteristic of Monterrey's "captains of industry," as they were referred to, is their religiosity. Several of the most influential businessmen were practicing Catholics: Isaac Garza, Francisco Guadalupe Sada, José A. Muguerza, and José Calderón, all of whom sat on the board of directors of the Cuauhtémoc Brewery and had other lucrative enterprises; the first two were also active members of the Rotary Club of Monterrey. In addition to pursuing their business interests, they held no reservations in professing their Catholic faith. For instance, in April of 1923 the four participated in the Easter celebrations organized by the Archdiocese of Monterrey. In a public demonstration of piety, the exceedingly rich men led the Way of the Cross procession, each carrying on their shoulders the *pallio*, a lavishly decorated canopy covering the image of Christ the Redeemer—a task fit for men of their prestige and status.¹⁷³

Some of these individuals came from families with a strong Catholic tradition. Francisco Sada, who founded the Cuauhtémoc Brewery in the late nineteenth century, christened his son Francisco Guadalupe because he was born on December 12, the Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Francisco Guadalupe Sada and his wife Mercedes had a total of 17 children (13 boys and four girls), 13 of whom were also given the middle name of Guadalupe, in honor of the Mexican patroness.¹⁷⁴

Nor did the members of the industrial elite harbor any misgivings about mixing their business affairs with their religious beliefs. This was especially the case of José A. Muguerza and his sons Fernando, Antonio, and José F. (all three of whom became members of the Sowers of Friendship Club). In early 1930, they began the construction of the first private, state-of-the-art health facility in the city called the Hospital Muguerza. As his biographer recounts, José A. Muguerza was a pious Catholic, who prayed the rosary and slept with a crucifix above his bed. In the same way that they carried out their lives, the Muguerzas wanted the hospital to have a close connection with the Catholic faith. Accordingly, they made arrangements to have the

¹⁷³ Pablo Cervantes: *un sacerdote de su tiempo* (Editorial Jus, 1971), 14–15; José Ortiz Bernal, *Juan José Hinojosa Cantú: siervo de Dios* (Monterrey, México: Gobierno del Estado de Nuevo León, 1994), 14–15.

¹⁷⁴ Better known as Francisco G. Sada, his full name was: Francisco de Paula Guadalupe Sada. Leopoldo Espinosa Benavides, "Marzo 31 de 1945: muere en Monterrey el industrial nuevoleonés Francisco G. Sada," accessed March 21, 2017, <http://elregio.com/editoriales/que-crees-que-paso/105775-marzo-31-de-1945-muere-en-monterrey-el-industrial-nuevoleonés-francisco-g-sada.html>.

hospital staffed by the Sisters of the Incarnate Word, a Catholic nursing order based in San Antonio, Texas, which later ran a nursing school in the hospital.¹⁷⁵

The most compelling evidence of businessmen's ties with the Church, however, was their affiliation to Monterrey's Knights of Columbus chapter. Among the elites who became Knights were several luminaries, such as Adolfo Zambrano and his son Adolfo Jr., (steelworks and banking), Isaac Garza Sada (brewery), Virgilio Garza Jr. (brewery), Luis G. Sada (founder of the COPARMEX), Roberto Riveroll (banking) Constantino de Tárnava (radio), and José Pío Lagüera (Spanish Consul and chamber of commerce member). Evidence suggests that the Hospital Muguerza ownership was also linked to some extent to the Knights of Columbus of Monterrey. A circa 1953 photograph of the nursing schools' graduation ceremony held in one of the hospital's halls shows a row of chairs with the inscription "KofC 2312" (short for Knights of Columbus 2312) on the backrests, which denotes the council or chapter number of the Monterrey Knights.



Figure 7: Graduation ceremony at the Hospital Muguerza. Note the "KofC 2312" on the backrests of the row of chairs in the *foreground*. Undated, circa 1950s.

Source: Rodrigo Mendirichaga, *Solitario y magnífico: Hospital Muguerza, 1934-1994*, 100.6.

Being a wealthy industrialist, however, was not a requirement for membership in the Knights. Some were men in mid-level positions and professionals. Octavio García Corral, for

¹⁷⁵ Rodrigo Mendirichaga, *Solitario y magnífico: Hospital Muguerza, 1934-1994* (Monterrey, México: Hospital José A. Muguerza, S.A. de C.V., 1994), 9, 23-25.

instance, was the assistant to the general manager of the brick factory and later manager at a regional bank. There were also professionals, such as Dr. Juventino Villarreal Muñoz, a prominent gynecologist. Nor was occupation a factor that determined membership, as it was for the Lions and Rotary clubs. Nevertheless, there is no evidence of men from humble backgrounds who were Knights. In this sense, the Knights of Columbus practiced a degree of filtering based on socio-economic standing in the way that service clubs did later.¹⁷⁶

Locally, the Caballeros de Colón began establishing a reputation of serving their community through charitable acts similar to those the Rotary and the Lions clubs would carry out in later years. For example, on Christmas the Knights pooled their resources to give presents and Christmas trees to underprivileged families in Monterrey. Like the Rotarians and Lions, the Knights of Columbus publicized in local newspapers their donation drives, the construction of daycare centers for working-class families, and the building of a public park for Monterrey's youth.¹⁷⁷

In addition to its philanthropic goals, the Knights functioned also as a semi-exclusive business club.¹⁷⁸ Unlike the chambers of commerce and industry, which already existed, the

¹⁷⁶ On businessmen joining the Knights, see "Iniciación de nuevos Caballeros de Colón," *La Prensa*, March 30, 1922; The profiles of the individuals mentioned here were compiled from: Agustín Basave and Federico Gómez, *Quién es cada quién en Monterrey: diccionario biográfico de los actuales y más destacados profesionistas y hombres de negocios de Monterrey (1948)* (Monterrey, N.L.: Impr. Monterrey, 1948); Oscar Flores Torres, *Monterrey en la Revolución* (San Nicolás de los Garza, N.L.; San Pedro Garza García, N.L., México: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León; Universidad de Monterrey, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2010), 17; Javier Rojas Sandoval, "Pioneros de la industria del cemento en el Estado de Nuevo León, México: Cementos Mexicanos, S.A.," *Ingenierías* 14, no. 50 (2011): 3; regarding Roberto Riveroll: Excelsior de México newspaper clipping, May 25, 1925, expediente 69, caja 296, Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (hereafter DGIPS), AGN; Edgardo Reyes Salcido, *Don Isaac Garza* (Fondo Editorial de NL, 2010); Alex Saragoza, *The Monterrey Elite and the Mexican State, 1880-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); "Mexican Broadcasting Stations," *White's Radio Log* 12, no. 2 (April 1935): 11; Oscar Flores Torres, *Monterrey, una ciudad internacional (1910-1980)*, vol. 1, 2 vols., Monterrey, origen y destino (Monterrey, México: Municipio de Monterrey, 2009); Villarreal Muñoz J, "Contribución de la Sociedad de Ginecología y Obstetricia de Monterrey al desarrollo de la gineco-obstetricia en el Norte de la República durante los últimos diez años.," *Ginecología y obstetricia de México* 79, no. 3 (2011): 177–78.

¹⁷⁷ Saragoza also noted the penchant among elites to join the Knights. *The Monterrey Elite and the Mexican State, 1880-1940*, 171; for examples of charitable activities by the Knights, see: "Árboles de Navidad, dulces y juguetes para los niños pobres," *El Porvenir*, October 19, 1924; "Ni un solo niño quedará sin obsequio esta Navidad," *El Porvenir*, December 8, 1925; "Se fundará la Casa de la Infancia, anexa al Colegio Eucarístico," *El Porvenir*, February 4, 1926, 4.

¹⁷⁸ Businessmen's affinity to the Knights of Columbus was not by any means exclusive to Monterrey. Researchers have pointed this similar socio-economic profile of Knights chapters in other parts of Mexico. Randall Scott Hanson discovered that the Knights, in fact, had been brought to Mexico by prominent American businessmen (bankers and railroad investors), which attracted middle- and upper-class Mexican Catholics to its ranks. See "The Day of Ideals: Catholic Social Action in the Age of the Mexican Revolution, 1867-1929" (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1994), 150–51; likewise, the Knights of Columbus in Puebla originally attracted elite textile industrialists. See: José Luis Sánchez

Knights limited membership to individuals who were devout Catholic and sought to extend the influence of the Church. At the same time, the Knights offered prime opportunities for making business deals and networks, both within the local chapter and beyond. The proximity to the US-Mexico border afforded Monterrey Knights prospects to establish links with American chapters, a practice which also anteceded a key feature of the Rotarians and Lions in Monterrey. Brotherhoods from both sides of the border regularly held joint assemblies, gathering hundreds of Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and Anglo-Americans. In 1924, for example, close to 200 Knights from Laredo, Texas were to a lunch in their honor at the Cuauhtémoc Brewery by their counterparts in Monterrey. The luncheon was followed by a tour of the glassworks factory and later a dinner at the Casino de Monterrey. The local newspaper, *El Porvenir*, welcomed their arrival, highlighting that among the visitors were Knights who were also "prominent businessmen, bankers, and industrialists from the state of Texas."¹⁷⁹

The Caballeros de Colón was additionally appealing because it addressed a key issue for business owners: employee-employer relations. Indeed, the ideology of the Knights was based on the teachings of Social Catholicism—a late nineteenth-century doctrine developed as a Catholic response to socialist and anarcho-syndicalist solutions to class conflict.¹⁸⁰ There seems to be no doubt that industrialists in Monterrey were already applying American-borrowed methods of scientific management (such as Taylorism) in their factories. However, historians may have too readily dismissed the likelihood that Social Catholicism complemented these ideas.¹⁸¹ The timing in which these ideas circulated in Monterrey certainly makes sense. Monterrey businessmen were first exposed to Taylorism by the turn of the twentieth-century. Catholic lay associations that taught social action emerged in Monterrey *after* the 1910s. By the time Calles had taken office in 1924, the city of Monterrey had active chapters of the ACJM, the Catholic Ladies Union, the Professional Union for Female Catholic Employees (Unión Profesional de Empleadas Católicas), and the Knights of Columbus.¹⁸² Moreover, the fact that

Gavi, *El espíritu renovado: la Iglesia católica en México. De la nueva tolerancia al Concilio Vaticano II. 1940-1968: Puebla: un escenario regional* (Puebla, México: Plaza y Valdes, 2012), 82–83.

¹⁷⁹ “Los Caballeros de Colón del Consejo del Estado de Texas, visitarán hoy a la Ciudad de Monterrey,” *El Porvenir*, May 22, 1924; “Fue solemnemente inaugurada la convención de Caballeros de Colón, en Laredo, Tex.,” *La Prensa*, May 22, 1924; “Los delegados de los C. de Colón en Monterrey,” *La Prensa*, May 23, 1924.

¹⁸⁰ On Social Catholicism in Mexico, see: Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, *El catolicismo social: un tercero en discordia: Rerum novarum, la “cuestión social” y la movilización de los católicos mexicanos, 1891-1911* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1991), 97; Jorge Adame Goddard, *El pensamiento político y social de los católicos mexicanos, 1867-1914*, 2 (México: Instituto Mexicano de Doctrina Social Cristiana, 1991), 183.

¹⁸¹ Citing Snodgrass, Gauss claims that “company paternalism ‘developed as an institutionalized system of labor relations after the Revolution’ rather than as an outcome of late nineteenth-century Vatican teachings.” Instead, both argue that Taylorism and other North American ideas seem to have been prominent among industrial leaders. Gauss, *Made in Mexico*, 215; In particular Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey*, 56–57.

¹⁸² *Pablo Cervantes*, 33, 42–43, 45–47.

several important business owners were Knights makes it reasonable to think that Social Catholicism spoke to them.¹⁸³ While the social composition of the groups and their activities suggests that they functioned as a hub for businessmen and employers, we must not overlook that the association also brought men together around shared religious beliefs, which became entangled in post-revolutionary politics.

During the 1920s in Mexico, membership in the Order of the Knights of Columbus was synonymous with involvement in anti-state politics. Before the outbreak of the Cristero War (1926-1929), the Knights in Mexico were already a target of anti-clerical elements within the state and among everyday citizens. During the presidencies of Álvaro Obregón and Calles, it was not unusual for government bureaucracies to terminate employees for supposed affiliations to the Order. Factories connected to the CROM, for instance, banned the Knights of Columbus in Mexico City from proselytizing to workers. Prior to the implementation of Calles' anti-clerical laws in 1926 and the ensuing Catholic rebellions in the center-west of Mexico, the federal government already began to monitor the Knights and other "religious fanatics" out of concern they might be involved in the rebellion. The General Directorate of Political and Social Investigation (Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, or IPS) was in charge of collecting information on the Order. At the same time, the IPS relied on Mexican consulates in the United States to provide information on nationals living or traveling abroad with possible links to the Catholic resistance. Reports confirmed that the Knights were part of a broader, transnational network of Catholics aiding the opposition efforts. Knights members throughout Mexico were making financial contributions, carrying out propaganda, hiding priests from authorities, and trafficking firearms across state and international lines. And they were doing so with the assistance from their brethren Knights on both borders: the United States to the north and in Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras to the south.¹⁸⁴

In Monterrey, within months after the local Knights was organized in 1921, reports stated that unidentified individuals were distributing pamphlets that attacked the Catholic association. In a separate case, the politician and revolutionary general Aarón Sáenz from Nuevo León

¹⁸³ Among the pioneers of the Social Catholicism movement in Monterrey was the priest, Pablo Cervantes. One of the earliest Catholic social action associations he founded was the Youth Guard of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Guardia Juvenil del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús), which in 1919 changed its name and became a local chapter of the Mexican Catholic Youth Association (Asociación Católica Juvenil Mexicana, or ACJM). See *Pablo Cervantes*, 33, 42-47.

¹⁸⁴ In 1925, for instance, the DGIPS was reporting on the activities of the Knights within Mexico and also in the United States. Multiple files can be found in caja 296, DGIPS, AGN. Reports of collaboration between Central American and Mexican Knights are in the file, Luis G. Hernández. Sus Actividades sediciosas en la frontera con Guatemala y Belice, December 29, 1927, fojas 8-9, exp. 15, caja 230, DGIPS, AGN; The Knights of Columbus was not the only organization that provided assistance to the Cristeros. For the most complete treatment of this transnational aid effort during the Cristiada, see: Julia G. Young, "The Calles Government and Catholic Dissidents: Mexico's Transnational Projects of Repression, 1926-1929," *The Americas* 70, no. 1 (June 19, 2013): 63-91; and also her book, *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles, and Refugees of the Cristero War* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

openly referred to the association in 1923 as an "enemy of the state."¹⁸⁵ During the Cristiada revolt, the Knights of Columbus of Monterrey also participated in the resistance during its early stages—albeit in a non-violent way. On March 8, 1926, local newspapers reported that "the religious question, which had not led to any difficulties" in the state of Nuevo León, had finally caused the first incident. The previous month President Calles issued an order requiring state governments to prohibit private schools from officiating religious services, placing religious images in classrooms, and teaching a religious curriculum. Shortly after, the governor of Nuevo León, Jerónimo Siller, began dispatching police inspectors to enforce the new law. When agents arrived at the School for Women of the Sacred Heart (Colegio de las Damas del Corazón Sagrado) with the intention of sealing the chapel doors shut, an incident occurred involving two members of the Knights who came to the dean's aid: Virgilio Garza Jr., brewery director, and Roberto Riveroll, prominent banker in the northeast region and Grand Deputy Knight of Columbus. Accounts differ on what exactly took place at the school's chapel; however, by day's end both Riveroll and Garza had been arrested and charged with obstruction of justice and sedition. The next morning Garza was released after his father (a lawyer) posted his bail, while Riveroll remained in custody for several more days before being let go for lack of evidence.¹⁸⁶

Following the incident with the School for Women, the mayor of Monterrey vowed to enforce the 1926 Calles Law. This seems to have been more rhetoric than actual policy on behalf of the mayor. Catholic schools in Monterrey, which were supposed to adopt a secular curriculum, continued to instruct their students following their old religious-centered

¹⁸⁵ For blacklisted federal and state employees, see Adición a la lista de Caballeros de Colón del Gobierno del Distrito, Secretaría de Comunicaciones y otros, circa 1926, foja 127, exp. 69, caja 296, DGIPS, AGN; and also "Serán Cesados del Caballeros de Colón en los cargos públicos," *El Porvenir*, January 18, 1923; and "Fue designado nuevo sub-secretario de hacienda," *El Porvenir*, January 20, 1923; on CROM workers incident, see: *El Sol de México* newspaper clipping, November 29, 1925, foja 18, exp. 69, caja 296, DGIPS, AGN; on anti-Knight pamphlets in Monterrey, see "Hojas sueltas contra los Caballeros de Colón," *El Porvenir*, November 22, 1921; on Sáenz's attacks on the Knights, see "Esa candidatura será sangrienta, le dicen al Gral. Aarón Sáenz," *Época*, March 25, 1923.

¹⁸⁶ On the effects of Calles' order banning religious ceremonies in schools from Nuevo León, see: Juana Idalia Garza Cavazos, *La educación socialista en Nuevo León, 1934-1940: la atmósfera regiomontana*, 1. ed (Ciudad Universitaria: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2010), 82; the incident involving Riveroll and Garza is from "Espéranse instrucciones de la secretaria de gobernación," *El Porvenir*, March 9, 1926; "La política anti-católica ocasionó un choque en la ciudad de Monterrey," *La Prensa*, March 8, 1926; "El gran diputado de los Caballeros de Colón de Monterrey, aprehendido," *La Prensa*, March 9, 1926; "Roberto Riveroll fue puesto en libertad por falta de méritos," *La Prensa*, March 13, 1926; "Se calmó la agitación religiosa en Monterrey," *La Prensa*, March 14, 1926.

programs.¹⁸⁷ The mayor, however, vowed to crack down on the Knights of Monterrey whom he considered to be "traitors to the nation."¹⁸⁸

Undeterred by the mayor's threats, the *regiomontano* Knights continued to hold clandestine meetings throughout 1926, on which the ISP was well informed. The agency compiled a list of Knights but noted also that individuals not affiliated with the Order were also participating. Among those identified as Knights were several leading businessmen, including Virgilio Garza Jr. and Roberto Riveroll, Pablo Salas y López (insurance firm), and Ramón Elizondo (banker). Other elite industrialists were also reported to have attended the gatherings: Fernando Zambrano and his son Fernando Jr. (mining and retail), Roberto G. Sada (insurance firm) and his brother Luis G. Sada (brewery and later co-founder of the COPARMEX), and an unnamed representative of the millionaire José Calderón.¹⁸⁹

The Knights also invited the local press to their sessions: from *El Sol de Monterrey* was the editor Alfonso Junco (later director the Catholic right-wing magazine, *Ábside*) and Federico Gómez García, director of *El Porvenir*. Government agents reported that the Catholic "subversives" were likely funding anti-Calles propaganda printed with *El Porvenir's* rotary presses. The ISP informants also noted that the personal connections between members of the Order and the banking sector allowed the organization to provide financial support to priests hiding in the United States. In particular, Ramón Elizondo in his capacity as president of the Banco de Nuevo León allegedly had wired money to the Banco Mexicano located in San Antonio, Texas.¹⁹⁰

As in chapters from other Mexican cities, the Knights of Columbus in Monterrey did not disband as a result of the anticlericalism of the state. Rather, the *regiomontano* Knights went underground during the Cristero rebellion, likely fearing further persecution from authorities. However, it is clear that in early 1920s Monterrey, the most influential businessmen's association

¹⁸⁷ Juana Idalia Garza Cavazos, "En defensa de la religión: los artificios del 'Colegio de Las Damas'" (IV Coloquio de Humanidades, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la UANL, Monterrey, México, 2010), <http://www.filosofia.uanl.mx:8080/cuartocoloquiohumanidades>.

¹⁸⁸ "El gran diputado de los Caballeros de Colón de Monterrey, aprehendido."

¹⁸⁹ For the list of Knights of Columbus attending meetings, see: Informando sobre cierto lugar, en Monterrey, N.L., en donde se verifican trabajos de conspiración, July 9, 1926, foja 47, exp. 69, caja 296, DGIPS, AGN; Memorandum: Actividades sediciosas en Monterrey, N.L., June 15, 1926, fojas 56-57, exp. 69, caja 296, DGIPS, AGN; reports on funds going into the U.S. are in: Informando sobre remisiones de fondos destinados para actividades Católicas, July 26, 1926, foja 58, exp. 69, caja 296, DGIPS, AGN; Francisco R. Canseco. Sus actividades sediciosas como Caballero de Colón en la frontera norte del País, 1927, fojas 1-6, exp. 9, caja 226, DGIPS, AGN; Juan Ochoa Ramos. Sus Actividades sediciosas en conexión con los elementos rebeldes que radican en Estados Unidos, August 1927, fojas 1-7, exp. 22, caja 231, DGIPS, AGN; Apartado Postal 404, S. Antonio Tex. Investigar las actividades sediciosas en contra de nuestro Gobierno, de la persona o personas que tengan dicho apartado, 1927, fojas 1-4, exp. 40, caja 231, DGIPS, AGN.

¹⁹⁰ Informando sobre cierto lugar, en Monterrey, N.L., en donde se verifican trabajos de conspiración.

was the Knights of Columbus. It is important to underscore that the majority of these men collaborating with the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic resistance became members of the Rotary Club in the 1920s and of the Lions Club later in the 1930s. It should not surprise that among the architects of the powerful Employers Unions (the COPARMEX) were also members of the Knights of Columbus of Monterrey: Luis G. Sada and Virgilio Garza Jr. During the Cárdenas administration, these same individuals, along with other actors, continued to oppose federal policies, whether they were anticlerical or favored the labor movement. By the 1930s, their strategies became more complex, involving massive demonstrations, boycotts, and organizing in different kinds of civic associations including service clubs. It is very plausible that the political involvement of the Knights compelled members to regroup in more secular associations, such as the COPARMEX or in service clubs like the Rotary and Lions.

PART II: SERVICE CLUBS IN MONTERREY

As an expanding center of heavy industry, 1920s Monterrey was an obvious choice for Rotary and later Lions International to form new clubs. Rotary of Monterrey was organized in 1922, becoming the second in Mexico after the club in the capital. Rotarians from McAllen, Texas, in fact, presented the charter to the Monterrey club—further evidence of the close ties between the two neighboring states. The Lions of Monterrey, established in 1934, though not the second club in Mexico, was one of the first to have been organized. The twelve-year difference between the two gave Rotary the upper hand in Monterrey, attracting the city's most powerful businessmen. Within the ranks of Rotary were Benjamin Salinas and Joel Rocha, founders of the furniture manufacturing firm and retail store "Salinas y Rocha," Roberto Garza Sada, co-owner of the Cuauhtémoc Brewery, and Andrés Chapa, owner of a major retail chain. The Lions Club, on the other hand, had more professionals and employees in middle- and upper-management positions. For example, the Lion Arturo J. Rodríguez was manager of merchandise traffic at the brewery, and Manuel M. Pier, was the station operator at a local radio. Others worked within their professions, like Antonio de la Garza, a medical doctor, or Thomas Escamilla, who was an accountant and lecturer at the state university.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ "McAllen Rotarians Deliver Charter to Monterrey Club," *Mercedes Tribune (Mercedes, Texas)*, December 20, 1922; for Manuel M. Pier, see: "North American B.C. Stations by Frequencies," *Radio Index*, January 1936, 26; "Mexican Broadcasting Stations," 11; and for Arturo J. Rodríguez, see: Basave and Gómez, *Quién es cada quién en Monterrey, 1948*, 152.

Occupation	Rotary Club	Lions Club
Bureaucrats	5% (1)	0% (0)
Professionals	0% (0)	40% (10)
Managers	27% (6)	24% (6)
Business owners	68% (15)	36% (9)

Table 6: Occupational distribution of Rotary and Lions Clubs of Monterrey, 1920s-30s. Figures in parenthesis denote number of individuals. (See Chapter One for my methodological approach to these four occupational categories.)

Like service clubs all over the world, the Monterrey Rotary and Lions led charitable activities benefitting the less fortunate. Rotarians worked closely with the local youth, sponsoring Boy Scout troops and building public recreational facilities. They also carried out projects to improve the city, such as reforestation campaigns. The Lions in the 1930s also collaborated by helping people with vision impairments (following their international mission) and reorganizing the local fire department. Club members, however, also began to use their organizations in political ways. As we shall see in the following section, their political involvement peaked in 1936 with anti-unionist and anti-communist activities.¹⁹² However, well before the confrontation with Cárdenas, the Rotary Club of Monterrey in particular was involved in resolving labor disputes.

In 1927, for example, employees from the Peñoles Smelting Company went on strike after management ignored complaints that fumes were affecting their health. Rather than upgrading the anti-pollutant devices (as city authorities had ordered previously), ownership instead dismissed the striking workers. Residents of the surrounding working-class neighborhood organized to protest by gathering tens of hundreds of signatures demanding that the mayor intervene on their behalf. The municipal government sided with the workers and placed an embargo on the smelting plant, which halted operations in early June.¹⁹³

¹⁹² For examples of charitable work by Rotary of Monterrey, see: Letter from Rotary Club of Monterrey to Regidores del R. Ayuntamiento, August 2, 1927, foja s/n, exp. 8, vol. 519, Sección: Correspondencia, Monterrey Contemporáneo, Archivo Histórico Municipal (hereafter MC, AHM); *Proceedings: Sixteenth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1925), 140; Arthur Melville, “Service for Country,” *The Rotarian*, July 1928, 16–17; and for the Lions Club: Manuel Pérez Zozaya, vice president of the Lions Club of Monterrey, to Leopoldo Treviño Garza, Mayor of Monterrey, July 2, 1937, foja 552, exp. 1937-1942, vol. T-523, MC, AHM, <http://archivohistorico.monterrey.gob.mx/index.php/coleccion/verimagenes/12238?c=423> [Accessed on 3/9/2017].

¹⁹³ “La Fundición de Peñoles suspende sus trabajos,” *La Prensa*, June 6, 1927; Convenio celebrado entre los Sres. Jesús M. Salinas, Alcalde Primero de la Ciudad de Monterrey, N.L., Heriberto

Seeking to mediate to the conflict, Joel Rocha and José Rivero from the Rotary Club of Monterrey along with representatives of the chamber of mining, Luis G. Sada, José Treviño, and José F. Ortiz, organized talks between company officials and city hall. Their "sole objective," they argued, "was to procure a resolution to the conflict" and resume operations at the foundry. After negotiating with the mayor, management at the smelting plant promised to reinstate the suspended employees and make modifications to reduce the pollutants in exchange for having the sanctions lifted. Rotary's involvement shows that resolving tensions between employers and labor was a role that it wanted to embrace. However, the Rotarians' decision to intervene was not just done out of an interest in the common good. One of the members of the club, Adolfo Zambrano Jr., had a personal stake in the conflict, which made Rotary's participation more compelling. The Peñoles plant was a family-owned business that was founded by his father, and Zambrano Jr. held a high-level position.¹⁹⁴ By the 1930s, Rotary and the Lions clubs increasingly became more directly involved in politics. To understand this development, it is important to first sketch out the tensions between business and labor, and between businessmen and the national state.

CARDENISMO IN MONTERREY

The story of the Monterrey elites' confrontation with the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas and its opposition to the post-revolutionary state has been a subject studied by historians.¹⁹⁵ I will not retell it here, but will add two important and related factors that must be considered. The first involves the architects of the Nationalist Civic Action (Acción Cívica Nacionalista, or ACN), which was a cross-class, grassroots organization to channel conservative opposition in 1936 and is considered the forerunner to the PAN. The second concerns the participation of the Lions and Rotary clubs of Monterrey during the confrontation. Cárdenas' influence on state elections and within labor unions infuriated elites and led to massive demonstrations, the shutdown of factories in protest, and clashes in early 1936. According to the scholarship, the confrontation with Cárdenas prompted employers to pursue several short- and long-term tracks to push back against the state's interference, from supporting the Nazi-sympathizing Golden Shirts (*Camisas Doradas*) to attack "red" unionists to continuing to fund company unions.

Hines y Lic. Santiago Zambrano, en representación de la Cía Minera de Peñoles S.A., June 6, 1927, fojas s/n, vol. 516, Sección: Industriales y Empresas, MC, AHM.

¹⁹⁴ Convenio celebrado entre los Sres. Jesús M. Salinas, Alcalde Primero de la Ciudad de Monterrey, N.L., Herberto Hines y Lic. Santiago Zambrano, en representación de la Cía Minera de Peñoles S.A.; Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey*, 110; for Zambrano's links to the smelting plant: Basave and Gómez, *Quién es cada quién en Monterrey, 1948*, 184; Mario Cerutti, *Burguesía y capitalismo en Monterrey, 1850-1910* (Fondo Editorial de NL, 2006), 59.

¹⁹⁵ Saragoza, *The Monterrey Elite and the Mexican State, 1880-1940*, chap. 8; Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey*, chap. 8 and 9; Gauss, *Made in Mexico*, chap. 6.

Historians also noted that elites attempted to marshal grassroots support through the short-lived precursor to the PAN, the ACN.¹⁹⁶

Leadership presented the ACN in February 1936 as an inclusive civic organization that gathered women and men, "rich and poor, workers and peasants, Catholics and Protestants, masons and freethinkers, educated and non-educated, young and old." As historians have noted, its founders were among Monterrey's most renowned businessmen and opponents of Cárdenas. However, many of them were also members of the Rotary Club and/or affiliated to Catholic lay organizations, including: Roberto Garza Sada (Rotary), Joel Rocha (Rotary), Virgilio Garza Jr. (K of C and Rotary), Andrés Chapa (K of C and Rotary), Santiago Roel (Rotary), and Bernardo Elosúa (Catholic Action).¹⁹⁷

The ACN claimed to instill nationalism, protect Mexican family values, seek the economic and moral uplifting of the working classes, and to promote a "perfect harmony among all citizens." Its real objective, however, was to coordinate a national grassroots opposition against Cárdenas without appearing too confrontational. Instead, ACN leaders expressed its mission to combat against its "irreconcilable enemy," the "communist hydra," which the nation's "decadent leaders" had brought into Mexico.¹⁹⁸ Despite professing civic virtue and moral rectitude, within months of its founding, tens of dozens of ACN members became embroiled in a violent confrontation with CTM militants, which left dozens injured and three killed. Police arrested close to six hundred ACN sympathizers, among whom at least twenty-eight were women. In the aftermath, a judge granted an appeal that allowed the ACN to exist; however, by then the association had lost its reputation and was disbanded.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey*, 219; Gauss, *Made in Mexico*, 219.

¹⁹⁷ To my knowledge, there are no records in existence of the short-lived ACN. I collected the names of ACN members and its goals from the following newspaper articles and government documents: "Acción Cívica Nacionalista en Monterrey," *La Prensa*, February 25, 1936; Arturo García Ramírez, "¿Qué pasa con nosotros?," *La Prensa*, July 31, 1936; "10,000 personas en un mitín en Monterrey," *La Prensa*, July 1, 1936; "500 prominentes vecinos de Monterrey Aprehendidos," *La Prensa*, July 31, 1936; "A los Neo-Leoneses Residentes en San Antonio y en el Edo. de Texas," *La Prensa*, April 22, 1936; Arturo García Ramírez, "Un comentario sincero," *La Prensa*, October 1, 1936; Report from Edward I. Nathan, American Consul General, July 30, 1936, file 800/711, Foreign Service Post, Monterrey, Recond Group (hereafter RG) 84; National Archives College Park (hereafter NACP); Report from Edward I. Nathan, American Consul General, August 3, 1936, file 800/714, Foreign Service Post, Monterrey, RG 84; NACP; Report from Edward I. Nathan, American Consul General, August 4, 1936, file 800/715, Foreign Service Post, Monterrey, RG 84; NACP.

¹⁹⁸ García Ramírez, "¿Qué pasa con nosotros?"

¹⁹⁹ The details of these events were gathered from: "500 prominentes vecinos de Monterrey Aprehendidos"; "Enérgica protesta al Gral. Cárdenas," *La Prensa*, August 1, 1936; "Nada se hará en el asunto de los cívicos," *La Prensa*, August 15, 1936; "500 Held in Mexico Jail," *Heraldo de Brownsville*, August 2, 1936; Report from Edward I. Nathan, American Consul General, July 30, 1936; Report from Edward I. Nathan, American Consul General, August 3, 1936; also covered in Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey*, 219–21.

Scholars have suggested that conservative opposition to the post-revolutionary state continued with the emergence of the PAN in 1939, which was backed by the Monterrey elites.²⁰⁰ Employers, however, used an additional strategy to challenge the state beyond party politics and beyond Catholic lay associations. Well before the PAN (and throughout most of the tenure of the PRI), the elites and middle classes of Monterrey were already using a less combative approach than the Knights of Columbus and the ACN: the seemingly apolitical service clubs.

THE POLITICS OF SERVICE

During the 1936 confrontation between employers and organized labor, the involvement of Monterrey's Lions and Rotary clubs was anything but discrete. In the days leading up to the mass demonstration and the 48-hour factory lockout, both clubs published insertions in local newspapers, denouncing the alleged communist infiltration and exhorting the public to join. Playing on the regional pride of *regiomontanos*, the Lions Club urged citizens to "send a bold message" to the rest of the nation: "Monterrey opposes communism, demolisher of property and families." The Rotary Club, for its part, also issued a statement that read: "Being peace and fraternity ideals of this Club, we cannot remain indifferent to the fratricidal struggle, which dissolutive elements attempt to provoke. United with the purpose of serving our community, we will participate in the Demonstration on [February] the 5th. WE INVITE YOU." On the day of the protests, Lions and Rotarians marched together with members of the COPARMEX, chambers of commerce, company unions, and others to denounce the so-called threat of communism.²⁰¹

The appeals and actions of the Lions and Rotary clubs are important because they show that members thought of their organizations as instruments to influence politics. Days after the protests, however, the image of both clubs, as *apolitical* institutions with ties to the United States, became compromised. The U.S. Ambassador and member of Rotary, Josephus Daniels, made comments to the *Los Angeles Times* that sparked outrage among service club members in Monterrey. It was the latest incident involving controversial remarks made by the ambassador.²⁰² In Mexican newspapers, Daniels appeared to downplay the severity of communism in Mexico, which prompted *regiomontano* businessmen to demand an explanation from the U.S. Consulate in Monterrey. Consul Edward I. Nathan wrote to Daniels informing that

²⁰⁰ Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey*, 219; Gauss, *Made in Mexico*, 219; Gustavo Herón Pérez Daniel, *Los primeros años del PAN en Nuevo León, 1939-1946: una historia del desarrollo organizativo* (San Nicolás de los Garza, Nuevo León: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2002), 64–67, 123–24.

²⁰¹ "Invitación," *El Porvenir*, February 4, 1936; "El Club de Leones de Monterrey," *El Porvenir*, February 4, 1936.

²⁰² In 1934, Daniels praised the educational reform in Mexico and quoted president Calles, which sparked a controversy among Catholics in Mexico and the United States. For this incident see: "Daniels Disclaims Hurting Catholics," *New York Times*, October 18, 1934; "Fight Rages on Daniels," *Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 1934; "Mexico Charges Clerics Provoke Foreign Attacks," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 28, 1934.

his comments had "aroused considerable resentment in local business and industrial circles" given that the employers based their mass protests "on the existence of this —ism in Mexico." According to Nathan, the businessmen of Monterrey charged Daniels with stating that "It was untrue that communism existed in Mexico" and that, furthermore, "there was no violence" in Mexico. Daniels, however, replied that his comments to the *Times* had been misconstrued. He had mentioned to the reporter that the Mexican government was "not seeking to gain something for nothing by force and violence." Regarding the issue of communism, Daniels stated, "A man would be very stupid to say there were no communists in Mexico or no communists in the United States." What he had meant was that Mexico was not under a communist state. "Mexico is rather a socialistic country," he explained, "Her people are constantly trying to improve their condition of living. They want to secure the education of their children and secure ownership of land."²⁰³

Following the protests and confrontation with Cárdenas, Ambassador Daniels' comments came at an inopportune moment for *regiomontano* service club members. To Rotarians, it was unfathomable that the U.S. ambassador would downplay the activities of communists. But perhaps what made this worse was that a fellow member of Rotary could utter such comments. (Before becoming an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Mexico City, Daniels was affiliated to the Rotary Club of Raleigh, N.C.). Incensed by these developments, the Monterrey club appealed directly to Rotary International, requesting that the headquarters demand the recall of Daniels to the Department of State. Rotary International, however, replied negatively stating that "political discussions or participation in political action was against the principles of the organization." Without the assistance of the institution that openly rejected communism and promoted a common front against it, the Monterrey Rotarians were left with few allies. Where could they turn to for support?²⁰⁴

The Lions of Monterrey, on the other hand, remained notoriously silent with regards to Daniels. They emitted no opinion against the ambassador and refrained from protesting to Lions International or the main Lions office in Mexico City. There is also no indication that the Lions or the headquarters in Mexico City voiced any further protests to Cárdenas. Most likely, the silence was due to the fact that the Lions of Mexico maintained a much closer relationship with the post-revolutionary party than Rotary. In fact, the Monterrey Lions Club leadership a year

²⁰³ The interview was first published in: "Mexico Paid High Tribute," *Los Angeles Times*, February 14, 1936; in Monterrey it appeared the following day in: "Que México es socialista, dijo Daniels," *El Porvenir*, February 15, 1936; for the exchanges between consul Nathan and ambassador Daniels, see: Edward I. Nathan, US Consul, to Josephus Daniels, US Ambassador, March 18, 1936, file 6, box 646, JDP-LOC; and Josephus Daniels, US Ambassador, to Edward I. Nathan, US Consul of Monterrey, March 26, 1936, file 6, box 646, JDP-LOC.

²⁰⁴ Report from Henry S. Waterman, American Consul General, October 16, 1945, page 5, file 800.Sembradores de Amistad, Monterrey, General Records (hereafter GR) 1936-1958, Box 5, RG 84; NACP.

later regretted their involvement in the boycotts, noting that engaging in politics had affected the club's public image.²⁰⁵

The Rotary Club with the city's most influential industrialists, on the other hand, felt "betrayed" by the US ambassador (and fellow Rotarian) and by RI. Moreover, it is quite likely that they expected Rotary International to support their cause—after all, the Knights of Columbus in the United States had previously condemned Daniels for being soft on communism in Mexico.²⁰⁶ Why would RI not do the same? The denial from Rotary International made it clear to Rotarians in Monterrey that membership in an organization that did not fully represent their interests was meaningless. In a final act of defiance, the Rotary Club of Monterrey submitted a letter of renunciation to Chicago headquarters, effectively dissolving the club in March of 1936. The now-former Rotarians, however, were determined to continue their opposition against the national state.

PART III: THE SOWERS OF FRIENDSHIP CLUB

Though disillusioned by Rotary International's policy, the former Rotarians believed that, at their core, service clubs could still be useful as forums to influence other businessmen and their families; not just in Monterrey, but at the national level. More specifically, service organizations could be utilized to propagate their cultural and political values in a subtle way. The incident with the Chicago headquarters showed that the problem with Rotary was not its ideological content, nor its civic purpose. Rather it was its dependence on a headquarters based in the United States, unwilling to become involved in politics (which *regiomontano* businessmen saw as a struggle for the greater good) that was the problem.

In the weeks after the club's disbandment, several former members and business colleagues began to talk about forming their own organization, independent of a foreign governing body, a club that fully represented their needs and values. They envisioned creating a club by Mexicans for Mexicans. Starting in early July of 1936, a group of men met weekly at the Casino de Monterrey to discuss the organization of such a club. Then on July 17, the businessmen of Monterrey officially founded the first Mexican service club, naming it later the Club Sembradores de Amistad, the Sowers of Friendship Club.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Acta de la Junta Directiva de la Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones, 1o de diciembre de 1937, fojas 1-2, Vol. "Archivo Leones, 1935-1938," ACLCM.

²⁰⁶ James J. Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1983), 271; Matthew Redinger, *American Catholics and the Mexican Revolution, 1924-1936* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 147.

²⁰⁷ During the first weeks of activity, the club held sessions without having an official name. It was simply referred to in the newspapers as "the new club." "La primera sesión del nuevo club," *El Porvenir*, July 17, 1936; "La sesión de ayer en el nuevo club," *El Porvenir*, July 24, 1936; one of the founding members and elite businessmen of Monterrey in his autobiography called the organization of the Sowers: Manuel L Barragán, *Fue por México* (Monterrey, N.L.: Sistemas y Servicios Técnicos, 1968); a

Weeks after the new club was established, the Sembradores began contacting Rotarians in other parts of Mexico. Their intent was to convince other Rotary Clubs to renounce their affiliation to Rotary International and join instead the Sowers of Friendship, making their Mexican service club a national movement. However, their proselytizing efforts with other Rotary clubs produced zero results. Were Rotarians not comfortable with the idea of further entering the political sphere? Or, were *regiomontanos* more nationalistic and more Catholic than other employers? Another possibility is that Rotary members in other cities considered it advantageous to remain affiliated to the American-based organization, either for the prestige or business networks. Though I am not yet able to establish whether or not this was the case, it is revealing that analogous organizations from other cities, such as the chambers of commerce and the COPARMEX, did not offer much support to their Monterrey counterparts during the 1936 incidents, a development noticed by conservative elements in Mexico. For instance, the journalist and founding member of the conservative Middle-Class Confederation (Confederación de Clase Media or CCM), Querido Moheno Jr., lashed against Mexico City's business leaders for remaining indifferent to the events in Nuevo León.²⁰⁸

The disgruntled Rotarians also pressured the Lions Club of Monterrey to leave their international organization. In this case, they convinced some Lions to join the Sowers, though were unsuccessful at having the entire club disband. Nevertheless, in the process the Lions Club of Monterrey's image and existence came into question. According to the 1937 president of the Lions Club of Monterrey, Joaquín Garza y Garza, after the protests and lockouts, his "club went through a difficult situation." Within the city, the Lions "had to regain the public's trust and prove the Club was useful," by which he meant the club's goals were charitable, not political. The Lions suffered, he also noted, from the "attacks made by the Sowers of Friendship," in reference to the new club's campaign to lure members to leave Lions International. On the same week that the 1936 lockouts and mass demonstrations occurred, the Lions of Monterrey were hosting a national convention to which several Lions clubs from Texas were also invited. The news of the anti-communist marches and labor strikes in dailies, however, caused the attendance to be considerably lower. As the hosting club, the Monterrey Lions were responsible and absorbed most of the debt from under-attendance. In addition, the local reputation of service clubs as philanthropic institutions became tarnished. Although the Lions survived after the 1936

rare photograph of the inaugurational dinner session of the Sembradores can be found in: Gerardo de León, *Jornadas regiomontanas: pensamiento y acción de un esforzado provinciano* (Monterrey, N.L., México, 1978), 199.

²⁰⁸ See, for example: Querido Moheno Jr., "Ya era tiempo," *La Prensa*, February 11, 1936; Ricardo Pérez Montfort writes that Moheno Jr. "relentlessly defended the conservative ideals of 1930s Mexico" in "*Por la patria y por la raza*": *la derecha secular en el sexenio de Lázaro Cárdenas* (México, D.F.: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1993), 54; for more on Moheno Jr. and this role in the CCM, see: Ángel Saltillo Moreno, "Organizaciones de derecha no tradicional en México, 1933-1940. Organización, ideología y coyuntura electoral" (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa, 1999), 71; newspapers in the United States also noted this lack of support, in particular dailies that were critical of the post-revolutionary regime; see: "La raíz de la llaga," *La Prensa*, August 10, 1936.

incidents, the drop in membership and poor financial standing brought them close to losing their charter.²⁰⁹

THE FOUNDING SOWERS

Who were the individuals who established the Sowers of Friendship Club? The founding members were a tightly knit group of men who shared kinship ties, business interests, memberships in recreational clubs, and political inclinations. Since it was based on the defunct Rotary Club, the Sowers gathered by far the wealthiest and most influential businessmen of Monterrey. Of the original sixty-five men, about a third were former members of Monterrey's Rotary Club. Five had previously been affiliated to the Lions Club of Monterrey, and the rest had never been associated with a service club.²¹⁰

Within a few years, the Sowers almost doubled the club size to 116 members; by 1948 the club had over 140. During this period, about a quarter were university educated. The most popular degree was engineering with sixteen, of whom nine obtained their degrees from universities in the United States, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. At least five were trained lawyers and eight were medical professionals as physicians, gynecologists,

²⁰⁹ Acta de la Junta Directiva, 1 de diciembre de 1937; Volúmen: "Archivo Leones, 1935-1938, ACLCM.

²¹⁰ I collected the profiles of 116 members from 1936 to 1948 from a disperse group of archival documents, printed, and secondary sources. Most of the information was drawn from: *Fundación y Socios Fundadores*, undated, Archivo de la Asociación Internacional de Clubes Sembradores de Amistad (Monterrey, México); *Estatutos de la asociación de Sembradores de Amistad*, 1942, pages 17-25, enclosed in file 800.Sembradores de Amistad, Monterrey, GR 1936-1958, Box 5, RG 84; NACP; the existence of various biographical dictionaries, directories, and local histories provided invaluable information: Basave and Gómez, *Quién es cada quién en Monterrey, 1948*; Agustín Basave and Federico Gómez, *Quién es cada quién en Monterrey: diccionario biográfico de los actuales y más destacados profesionistas y hombres de negocio de Monterrey (1956)* (Monterrey, México: Imprenta Graphos, 1956); Juan René Vega García, *Quién es quién en Monterrey* (Editorial Revesa, 1976); Juan René Vega, *Personalidades de Monterrey: Diccionario biográfico con microbiografías de los hombres más destacados del Monterrey actual* (Vega y Asociados, 1967); Irma Salinas Rocha, *Mi padre* (Monterrey, México: Oficio Ediciones, 1992); *Constructores de Monterrey* (Monterrey, México: Editorial-Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, 1945); José P Saldaña, *Y qué hicimos? Monterrey en el siglo XX* (Monterrey, México: Producciones Al Voleo-El Troquel, 1988); Víctor Alejandro Cavazos Pérez, *Panteones de El Carmen y Dolores: patrimonio cultural de Nuevo León* (Fondo Editorial de NL, 2009); Salcido, *Don Isaac Garza*; Carlos Pérez-Maldonado, *El Casino de Monterrey; bosquejo histórico de la sociedad regiomontana*. (Monterrey: Impresora Monterrey, 1950); Mario Cerutti, *Proprietarios, empresarios y empresa en el norte de México: Monterrey: de 1848 a la globalización* (Siglo XXI, 2000); Jorge Pedraza Salinas, *Monterrey entre montañas y acero* (Villacero, 1996); Rómulo Garza Garza, *Rómulo Garza: impulsor de nuestro desarrollo industrial y del mejoramiento social* (Editorial Font, 2004); *Pablo Cervantes*. Periodical sources also provided key information, especially from *El Porvenir* (Monterrey) and also from the San Antonio, Texas newspaper, *La Prensa*, which published a significant amount of information on Monterrey.

dentists, optometrists, or another specialization. In terms of members' occupation, thirty-six were sole or partial business owners. Nineteen practiced their professions as architects, doctors, lawyers, or engineers. Close to half of the Sembradores (55) were individuals in management, making it the most common occupation. Only two members had held political office; José P. Saldaña served as interim governor of Nuevo León, and Héctor Cortés González in previous years had been the Mayor of Monterrey.

In addition to membership in the Sowers of Friendship, it was common for the men to have affiliations with other civic and recreational groups. In fact, evidence indicates that the Sowers encouraged members to have multiple affiliations. For instance, roughly a quarter was associated to either the local chamber of commerce or the COPARMEX. From 1936-48, over 60 percent of the members were linked to a mutual-aid society, 67 with the *Círculo Mercantil Mutualista* and four with the *Factores Mutuos*. Notably, about half of the Sowers were cardholders to one of the two elite recreational clubs in Monterrey: 37 of the *Casino de Monterrey* and another 30 of the *Country Club*. A few gun-enthusiasts were members of the *Hunting and Shooting Club*. The penchant for joining recreational societies suggests that a good portion enjoyed disposable income and time for leisure activities.

More significant for this discussion, however, were the religious and political affiliations of the Sowers of Friendship. Although I do not have full membership lists that can be cross referenced, scattered sources nonetheless show an evident proclivity among Sowers with either formal or informal ties to the Catholic Church. Of the same sample of 116 members taken from 1936 to 1948, at least 20 members can be directly linked to lay organizations. Ten were Knights of Columbus. There were also militants of the Mexican Catholic Union (UCM), the Margáin Zozaya brothers Ricardo and Miguel, and Ricardo Chapa. Three others were affiliated to the Mexican Catholic Action (ACM), Ernesto Casasús Delgado and Jaime Zambrano Lafón.²¹¹ Even the American consul in acknowledged in 1945 that most of the Sembradores could be considered "extremely" clerical.²¹²

There were also other men for whom there is evidence they were members of Catholic lay organizations after the 1940s. Bernardo Elosúa, for example, in 1941 helped coordinate and participated in the first Eucharist Congress held in Monterrey. At the meeting, Elosúa spoke about parents' God-given prerogative to educate their children, rather than the state. He also encouraged parents to organize to have Article 3 of the constitution repealed, and by joining the

²¹¹ On the ties to the Knights of Columbus, see the IPS reports at the AGN: Memorandum: *Actividades sediciosas en Monterrey, N.L.*; Isaac Garza Sada joined the brotherhood a year after it was founded in Monterrey. See: "Iniciación de nuevos Caballeros de Colón"; on Virgilio Garza Jr., see: "La política anti-católica ocasionó un choque en la ciudad de Monterrey"; "El gran diputado de los Caballeros de Colón de Monterrey, aprehendido."

²¹² For participation at the Eucharist congress, see: Archdiocese of Monterrey (Mexico), *Congreso Eucarístico Diocesano, documentos y discursos: febrero de 1941* (Monterrey, México, 1941); the Consul's comments are from: Report from Henry S. Waterman, American Consul General, October 30, 1945, page 2, file 800. *Sembradores de Amistad*, Monterrey, GR 1936-1958, Box 5, RG 84; NACP; for "extremely" clerical, see: Henry S. Waterman, American Consul, to Herbert S. Bursley, Chargé d'Affaires, May 18, 1945, file 690. *Gas Industrial*, Monterrey, GR 1936-1958, Box 5, RG 84; NACP.

Mexican Catholic Action, which strongly suggests that he was a member himself. Elosúa later in the 1940s became involved in founding Catholic study groups for employees in Monterrey and became an expert on the topic. In 1946, he attended presented at a Catholic social action conference in Costa Rica, exhorting employers to form similar groups as way to block the proliferation of communism among the Central American working classes. Following this goal of curbing radical labor militancy, Elosúa by the 1950s joined an influential Catholic-inspired business owners' organization called the Social Union of Employers of Mexico (Unión Social de Empresarios de México, or USEM).²¹³

Other Sowers apparently without affiliations to Catholic groups during the 1930s nonetheless had close ties with the Church. For instance, Andrés Chapa—like Elosúa—also participated in the 1941 Eucharist Congress planning and even held a reception for prelates visiting from other cities. The Chapa family's relationship to the Church, however, went beyond coordinating events. The American Consul in Monterrey reported that the Chapas and the Santos were one of few families in the city that "undoubtedly have control over the greatest amount of the many millions of church funds." After the Cristero revolt, the Chapa and Santos families offered to safeguard the Church's cash assets in private bank accounts. The consul was certain of this since "These two sets of brothers are among my most frequent golfing companions" and, presumably, they had confided this information to him. But there were others, like the seminary-educated Garza Guajardo, who kept parish religious iconography in his home during the Cristiada. "These men," noted the consul, "are a type of what I consider to be strongly clerical members" of the Sowers and of the conservative party, the PAN.²¹⁴

Another visible pattern within the Sowers was Catholic party preference. In this case, again, there are no complete lists that can definitively indicate affiliation; however, based on dispersed sources, the clear tendency was that most Sowers were either members or supporters of the PAN. Of the 116 member sample, I was able to identify the preference of about 20 percent. Of these one was linked to the PRI, while five were members other lesser-known regional parties. Given the strong Catholic and anti-statist background of the Sowers, it should not be surprising that the Partido Acción Nacional was the most favored after its founding in 1939. By 1945, the American consul in Monterrey informed that "most of the Sembradores are members of the Acción Nacional." Among the Sowers were key figures within the leadership of the PAN in Nuevo León: Bernardo Elosúa, Dr. José G. Martínez Lozano, Antonio L. Rodríguez, and Armando Ravizé—all of who were instrumental in establishing the PAN in the northeastern state. It is important also to recall here that at least sixteen Sembradores de Amistad had been militants in the Acción Cívica Nacionalista, the forerunner of the PAN.²¹⁵

²¹³ Archdiocese of Monterrey (Mexico), *Congreso Eucarístico Diocesano, documentos y discursos*, 10, 34; Basave and Gómez, *Quién es cada quién en Monterrey, 1956*, 74; Vega García, *Quién es quién en Monterrey*, 56; Eugene D. Miller, *A Holy Alliance?: The Church and the Left in Costa Rica, 1932-1948* (M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 167.

²¹⁴ Report from Henry S. Waterman, American Consul General, October 30, 1945.

²¹⁵ Report from Henry S. Waterman, American Consul General, p.4. It is important to highlight, however, that voting preference is not the same as party membership. In other words, one could be called

Clearly *regiomontanos* saw the Rotary Club and later Sowers of Friendship as having a strong role to play in the political arena, not just as civic associations for philanthropy and boosterism. And yet in the aftermath of the incident with RI and Ambassador Daniels, the disgruntled Rotarians realized that politics within the American organization had well-defined limits. How would the new service club be different from the Rotary and Lions? Once released from the dependence of Rotary International, the Sembradores de Amistad could openly embrace Mexican nationalism and their Catholic faith, making them essential to club's identity. By doing so, the Sowers of Friendship began to resemble the 1920s Knights of Columbus more so than the Rotary club. The founders were well aware, however, that publically their organization needed to appear not a religious or political group, but as a service club. How were they to accomplish balance?

THE IDENTITY OF THE SOWERS

On the surface, the Sowers of Friendship Club seemed to reproduce verbatim the purposes and activities of Rotary and the Lions. In fact, their bylaws were largely based on Rotary International's. The club statutes established that the Sembradores would be a civic organization that gathered men, professionals and in business, for the supposed goal of promoting community welfare and improvement. Like both international clubs, the Sowers were to meet weekly for dinner or lunch session at a classy restaurant, listen to a presentation, and coordinate events to benefit a charitable cause. They aimed to promote ethical business practices among their members and their clients.

Though the Sowers of Friendship retained many of the elements of Rotary International, the new service organization departed significantly in two particular areas: nationalism and religion—both of which were inextricably linked. As discussed in the previous chapters, Rotary and Lions promoted "civic internationalism," a form of citizenship not bound to a specific national identity. Rotary and Lions international were also ostensibly founded as non-denominational organizations. However, these policies were fundamental in the disagreement between the Monterrey club members and Rotary International in 1936. As an autonomous institution, the Sowers could shape their service club to reflect their political and religious convictions.

Both nationalism and religion were synthesized under the concept of *hispanismo*, the ideological cornerstone of the Sowers—and of many conservatives in Mexico prior to the 1960s. Like proponents of *hispanismo* in the greater Atlantic world, club founders in Monterrey held the conviction that under the colonial rule of Spain, the peoples in the Americas assimilated the traditions, values, and Catholic faith of the Spanish. The result, after several centuries, was the forging of a common spirit and cultural bond between Spanish Americans and *peninsulares* that

a supporter of, say, the PRI by casting their vote without necessarily being an "official" member of the party.

transcended race. Thus, *hispanismo* set the foundation of Mexico's national identity and established Catholicism as the legitimate religion.²¹⁶

Unlike Rotary and the Lions, which celebrated a civic internationalism, the Sowers aimed to propagate Catholic *hispanismo* throughout Mexico and the rest of Spanish America. The founders chose to name the club to reflect their Catholic faith, though in a subtle way. The "Sowers" was in reference to the apostle Paul's warning to the Galatians: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."²¹⁷ In this view, false ideologies and corrupt politicians had created discord in Mexican society. The Sembradores' solution was to rekindle a Catholic-inspired fellowship, in contrast also to the secular Rotary and Lions clubs.

The Sowers of Friendship also created their own emblem, like the Rotary wheel or the Lions emblem. However, the founders designed it in a way that it mirrored their belief in *hispanismo*. In the foreground of the crest, is a Spanish knight's shield with wheat sheaf on its surface, representing the fraternal union among the Sembradores. In the middle ground, stand two birds of prey—an eagle in honor of New Spain, the first "Spanish-American nation" in the continent; and an Andean condor symbolizing the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Finally, in the background, is a gilded castle honoring the Spanish "to whom we owe who we are" and "for having given us their religion, their language, and their culture." It is important to note here that the Sowers of Friendship emblem was designed by the Knight of Columbus and former Rotarian, Virgilio Garza Jr.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of hispanismo, see: Fredrick B. Pike, *Hispanismo, 1898-1936; Spanish Conservatives and Liberals and Their Relations with Spanish America* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971).

²¹⁷ Gal. 6:7 (King James Version).

²¹⁸ Carlos Pérez-Maldonado, "El blasón de Sembradores de Amistad," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles*, 1947, 4–5.



Figure 8: Sowers of Friendship Club emblem. Designed by the businessman and Knight of Columbus, Virgilio Garza Jr. Image from the cover of the club's monthly organ: *El Sembrador*.

The club founders, however, were careful that the Sowers not come across as a Catholic lay organization, like the Knights of Columbus; nor a political group, like the short-lived *Acción Cívica Nacionalista*. The bylaws stated that the Sowers of Friendship was an "apolitical" service club open to men of "any religious and political creed." They specifically prohibited discussions centered around these topics, though with an important caveat. Topics of "social and public interest" could be discussed in sessions as long as they were carried out in an "intelligent and discrete manner." The language of the statutes notwithstanding, there was no doubt that the *Sembradores de Amistad* talked about had a political and religious agenda.²¹⁹

According to speeches made by club founders, Mexico since the revolution had been in a state of political crisis and moral decay. They attributed the country's problems to a mix of liberalism, individualism, and materialism. In the opinion of one founder, Bernardo Elosúa, the nation was still reeling from the effects of nineteenth-century liberalism, alluding to the Reform Laws enacted under President Benito Juárez in the 1860s, which eroded the authority of the Church and its traditional role as the mediator of social problems. Whereas the Catholic Church provided spiritual guidance and benevolence toward men, argued Elosúa, the present generation was heir to "selfishness and arrogance" passed on from the "decadent liberalism and

²¹⁹ Estatutos de la asociación de *Sembradores de Amistad*.

individualism." In his view, it was necessary to once again embrace *hispanismo* and to replace these distorted ideas with "true Christian charity, which is love in one of its most pure and disinterested forms: friendship."²²⁰

The Sowers also held the belief that the society across the world was being overrun by another false ideology they referred to as "materialism." Club followers believed that materialism negated the existence of humankind's true essence, the spirit, which the Catholic religion sought to save. "Materialism," argued Elosúa, defined a man's worth by his "success, riches, fame, and social position." It would seem hypocritical, if not ironic, for a club of wealthy businessmen to profess such beliefs. However, recall that several of the club founders had been schooled in the doctrine of Social Catholicism in the Knights of Columbus, the ACJM, the ACM, and the UCM. The Sowers could reconcile this apparent contradiction by suggesting that the denial of the sacred "diminishes and denigrates" mankind. Reminiscent of the late 19th-century discourse of US Protestant-influenced philanthropic capitalists (such as Andrew Carnegie), the Sowers also considered that it was not sufficient to be rich, a person had to first seek God and help their fellow man. "Our association," noted Elosúa, "is inspired by the Christian ideal of charity and social justice."²²¹

The Sembradores equated socialism and communism (terms which they used indiscriminately) with materialism. Both ideologies, according to the club, were harmful to society for viewing religion as the "opium of the people" and for allegedly giving primacy to the material world over the spiritual. Sower Ricardo Margáin Zozaya recalled that in 1936 the "forces of evil" threatened to supplant Mexico's "spiritual and moral values" with "vulgar and divisive materialist doctrines." The prime culprit was the Cardenista state for siding with so-called communist labor unions and for poisoning the minds of school children with his "socialist" curriculum. Similarly, Elosúa noted that, "during the height of the Cardenista dictatorship, frankly communistic...we lived in an era of persecution, thousands of children including our own, studied in clandestine schools in order to save themselves from the socialist virus." At labor rallies, he commented, "the Internationale was sang" and the Mexican flag replaced by a "red and black rag," a deriding reference to the traditional symbol of anarchists and communists worldwide.²²²

²²⁰ Bernardo Elosúa, "Ideales del Club Sembradores de Amistad," *Resumen de los principales trabajos presentados en el Club Sembradores de Amistad durante el año social 1957-1958*, 1958, pages 1-4, Sala Agustín Basave Fernández del Valle, Biblioteca Raúl Rangel Frías, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León.

²²¹ Elosúa, 2; in the United States, the most emblematic representation of this idea can be found in Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth: And Other Timely Essays* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962).

²²² "Discurso del Lic. Margáin Zozaya en los Sembradores: Fines de Sembradores de Amistad," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles*, 1947, pp.15-16; for Elosúa, see: "Discurso pronunciado por el Ing. Bernardo Elosúa, en el banquete de despedida a los convencionalistas," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles*, May 1946, pp.3-5. Elosúa's seems to have taken part of his speech from a 1936 article in *El Porvenir*, which described in a very similar language the "threat" of communism

Sowers were unequivocally anti-communist, and another way they expressed their opposition was by labeling it an "imported" ideology incompatible with Mexico's *hispanismo*. Remembering the protests against the "red" labor movement in 1936, Elosúa declaimed: "One fine day... 70,000 souls filled our streets, carrying Mexican flags with the inscription: 'we are Mexicans, not Russians... The entire city of Monterrey exploded against the communist wave.'" In his opinion, President Cárdenas, who suffered from "*malinchismo*," admired communism because he considered "all that was foreign was better." The Sowers of Friendship, on the other hand, believed in the "glorious and noble Hispanic tradition," which united Mexicans through "faith and language," and "enlightened [us] by the cross."²²³

As leaders of industry and business, the Sowers believed it was their duty to steer Mexico back on the right path. Elosúa argued that Cárdenas had created "confusion" in society, alluding to the conflicts employers had with the working classes. As a result, society was like in the darkness in need of "guiding lights," a metaphor often used by service club members in Mexico referring to their role as leaders of their communities. To undo the mistakes of the post-revolutionary state, the club founders believed that the notion of *hispanidad* needed to be saved and embraced once more. As Margáin put it, they would strive elevate Mexico's traditions and "preserve the moral values that constitute the basis of our nationality." In other words, the Sowers of Friendship sought "to reestablish the ideal of *hispanidad*, for we have no reason to deny our Hispanic ascendancy," argued Margáin.²²⁴

The post-revolutionary regime had disrupted the social order and harmony, which benevolent employers like those of Monterrey had assiduously worked to establish. By fomenting "*enemistad*" (enmity or conflict) instead of "*amistad*" (friendship) between workers and employers, and by attacking the moral authority that was the Church, the state from Calles to Cárdenas was fraying Mexico's social fabric. In an editorial of the Sowers of Friendship's official organ, *El Sembrador*, Margáin described at length how Mexicans like him had become "bewildered by the acts of the Public Authority." The government, he noted, "gave out lands that were not its own to give," and which were "later stupidly abandoned" by *campesinos*—implying that peasants were too ignorant to make their lands productive. Then, he continued, the state began to give factories to workers "as if the owners had not put their hearts and lives into those

under Cárdenas. See: Snodgrass, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey*, footnote 19 on p.209. His speech also appeared in *El Porvenir*, October 13, 1945.

²²³ Elosúa, "Ideales del Club." "*Malinchismo*" is a term describing a person who, out of an attraction for foreigners and self-hate, betrays their own people or nation. It derives from La Malinche, the Nahuatl interpreter of Hernán Cortés who infamously "betrayed" the indigenous nations by siding with the Spaniards during the conquest.

²²⁴ For Elosúa, see: Elosúa; "Discurso pronunciado por el Sembrador Lic. Ricardo Margáin Zozaya, en la Convención de Clubes de Sembradores," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles*, May 1946, 15.

factories." The constitution was also reformed to "take by force the sacred right of parents" to determine the education of their children.²²⁵

The Sowers of Friendship additionally believed that the post-revolutionary state was forcing upon Mexicans a fabricated national identity, that of *indigenismo*. Alfonso Junco, another club founder and prominent conservative intellectual in Mexico, argued that "The state's cult of *indigenismo*" had reduced Indians to "exotic and picturesque" beings, by celebrating their use of "dialects, earflaps, and necklaces." It is worth noting that in the second half of the twentieth century, leftist intellectuals such as Carlos Monsiváis would make similar criticisms toward the post-revolutionary regime. Junco noted that the state in doing so was coming to be more like the United States. Instead of welcoming them into mainstream society, Americans segregated Native Americans in reservations. By contrast, Junco argued that "Catholic *hispanismo*" for centuries had advocated for their incorporation into the Spanish world for their social and cultural improvement. In his opinion, there were countless examples of Spanish benevolence in Mexico's colonial past. One he cited was Vasco de Quiroga, the first bishop of Michoacán, who taught Indians how to gather in "ideal communities," to "clean their souls and bodies," and to "organize their work and economy." Another was the Franciscan school for Indian boys in Tlatelolco in the colonial era. According to Junco, the seminary had "transformed" Indians into "learned and respectable" individuals. This, of course, was false, since the school banned indigenous (along with Africans and mestizos) 15 years after it opened, and never were any non-Spanish priests ordained. His views of the colonial era and of Spanish-Indian relations were not only riddled with factual inaccuracies, but they were grossly condescending. Reflecting a common *hispanista* understanding, Junco assumed that Indians were in need of being civilized by the superior Spanish.²²⁶

The Sowers of Friendship Club's concept of nationalism also had anti-Yankee tinges. After Rotary International's refusal to denounce Ambassador Daniels, the Sowers embraced the incident and modified the narrative. In an overly romanticized language, Elosúa later recalled that "at that moment," when Chicago had ignored their plea against Daniels and against communism, "the Spanish knight reemerged in us, with pride and dignity... We dusted off our inferiority complex... and we made the resolution to organize ourselves, without hate towards foreigners, but also without subjecting ourselves to them."²²⁷ The club founders, however, were not dogmatically anti-American. Many of these men had business interests and family across the border, they owned real estate in Texas, and several had graduated from top American universities. In this regard, the Sowers were selective about what they chose to be resentful

²²⁵ "Discurso del Lic. Margáin Zozaya en los Sembradores: Fines de Sembradores de Amistad," 15.

²²⁶ "Memorable sesión-comida del Club Sembradores de Amistad," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles*, July 1946, 14–16; on the fate of the College of Santiago de Tlatelolco, see Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico; an Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523-1572*. Translated by Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), chap. 14.

²²⁷ One wonders if Elosúa's mention of the "Spanish knight" (*caballero español*) was a reference to the Knights of Columbus (Caballeros de Colón).

towards. In the early years of the club, members at times expressed their opposition toward the influence of American Protestantism and of other US service clubs in Monterrey and the country.²²⁸

CONCLUSION

Examining the case of international service clubs in Monterrey during has allowed me to make two main claims. Echoing a central concern in this dissertation, I have shown that the Lions, Rotary, and later Sowers of Friendship clubs were deeply immersed in the political life of post-revolutionary Nuevo León. Rotary of Monterrey along with the Lions Club participated in the opposition against the agitation supposedly carried out by communist union leaders. The ostensible non-political nature of the Rotary and Lions club allowed members to enter the political sphere in a less combative way than the ACN and the Knights of Columbus. Service clubs, then, provided an optimal path to advance political and religious agendas, while maintaining their status as organizations promoting community welfare.

However, the Monterrey clubs' involvement in local politics came at a price for both organizations. The Lions Club came close to disappearing and lost much of its credibility, although it eventually recovered and later rose to fame as the largest Lions club in Mexico and the world. The Rotarians of Monterrey, for their part, chose to renounce their affiliation with Rotary International. The conflict with Cárdenas showed them that there were limits as to how far international service clubs could become involved in politics. By regrouping as the Sowers of Friendship, the so-called "captains of industry" began a long battle against the post-revolutionary state. The membership overlap between the Acción Cívica Nacionalista, the Sembradores de Amistad, and later with the PAN was no coincidence. Indeed, the Sowers of Friendship were a product of the conflict with the Cardenista state, a factor in the development of the PAN in Nuevo León, and a conduit of conservative ideology among businessmen in Mexico.

A by-product of telling this story of the Monterrey clubs has been a revision to our understanding of the place that Catholicism had in shaping *regiomontano* identity. Until now, historians have assumed that official anticlericalism and religion in general was by and large irrelevant in Monterrey. By examining the affiliations of the leading industrialists and businessmen to Catholic lay organizations, especially the Knights of Columbus, and by continuing this story of pro-Catholicism into the Sowers era of pro-PAN organizing, there is little doubt that religion mattered. The openly Catholic ideology of the Sowers of Friendship further demonstrates the importance the Catholic faith had in shaping the club's identity. The evidence suggests that the confrontation between industrialists with Cárdenas was a process that began since the advent of the revolution. For members of the business community, state involvement in labor affairs and the attacks on the Catholic faith were not separate issues; they were part of the same problem.

²²⁸ "Discurso pronunciado por el Ing. Bernardo Elosúa, en el banquete de despedida a los convencionistas," pp.3-4.

The solution offered by the Sowers rested on a return to Mexico's genuine national identity and its Catholic roots found in *hispanismo*. The case of the Sowers of Friendship sheds new light on how conservative ideas developed and were later circulated in Mexico in the post-revolutionary era, beyond the oft-cited PAN. The Sowers of Friendship represent, finally, a peculiar brand of service club culture and politics that developed in Mexico, different not just from Rotary, but also from the Lions Club in Mexico.

CHAPTER 4 SERVICE CLUBS AND THE CRUSADES FOR MEXICO, 1940s-1950s

In 1950, an editorial printed in Morelia, Michoacán ranted: "It would seem incredible that men who regard themselves as honorable, distribute all over the city these kinds of calendars." The irate author referred to "nudist calendars," filled with "malice" poisoning innocent children's minds, which store owners gave to frequent clients as gifts for their business. "This is an immoral, infamous, maddening and anti-patriotic propaganda," he exclaimed. "Let us put our army of pure hearts" into action by "denouncing these perverts," the article continued. Morelia's "children and youth call for our action. Our wives demand it."²²⁹

The call to action against erotic calendars featuring pinup girls very well could have appeared in a publication from a Catholic organization such as the Catholic Action, the Knights of Columbus, or the League of Decency. These lay organizations are commonly associated with the moral panics against "indecent" media that took place in Mexico between the 1940s and 1960s. However, this was not the case. This piece, in fact, was written by a member of the Rotary Club of Morelia and published in the club's magazine. In its opposition to media with suggestive themes, the Rotary Club of Morelia was not an exception. Rather, along with Catholic lay organizations, it was one of the many service clubs throughout the country that demanded action against "immoral" publications—and a number of other social problems, from alcoholism, to youth rebellion, to illiteracy.

This chapter examines the broadening impulses of service club members across Mexico to uplift their communities and country, from the mid-1940s to the late 1950s. Throughout this period, Lions, Sowers, Rotary, and Junior Chamber International Clubs (or JCI) were embarking on a variety of crusades that went beyond the standard club goals of helping children with poliomyelitis or the blind (in the case of Rotary and Lions International, respectively). Often, the service clubs' crusading impulses overlapped with the projects of other actors in society, including Catholic lay associations and also the post-revolutionary state. Part I of this chapter studies the participation of service clubs in two state-led initiatives concerning education. The first was the literacy campaign beginning in 1944; the second was the movement to build public schoolhouses, which started in 1947. I argue that although all service clubs participated in these state-led projects, they did so in ways that represented the cultural and political interests of their members. Partly fueling this collaboration was a concern over a popular uprising and a way to avoid such as specter was by educating the poor.

Part II delves into the so-called moralization of Mexican society in which service clubs and other actors participated. The last part of the chapter explores how service clubs addressed the "problems" surrounding youth rebelliousness, especially during the 1950s. In essence, service clubs expanded their scope of involvement in community affairs. In doing so, I show

²²⁹ "Nudismo que avergüenzan," *Morelia Rotario*, January 1, 1950, p.3.

that campaigns in the name of community serving had broader implications, as members made arguments about how Mexican society should function.

PART I: THE CRUSADES FOR EDUCATION

As part of the wartime measures to promote national unity, President Manuel Ávila Camacho in 1944 launched an ambitious campaign to eliminate illiteracy among adults and children, which had reached staggering rates. Despite previous state-led literacy campaigns, that year, statistics indicated that over 53 percent of the population in Mexico over the age of six was illiterate, just shy of 10 million people. To address this considerable deficiency, Ávila Camacho enacted a law that made it "mandatory" for all illiterate individuals between the ages of six and 40 to learn to read and write. The law that created the National Campaign against Illiteracy (Campaña Nacional contra el Analfabetismo) mandated that literate people over 18 teach at least one person who could not. The decree also established the general guidelines to carry out the monumental task of teaching basic grammar to scores of men and women scattered throughout the country.²³⁰

Organizationally, the head of the Secretary of Public Education (SEP), Jaime Torres Bodet, was in charge of managing the campaign, whose office printed 10 million didactic booklets for students. At the local level, state governors were instructed to form committees with the aid of various sectors from society, including mayors, SEP inspectors, congressmen, union leaders, chambers of commerce, and civic associations of all kinds. These committees, with a combination of federal, state, and private donations, would then do everything from building a school, if one did not exist, to providing teachers with a stipend. In many locations, public schools became literacy centers after normal school hours, as was the case in the states of Nuevo León and Puebla. Ávila Camacho's campaign was intended to end by May 1946, though other literacy campaigns were taken up by subsequent administrations.²³¹

²³⁰ For a general overview of the literacy campaigns in Mexico prior to 1944, see: Alba Alejandra Lira García, "La alfabetización en México: campañas y cartillas, 1921-1944," *Traslaciones* 1, no. 2 (Diciembre 2014), <http://revistas.uncu.edu.ar/ojs/index.php/traslaciones/article/view/247>; and also Fernando Solana, *Historia de la educación pública en México* (Mexico D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990), 318–39; Dirección General de Estadística, *Campaña nacional contra el analfabetismo: Cómo ha decrecido el analfabetismo en México durante los últimos veinte años: informe de la Dirección General de Estadística de la Secretaría de Industria y Comercio*. (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1964) in: expediente 6.2, carpeta 94, caja 14, fondo Jaime Torres Bodet, hereafter, JTB; Instituto de Investigaciones Sobre la Universidad y la Educación, Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, hereafter, IISUE-AHUNAM.

²³¹ For the example in Puebla, see: Rotary Club of Puebla to Sr. Director de Educación Pública Federal, May 16, 1945, exp. Alfabetización; Archivo 1945-1946, Vol.1; ACRP; and for Nuevo León: Prof. Ernesto de Villarreal Cantú, Director General de Educación Primaria y Secundaria, Estado de Nuevo León, to Jaime Torres Bodet, Secretario de Educación Pública, July 5, 1945, exp. 5, carpeta 88, caja 13, fondo JTB, IISUE-AHUNAM; "Ley que establece la Campaña Nacional contra el Analfabetismo," *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, August 23, 1944, sec. second; A los CC. Secretarios de la H. Cámara de Diputados, del Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Manuel

Drawing on the patriotism generated by the Second World War, Ávila Camacho's crusade received broad support from all segments society. National newspapers, such as *El Universal*, in 1945 referred to teachers as the "soldiers of the peace, whose weapon is the booklet, and whose compensation will be the future wellbeing of our country."²³² Less optimistic observers noted the potential limitations of the campaign. One journalist from Guadalajara's daily, *El Informador*, while praising the initiative, commented that thousands of indigenous people first needed to speak Spanish before they could learn how to read and write it—especially in the states of Oaxaca, Puebla, Veracruz, and Chiapas, where the largest non-Spanish speaking communities were located. Others wondered, once millions of Mexicans who came overwhelmingly from the poorest classes became literate, what would they read? Could they afford to buy a book from a store? To these kinds of criticisms, SEP's Torres Bodet replied that more public libraries would be built and suggested that publishing houses print low-cost editions. The head of Indigenous Affairs also commented that 2,000 "Hispanicized Indians" had been enlisted in the army of literacy crusaders.²³³ Despite these criticisms, however, the campaign was exceedingly popular in its first years. Enthusiastic letters and telegrams applauding the law poured in from everyday citizens, labor unions, chambers of commerce, Protestant churches, to masonic lodges, and service clubs.²³⁴

The three international service club organizations (Lions, Rotary, and JCI) and the Sowers of Friendship all collaborated in the national literacy campaign in varying degrees, budgets, and levels of commitment. Local clubs participated, from building literacy centers to providing monetary donations, to sending their own teachers out on the streets of poor neighborhoods. And while Lions, Rotarians, and Sowers all joined the state-led crusade, which earned them the esteem of the government, they did so in ways that represented their cultural and political interests.

When the Ávila Camacho regime launched the literacy campaign 1944, the total number of Lions clubs in Mexico hovered around 60. During the first two years of the crusade, the participation of the Lions was relatively higher than the Rotarians. By 1948, the Lions clubs from Acapulco on the Pacific to Mérida on the Gulf, to Ciudad Juárez and San Luis Potosí in the north, collaborated in the literacy crusade. Each club's participation depended on the organization of the club and on how their respective members could contribute. Some clubs, such as the Lions clubs of Tijuana and Villa Hermosa, for example, committed to providing

Ávila Camacho, undated but likely 1945, leg. 2, exp. 433/378, caja 431, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, hereafter MAC, RP, AGN.

²³² Quoted in: Lira García, "La alfabetización en México," 139–40.

²³³ Rubén Salazar Mallén, "Límites y problemas," *El Informador*, September 6, 1944; Guillermo de Luzuriaga, "El más grave problema de la cruzada alfabetizadora," *El Informador*, September 28, 1944; Clemente Cámara Ochoa, "El libro y la campaña de alfabetización y el mono de la fábula," *El Informador*, November 5, 1944.

²³⁴ Dozens of congratulatory telegrams and letters from 1944 in leg. 2 "Felicitaciones," exp. 512.32/23, caja 554, fondo MAC, RP, AGN.

monetary aid to their respective regional SEP offices, which managed literacy classes in local public schools.²³⁵

Other clubs, such as the Monterrey or Puebla Lions, raised funds to build schools entirely from the ground up. The Lions of Puebla opened two centers in the city, for which the state governor granted the club an award of recognition for their efforts. The Monterrey Lions club's literacy complex was particularly impressive compared to others built by service clubs and even those by the state. The *regiomontano* Lions claimed their center provided classes for 300 students on a daily basis.²³⁶

Rotary clubs also contributed toward the crusade against illiteracy in Mexico—although the exact number of centers and contributions made by all of the Rotary clubs are unknown. Before Ávila Camacho launched the program, the Rotarians from the city of Puebla began making donations for the construction of an all-girls Catholic elementary school located in a working-class neighborhood. The school was founded and managed by a Catholic priest, Manuel M. Teyssier, who preached in the Parish of the Cross and who organized lay associations, particularly the Nocturnal Adoration Society. Shortly after the national literacy campaign came into effect, with the financial support of the Rotary club of Puebla, Teyssier's school began to offer evening literacy courses, naming it the Sons of Workers' School. The Rotarians considered that the location of the school was ideal because it was located in an area "inhabited by humble people and where the most illiterates can be found." The reading and writing classes were given by a SEP-trained *normalista* head teacher who was under the authority of the priest. Because the Rotary club sponsored the literacy program, the teacher regularly reported her progress to the club.²³⁷

In the first year of courses at the Sons of Workers' School, the number of students fluctuated between three and 30 students, all of whom were adult women. According to the head

²³⁵ *Memoria de la XI Convención de Clubes de Leones (1945)*, 37; *Memoria de la XIV Convención Nacional de Clubes de Leones, Celebrada en la Ciudad de Monterrey, N.L. durante los días 6, 7 y 8 de julio de 1948* (Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, 1948), 54.

²³⁶ On the Lions of Puebla's two schools, see *Memoria de la XIV Convención de Clubes de Leones (1948)*; "Finalizados una vez más los cursos en Centros Alfabetizantes Poblanos," *El León: La Revista de los Leones*, April 1950, exp. 272, caja 46, serie Revistas, sección Hemerografía, fondo Esperanza Iris (hereafter EI), Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal, hereafter AHDF; José Tamborrel Suárez, *Informe General de los trabajos efectuados por la Asociación Nacional de Clubes de la República Mexicana y los Clubes Afiliados a la Misma, en el Período Administrativo 1946-47* (Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, 1947); the City of Monterrey, for instance, had 65 centers that served 1,300 students every day. The Lions had one center that served 300. See: Informando de las actividades Pro-Alfabetizantes al C. Don Felix González Salinas, Presidente Municipal de Monterrey, undated (ca 1947, exp. 1946-1948, vol. T-4, fondo MC, AHM, <http://archivohistorico.monterrey.gob.mx/index.php/coleccion/verimagenes/10772?c=190&res=hd>).

²³⁷ Rotary Club of Puebla to Gonzalo Bautista, Governor of Puebla, June 5, 1944, exp. Correspondencia: Instituciones; Archivo 1943-1944; ACRP; Ramón Canales, Rotary Club of Puebla, to Carlos I. Betancourt, Governor of Puebla, September 6, 1945, exp. Alfabetización; Archivo 1945-1946, Vol.1; ACRP.

teacher, Aurora Gómez, her students were maids, mothers of students who attended the elementary school in the morning, and other women from the *barrio*. Gómez noted that, despite the effort they made to get the ladies to enroll, attendance was often poor for reasons that varied. Sometimes students were no longer employed as maids in the area, and thus traveled to other parts of the city; sometimes they become pregnant, or had other responsibilities which prevented them from attending.²³⁸

The choice by the Rotarians to fund the construction of a Catholic school and to sponsor its literacy program was deliberate and reflected their cultural and religious values. Most of the members themselves were Catholics who expressed clear opinions regarding how the educational system should be managed in Mexico. During a club dinner session, a few members began discussing the overall educational system in Mexico. One Rotarian (who in the 1920s protected Church property during Calles' anticlericalism) Miguel Marín Hirshman, commented that the solution to Mexico's education problems could not be solved entirely by SEP school teachers who are "unprepared and poorly remunerated." In the countryside, he noted, the "task of civilizing the Indian" could also not be given to rural teachers. Rather, it should be "the abnegated and unselfish missionary priests, who have less familial attachments, and who by vocation seek good deeds and to be good in the eyes of God. The history of colonial *Méjico* (sic) provides us with irrefutable evidence."²³⁹

²³⁸ Aurora Gómez, Informe que rinde la maestra encargada del "Centro de Alfabetización" patrocinado por el H. "Club Rotario de Puebla," December 7, 1945, exp. Alfabetización; Archivo 1945-1946, Vol.1; ACRP.

²³⁹ Lic. Miguel Marín H., Crónica de la cena-sesión, December 26, 1945, exp. Crónicas, Archivo 1945-1946, ACRP; for Miguel Marín's work protecting priests and Church property in Puebla, including the Sagrario Metropolitano during the Cristero rebellion, see Jesús Joel Peña Espinosa, "La catedral angelopolitana: sus autoridades y administradores durante el conflicto religioso, 1927-1929," in *Clérigos, políticos y política: las relaciones iglesia y estado en Puebla, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Alicia Tecuanhuey Sandoval (Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2002), 130 and 139. For reasons that are unknown, Miguel Marín would later leave the Rotary Club to join the Sowers of Friendship (likely because it was openly Catholic and pro-hispanista). Furthermore, his spelling of "Mexico" with a "j" rather than an "x" suggests that the ideas of hispanismo appealed to him. Recall from Chapter III that hispanistas were also adamant about reclaiming "proper" grammar from Spain.



Figure 9: Members of the Rotary Club of Puebla at Father Teyssier's (*background*) all-girls school, circa 1944. The school was built with donations made by the Rotarians. Note the Rotary wheel and motto in Spanish "*dar de si antes de pensar en si*" on the back wall.

Source: Exp. Primer Concurso Interescolar, Archivo 1944-1945, ACRP.

Despite their disdain for Lázaro Cárdenas, the Sowers of Friendship began to warm to the post-revolutionary state after the Ávila Camacho presidency, evidenced by their contribution to the literacy crusade. By the mid-1940s, the number of Sowers of Friendship clubs in Mexico compared to the Lions and Rotary clubs was considerably smaller—only nine.²⁴⁰ Of these, the Sowers of Puebla in 1947 were among the first to have answered the government's "patriotic mission" to end illiteracy, as they called it. By then, the literacy crusade had been extended to its second presidential term by Miguel Alemán. Puebla's Sowers were so enthusiastic about collaborating that they wrote directly to Alemán shortly after forming their brigade of teachers. The club president, Francisco Simarro, stated that they were "Inspired by the patriotic desire" to

²⁴⁰ In 1946, there were Sowers of Friendship clubs in the cities of Monterrey, Saltillo, San Luis Potosí, Irapuato, Tampico, Oaxaca, Hermosillo, Guadalajara, and Puebla.

put their "private initiative in the service of the noble cause that is the elimination of popular illiteracy."²⁴¹

The Sowers of Puebla, which was founded in 1946, participated in the crusade, albeit differently than their Lion and Rotarian counterparts. As the club's first act of service for their community, the newly formed club invited their wives, sisters, and daughters to form a brigade of "*maestras misioneras*" (missionary teachers). Instead of building a schoolhouse or making cash donations to the SEP, the club trained their own teachers in the club-sponsored Center for Missionary Teachers of Literacy, and sent them to the poorest neighborhoods of Puebla, such as Xanenetla, to teach literacy. Also, it is noteworthy they used teaching materials that the head teacher, Enriqueta López de Cabrera, herself created and not the official SEP booklets.²⁴²

During the national Sowers of Friendship convention held in Guadalajara the previous year, the head *maestra misionera* suggested that other Sowers clubs form their own brigade of teachers as well. She noted that, while praiseworthy, the state-led crusade was not delivering "practical results." Students could not easily access the literacy centers and were dropping out. As an example, she noted that the Lions, Rotarians, and three other institutions in Puebla managed their own centers, but between these very few students were being taught. "Five magnificently setup centers at the disposal of the people," López de Cabrera exclaimed, "and only 36 students!" It was more efficient and cost-effective to send teachers out to the places where illiterate people lived—hence the "missionary" in the title. Inspired by Catholic *hispanismo*, the Sowers looked to the Catholic Church's spiritual conquest of the Americas as the example to follow. "The true conquest of the Americas by the Spanish," argued the *maestra*, "was more the product of the missionaries than of the conquistadores."²⁴³

²⁴¹ Francisco Simarro to Miguel Alemán Valdés, October 23, 1947, leg. 1, exp. 512.32/2-20, caja 445, fondo Miguel Alemán Valdes, hereafter MAV, RP, AGN.

²⁴² Acta Constitutiva del "Centro de Maestras Misioneras de Alfabetización de la Ciudad de Puebla," October 18, 1947, p.4, leg. 1, exp. 512.32/2-20, caja 445, fondo MAV, RP, AGN.

²⁴³ Ponencia Número Uno: Presentada por el Club "Sembradores de Amistad" de Puebla, Pue., a la respetable consideración de la Convención de Clubes "Sembradores de Amistad" de la República, celebrada en la ciudad de Guadalajara, Jal., October 4, 1947, p.2, leg. 1, exp. 512.32/2-20, caja 445, fondo MAV, RP, AGN.



Figure 10: Sowers of Friendship and *maestras misioneras* with their students in the Barrio Xanenetla in Puebla. Circa 1946.

Source: Exp. 512.32/2-20, Caja 445, MAV, RP, AGN.

The Sowers of Puebla's on-the-ground approach to teaching literacy was also based on gendered and class assumptions. Both male members and their female relatives considered that women were ideal literacy teachers since, after all they were essentially "selfless and solicitous" and thus naturally inclined to carry out this kind of work.²⁴⁴ At the same time, there was more than just teaching basic reading and writing. The *misioneras*, more importantly, would teach proper morals and domestic habits, which they assumed the people living in poverty lacked. In describing their mission, the head teacher also reflected the Catholic impetus to teach the poor how to live with according to the Church's teachings. The Puebla Sowers argued that "the intimate and affectionate contact with the popular classes will allow the *maestras misioneras* not only to teach them how to read, but also to educate and *moralize* them, while inculcating in them basic but necessary habits of personal hygiene and tidiness."²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Ponencia Número Uno; MAV, RP, AGN.

²⁴⁵ Emphasis mine. Ponencia Número Uno; MAV, RP, AGN.



Figure 11: The Sowers of Friendship's *maestras misioneras* teaching a lesson in the Barrio de San Antonio in Puebla. Image circa 1946.

Source: Exp. 512.32/2-20, Caja 445, MAV, RP, AGN.

The Sowers of Friendship were not the only service clubs to point to the limitations of the state-led literacy crusade. As early as 1945, the Lions of Mexico noted that, though a laudable effort on behalf of the state, the campaign was already losing steam. For some Lions, like Luis Tijerina Almaguer from Monterrey, a more effective long-term solution was needed. "Once the initial moments [of the crusade] have past, we have returned to the same state of inaction," he lamented.²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Rotary, Lions, and Sowers clubs around the country continued to promote literacy in their own ways until well into the 1960s. The Lions clubs from District B-3 (which included the states of Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and San Luis Potosí), for example, managed a total of 20 literacy centers by 1962. Even the Sowers of Friendship in

²⁴⁶ *Memoria de la XI Convención de Clubes de Leones (1945)*, 86.

remote towns like Tecate, Baja California in the late 50s continued to lobby local authorities for literacy programs.²⁴⁷

SEP directors at the regional level were also aware that the campaign was facing some pitfalls. In Nuevo León, for instance, the director noted that in 1946 the state had some 48 thousand illiterate persons, of whom only 7,600 volunteered to take classes, and a few months later, close to 2000 had failed to finish the program. He further noted that, "By letting so much time go by without attacking the problem of illiteracy in the country" and overlooking "the urgent need of the majority of illiterates...the poverty in which so many live, which force them to work all day to make ends meet, [causing] apathy, etc., etc., have become factors that make the completion of this noble and patriotic task all the more difficult."²⁴⁸ By 1950, 6 years after the crusade began, the SEP reported that illiteracy among individuals over the age of 6 had, in fact, decreased from 53 percent to 43 percent. And while the overall number of Mexicans who could read rose from 8 million in 1940 to 12 million in 1956, this was only a nominal gain. Within this same time frame there were still close to 10 million Mexicans who were illiterate. Indeed, even the former Minister of Education, Jaime Torres Bodet, lamented that president Alemán seemed to have lost interest in the literacy crusade before the end of his presidency.²⁴⁹

During Alemán's term, some Lions members were already arguing for more active involvement in Mexico's educational issues. At the national Lions convention held in 1945, Lion Ricardo Carrillo Durán from Ciudad Juárez took the floor and gave an impassioned speech. "Fellow conventioners, the problems of Mexico are secular and far too profound," referring to the entrenched poverty and dire educational levels of most Mexicans. These problems, he noted, "have historic roots, centuries old." The scores of illiterate and impoverished Mexicans today were "The same masses that followed Miguel Hidalgo...the same that Morelos gloriously marshalled" and "the same that in 1910 fought for social justice." Carrillo Durán compelled his fellow Lions to take further steps in addressing these realities and not "expected everything from the Government." The delegate from Juárez made a bold proposition: "Let us build a school in every place where there is a Lions club to be found!"²⁵⁰ Though at face value, the Lion's desire to address poverty and education among the lower classes seems to be out of service, this can equally be interpreted as a concern over a peasant or working-class uprising—such as Hidalgo's.

²⁴⁷ "Así trabajan los Leones del B-3," *Leones: Boletín del Distrito B-3, Monterrey*, August 15, 1962, p.4; "El club de Tecate se interesa en la educación," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles*, June 1959, p.16-17.

²⁴⁸ Prof. Ernesto de Villarreal Cantú, Director General de Educación Primaria y Secundaria, Estado de Nuevo León, to Jaime Torres Bodet, Secretario de Educación Pública.

²⁴⁹ Solana, *Historia de la educación pública en México*, 337.

²⁵⁰ *Memoria de la XI Convención de Clubes de Leones (1945)*, 81.

THE SEP'S SCHOOLHOUSE MOVEMENT

Starting in 1945, there emerged among service clubs in Mexico the drive to build public schools in Mexico. As the above quote by the Lions delegate from Ciudad Juárez shows, the movement had its beginnings within the Lions Clubs of Mexico during its yearly national meeting held in Guadalajara's historic Teatro Degollado. However, as spirited as Carrillo Durán's speech was, his call to action was met with strong criticisms from certain Lions who were attending the convention. For reasons that are unclear, while he was still making his case for all Lions clubs to commit to building a school in their respective cities, some in the audience began to hiss with disapproval—allegedly among them was Miguel E. Abed, president of the National Association of Lions Clubs (NALC).²⁵¹ The convention's board of directors, which listened to all club proposals and then voted on them, ruled to take Carrillo Durán's proposal to build schools as a "recommendation" to Lions clubs, rather than a directive.

Carrillo Durán objected to the ruling and again urged the board and all attendees to make it "mandatory" for all Lions clubs to build a schoolhouse within their means. "I believe, fellow Lions," he stated, "it is nonsense, [and] politically and socially absurd" to wait for the government to do everything. Delegates from his district took the floor to back the proposal. One Lion from Monterrey stated that with this mission alone "the existence of the Lions clubs of Mexico will be justified." "Rural Mexico is clamoring for schools," he argued. Another delegate from Tampico then noted that many times proposals were listened to with excitement, but after the conventions end they were not followed through. "I fear this will happen with the proposal by the Ciudad Juárez club," he stated. Another Lion from Juárez, Colonel Jesús Vidales Marroquín, stated he was disappointed at the impolite reactions by some Lions. "Many people believe that all our clubs do is have *fiestas* and dances," he noted. Vidales then began to read a letter from the Minister of Education, Torres Bodet, in which he congratulated the Juárez Lions for their decision to build an elementary schoolhouse in their city.

With members of the Lions of Mexico City club and some from the National Association of Lions Clubs (NALC) supporting the proposal, the tide began to turn in favor of the schoolhouse proposal. Francisco Doria Paz—the prominent textile industrialist and lawyer—noted that the Lions clubs of Mexico needed to embrace a mission that had a national scope. "What better than to make building schoolhouses the foundation of our organization's basic program?" he asked. Noting the support, the president of the NALC, Miguel E. Abed, reversed his position and declared that his club (Mexico City) would commit to building one school, and he personally donated 5 thousand pesos. After having a lengthy discussion on the ambitious proposal, the assembly voted once more—this time it was approved unanimously.²⁵²

²⁵¹ Corl. Jesús Vidales Marroquín "Carta Personal," May 28, 1958, Volume 1958: Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, ACLCM.

²⁵² Though the specific backdrop to the disagreement is unclear, quarrels between factions of Lions in Mexico was quite common. Frequently, disputes—such as whether or not to support the schoolhouse project—were rooted in power struggles between groups vying to have influence over the NALC. What is clear is that the disagreement between Miguel E. Abed, who was from the Mexico City club, and members from the Ciudad Juárez club (particularly Vidales Marroquín) continued into the

Remarkably, the Lions club's schoolhouse mission came a couple years before the 1948 state-led campaign to build public schools—under the presidency of Miguel Alemán Valdés. While there is no evidence that the SEP or Alemán Valdés took the idea from the work of the Lions, the timing and links does raise the possibility that it could have at least influenced the project. President Alemán—though not yet a member of Lions—was well aware of their Lion's activities. Just a year before the launching of the national campaign, Alemán was invited as the guest of honor to the inauguration of the first school built by the Lions of Mexico City.²⁵³

The Lions of Mexico's commitment to build public schools was a significant development for various reasons. First, as with the literacy campaign, this new project brought the middle classes closer to the goals of the post-revolutionary state. Second, it showed that the state was increasingly open to invite civil society to contribute towards public education, which was until recently an area reserved for the government. Finally, from the perspective of the Lions Clubs of Mexico this was an important departure from the goals of Lions International, which traditionally has focused on programs to help those with vision impairments. In essence, the Lions of Mexico prioritized and took up the cause of the post-revolutionary state, a decision that was both nationalistic and inherently political.²⁵⁴

In 1948, Miguel Alemán made a historic call to Mexicans to collaborate in the construction of thousands of public schools throughout the republic, a massive and expensive undertaking. According to statistics from the SEP, with the country's population growth and insufficient schools, Mexico was on track for a grave educational crisis. Estimates showed that somewhere between 2.5 and 3 million children did not have a school to attend, while 80 percent of the 3 million schools that already existed needed significant infrastructural upgrades. Though Miguel Alemán's legacy is commonly associated with the (premature) inauguration of the UNAM's Ciudad Universitaria in 1952, the erection of over 4,000 schools throughout Mexico in his term had arguably a greater impact in public education.²⁵⁵

To address the colossal shortage of schoolhouses, Alemán relied on the Administrative Committee of the Federal Program for the Construction of Schools (Comité Administrador del Programa Federal de Construcción de Escuelas, or CAPFCE created under Ávila Camacho) to

1950s. All quotes from the discussion are taken from: *Memoria de la XI Convención de Clubes de Leones (1945)*, pp.81-93.

²⁵³ Acta de la Junta de Mesa Directiva del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México, May 20, 1947, Caja Archivero 1946-1947, Exp. Actas Originales, ACLCM.

²⁵⁴ This did not mean that Lions Clubs in Mexico abandoned the mission to help the blind; rather they allocated far more resources, time, and emphasis on public schools—to the point that it became their core service.

²⁵⁵ “Más escuelas en que se forjen nuevos valores espirituales y morales para un México mejor,” *El Nacional*, June 23, 1948; the exact number of schools is unclear. Fernando Solana cites 4 thousand, while Tzvi Medin 5 thousand. Solana, *Historia de la educación pública en México*, 341; Tzvi Medín, *El sexenio alemanista: ideología y praxis política de Miguel Alemán*, 1. ed, Colección Problemas de México (México, D.F: Ediciones Era, 1990), 142–46.

coordinate the endeavor. Much like Cárdenas did to repay the indemnities for the nationalization of the oil industry, and Ávila Camacho for the literacy program, Miguel Alemán recognized that the state alone could not tackle the problem. "The [CAPFCE] will carry out a campaign in order to take advantage to the fullest the efforts of the federal, state, and municipal governments as well as the private sector, whose cooperation is *indispensable*," stated Alemán.²⁵⁶

After launching his crusade for schools, the president along with his cabinet members began to campaign for the support of the private sector. In June of 1948, the Rotary Club of Mexico City invited President Alemán, the Minister of Education, Manuel Gual Vidal, and Jaime Torres Bodet, then Secretary of Foreign Relations, to a luncheon dedicated to discuss the issue of public education, which they accepted. The event was widely covered by the media. Members of the national press were present, and the speeches were broadcast live on the airwaves of Radio Mil. Alemán appealed to the altruism of the Rotarians, whom he considered were "founded on friendship and cordiality," to aid the "many thousands of Mexican children" who lack schools to attend. The SEP Minister, Gual Vidal, applauded the participation of civil society in the quest for building schools. "The cooperation from all sectors of society, to whom we have reached out to," Gual Vidal was certain, "will suffice to carry out this great endeavor in a shorter time than if the government were exclusively in charge."²⁵⁷

Although the federal government's goal was to build more public schools, it also began to warm to the idea of sanctioning private institutions. In fact, shortly after Alemán's announcement, Minister of Education Gual Vidal called on private educators to do their part by providing affordable tuitions—a clear sign of the state loosening its control over the educational system. Gual Vidal assured private educators that "you shall have all the sympathy and support of the State," especially if their schools allowed poor children to attend free of charge, "since the majority of Mexican families lack the economic resources to pay for tuition." More than the content of the curriculum, it is clear that Gual Vidal's priority was to make more schools available to low-income families.²⁵⁸

The response to Alemán's crusade for building schools with the cooperation of all sectors of Mexican society was overwhelmingly favorable. Civic associations, journalists, and religious institutions were all enthusiastic about participating in the movement. Celebrating Alemán's pro-school policy, the editorial board from the Spanish newspaper in San Antonio Texas, *La Prensa*, stated that words could not do justice to the patriotic call to Mexicans made by Alemán. At the start of the crusade, it was not uncommon for regional newspapers to include special sections dedicated to the national schoolhouse movement. From Torreón, the daily *El Siglo*, for example, frequently ran an entire column to the campaign in which the paper kept the people of Torreón informed on how much money had been collected and how the construction process of each school was developing. Prelates from the Catholic Church also saw the crusade in a positive

²⁵⁶ Emphasis mine. Campaña Nacional Pro Construcción de Escuelas, Comité Minicipal, n.d., fojas 14-120, leg. 327, tomo 1375, Serie de Expedientes, Archivo General Municipal de Puebla (hereafter AGMP).

²⁵⁷ "Más escuelas en que se forjen nuevos valores espirituales y morales para un México mejor."

²⁵⁸ "Escuelas privadas aliviarán la escasez de aulas en México," *La Prensa*, April 20, 1948.

light, because it was an opportunity for the church to return to the sphere of education. Soon after the president announced the call to action, the Archbishop of Mexico, Luis M. Martínez, urged members of the church to participate in the campaign. "Since the President alludes in [his announcement] to the initiative of the private sector," stated the Archbishop, "I exhort Catholic Mexicans to make efforts towards building schools."²⁵⁹

Members from the opposition party, the PAN, however, were less enthusiastic. Although they applauded the noble and patriotic reaction of everyday Mexicans, the PAN admonished the post-revolutionary state for having allowed the schooling crisis to reach such terrible dimensions. Furthermore, the PAN continued to oppose what they viewed as the state's monopoly over the educational system. In particular, it pointed to the campaign's policy, which stated that the local committees in charge of building a school "will have no involvement in the direction nor the technical and administrative management of the school, which are exclusively of the SEP." "How is it possible," a writer from the PAN's official mouthpiece *La Nación* asked, "that after admitting the dire state of education in Mexico, and after asking mothers and fathers for their assistance to build schools, the state still intends to retain control over them?"²⁶⁰ Despite the eventual control over public schools built by the direct contributions of civil society, evidence suggests that the majority of Mexicans remained on board with the crusade.

SERVICE CLUBS AND THE SCHOOLHOUSE MOVEMENT

Like the literacy crusade, the schoolhouse movement was exactly the kind of pro-community programs that service clubs aimed to support. When Alemán initiated his campaign, there were four service club organizations in Mexico: Rotary, Lions, Sowers of Friendship, and the most recent addition (since 1937), the Junior Chamber International for men under the age of 35, also brought from the United States. Since the Lions of Mexico started their own ad hoc campaign for building schools before the state-led program, they had an "early start" compared to other organizations, with 35 schools bearing the name "Escuela Club de Leones." Nevertheless, in cities throughout Mexico, all service club organizations were participating in Alemán's crusade.

As was the case with the literacy program, clubs contributed to varying extents and levels of commitment. In some cities, clubs joined larger pro-school committees along with additional civic organizations that pooled resources. The municipal CAPFCE committee in Torreón, for example, was comprised by a motley of institutions, including the Rotary, Lions, and JCI clubs, the Centro Patronal (Employers' Union), the chambers of commerce, the regional army, the

²⁵⁹ Blás de Toledo, "Un mensaje histórico," *El Siglo de Torreón*, April 6, 1948; for an example of the column dedicated to the schoolhouse movement, see: "Construyamos escuelas," *El Siglo de Torreón*, April 16, 1948; Letter from Archbishop of Mexico, Luis M. Martínez, March 22, 1948, foja 18, leg. 327, tomo 1375, Serie de Expedientes, AGMP; Catholic lay organizations such as the Damas Católicas in Monterrey also organized to build public schools. See, for example: "Las construcciones de escuelas en Monterrey," *El Siglo de Torreón*, August 9, 1948.

²⁶⁰ Manuel Castillo, "Comentarios," *La Nación*, March 27, 1948, p.2.

municipal and state governments, among others.²⁶¹ But there were also many instances in which service clubs worked individually, gathering funds to build their "own" schoolhouse. One such case was the new Rotary Club of Monterrey, which was reorganized in 1940 after the original club disbanded to form the Sowers of Friendship.

In 1948, the new Monterrey Rotary Club committed to building an elementary school. During a luncheon in June of that year, Rotarian Angel de Fuentes pitched the proposal to his fellow members. The idea was approved and, in the heat of the moment, the Rotarians took out their wallets and spontaneously made donations, raising over 62 thousand pesos that day. After consulting with city authorities, the club decided to build the school in la Colonia Fabriles, "the heart of the popular class neighborhoods" (*barriadas populosas*), a few blocks north of Monterrey's massive iron smelting complex. By February of the following year, the school was finished, remarkably without requesting funds from anyone outside of the club. The school, which cost a total of 103 thousand pesos, was christened "Escuela 'Lic. Héctor González'," after a Rotarian and university professor who had recently died.²⁶²

It is worth noting that of the main service clubs, the Sowers of Friendship were the least interested in contributing toward the state-sponsored crusade. In fact, of the 28 clubs that existed in Mexico, only the Sowers from the city of San Luis Potosí constructed a school, which over the years expanded to accommodate students from kindergarten to high school. Yet even in this case, the institution was private—meaning that it was never handed over to the SEP—and, not surprisingly, was taught by Catholic educators. The only other club that seems to have joined the campaign was the Sowers from Ciudad Valles, also in the state of San Luis Potosí, which donated funds every month to the local CAPFCE committee for school reparations.²⁶³

As for the original Sowers of Friendship from Monterrey, they chose to direct their efforts towards private, higher education. On the night of the first session back in 1936, the Monterrey members proposed founding a top-tier university and making it the mission of the new club. Although the Sower of Friendship of Monterrey as a club did not lead the establishment of the famed Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESM or "Tec de Monterrey"), members individually did contribute toward this enterprise. And they did so also in the founding of the private Lasallian school Instituto Regiomontano, in 1942, and the cultural center Centro Cultural Carlos Pereyra, which had a strong pro-Hispanismo and Catholic program. Years later, during his second stint as the Minister of Education, Jaime Torres Bodet met with leaders of the Sowers in Tampico to discuss the possibility of collaborating with the SEP on the establishment of Teaching Colleges (in Mexico "*escuelas normales*"). Remarkably,

²⁶¹ "Se formó el Comité pro Construcción de Escuelas," *El Siglo de Torreón*, May 20, 1948.

²⁶² Historia de la fundación de la escuela "Lic. Héctor González" construida y donada a la comunidad regiomontana por el Club Rotario de Monterrey, February 1949, vol. 77; serie Asociaciones Civiles; sección Correspondencia; fondo MC, AHM.

²⁶³ "Campaña pro-escuelas," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles*, July 1948, pp.15-16.

all the club presidents declined, noting that "they could only do so if they had the assurance that the money would be managed in private hands, and not by the government."²⁶⁴

The Lions of Mexico City and Monterrey were by far the most committed and active clubs in the schoolhouse movement. The *regiomontano* Lions by 1962 had outpaced other clubs, building 11 which carried the name of the club, followed by the number of the school: "Escuela Club de Leones número 9," for instance. Beginning in 1947, the Mexico City Lions formed a permanent committee in charge of everything relating to fundraising and construction of schools in the nation's capital. With Miguel Alemán as a fellow Lion, there were opportunities for the president himself to inaugurate schools. Like any school unveiled by the president of Mexico, the events received considerable attention from the newspapers and radio news outlets. Such was the case when the Lions concluded the construction of the "Escuela Club de Leones número 2" in the working-class neighborhood Aquiles Serdán, just west of the airport. The magazine *La Semana* hailed the work done by the Lions, "demonstrating that the private sector, represented on this occasion by businessmen with a sensibility for the needs of the people, have responded to the call made by the State." The article noted that the impoverished children were in terrible need of a schoolhouse, who took classes in a "rickety shack." The authorities were going to build a school there year ago, but "why leave everything up to the government?" the writer commented. By 1960, the Mexico City Lions Club had founded a total of 8 schools, in which 13 thousand children attended.²⁶⁵

Because the different kinds of contributions that service clubs provided varied so widely, it is difficult to establish with precision how many schoolhouses were built with the support of all the main service clubs in Mexico. The exception is the Lions of Mexico, which made it its mission, and because the organization had a national headquarters that kept a tally of all the schools built. There is little doubt that the Lions built, by far, the most schools than any other service club. In 1961, Mexican Lions clubs had built 568 schools, and in the 1980s the total hovered around 750 schools.²⁶⁶ The other main international service clubs also participated,

²⁶⁴ "Colegio Sembradores de Amistad de San Luis Potosí, México.," accessed August 14, 2017, <http://colegiosembradoresdeamistad.edu.mx/>; "La primera sesión del nuevo club," pp.4 & 8; Report from Henry S. Waterman, American Consul General, October 16, 1945; Report from Henry S. Waterman, American Consul General, March 3, 1943, file 842.Carlos Peyrera (sic) Cultural Institute, Monterrey, GR 1936-1958, Box 4, RG 84; NACP; on the Sowers turning down Torres Bodet's invitation, see: Rodrigo Mendirichaga, *Sembrando amistad* (Monterrey, México: Imp. Monterrey, 2007), 100.

²⁶⁵ One the Lions of Monterrey, see: "Polio, Alfabetización y Escuelas, programa básico del Leonismo," *El Porvenir*, June 12, 1957; and "Hay en el leonismo deseos de servir y de ser útiles," *Leones: Boletín del Distrito B-3, Monterrey*, October 15, 1962; information regarding the Mexico City Lions Club's schools, including the article from *La Semana* in: exp. Comité Permanente Pro-Escuela, n.d., Caja Archivero 1947-1948, ACLCM; and "Escuelas," *Boletín: Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México*, May 9, 1960, p.18.

²⁶⁶ Olga Yolanda Couoh, "El Leonismo, es Civismo," *El Sol de Puebla*, February 13, 1961; Juan Rueda Ortiz, *El leonismo en México: una historia con 60 años de existencia* (México: Asociación de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, 1995), 137; Dr. Enrique Vela Rodríguez, "Historia del Leonismo Nacionalista en México," 2006, <http://enriquevelarodriguez.com/html/CAPITULO7.html> [accessed: 2017-08-13.].

though the statistics for these are less reliable. A SEP source from 2015 indicates that Rotary, the JCI, 20-30, Sertoma, Soroptimists, and Sowers of Friendship clubs built schools—although these current reports do not reflect the exact contribution since the 1940s. It is quite possible that some schools erected with contributions made from clubs no longer exist or changed their name and thus do not appear.²⁶⁷

The pro-schoolhouse crusade, which began in 1948 and continued for decades revealed three important and interrelated developments. First, that the state was increasingly open to the collaboration of the private sector in areas that were once considered off limits, particularly education. Second, the movement to build schoolhouses showed that the state could not shoulder on its own the financial responsibility of providing schools to the rapidly expanding population. Mexico's welfare state had reached its capacity. And third, it became evident to service clubs and other civic organizations that the efforts to uplift their communities and country in general was like trying to treat a severe disease with analgesics. In 1956, a few years after the Lions Club of Monterrey had donated their "Escuela Número 2," and as they were about to start construction work for the "Escuela Número 3," city authorities were already asking for additional assistance. "Due to the demographic growth," mayor José Luis Lozano wrote, "the building [of "Escuela Número 2"], which a year ago responded efficiently to the needs for which it was created, is now insufficient, to the degree that numerous students now have to be taught in the playground." The Rotary Club of Monterrey received a similar letter from the mayor. Concerning the "Escuela 'Lic. Héctor González'," which until a few years ago responded so well to the needs of the neighborhood, is now insufficient."²⁶⁸ Although Mexico's educational deficiencies seemed insurmountable, these philanthropic organizations, under the banner of service, continued to embark on new crusades to uplift the nation.

PART II: MORAL CRUSADERS

At about the same time that the literacy and schoolhouse campaigns were taking place, service clubs became involved in the crusade for the "moralization" of Mexican society—a movement in which various actors participated jointly, including the Catholic Church, civic organizations, and even the state. This new campaign intended on cleaning up everything from business practices to government affairs, and youth culture to the content of mass media. As Anne Rubenstein has noted, the sanitization of print media and film received the most attention from the Catholic Church and its affiliated organizations like the Knights of Columbus and the

²⁶⁷ For these numbers, I used information available on the website: "Sistema Nacional de Información de Escuelas," accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.snie.sep.gob.mx/SNIESC/>.

²⁶⁸ José Luis Lozano, Mayor of Monterrey, to Lic. León A. Flores, president of the Lions Club of Monterrey, March 12, 1956, vol. 77; serie Asociaciones Civiles; sección Correspondencia; fondo MC, AHM; José Luis Lozano, Mayor of Monterrey, to Dr. Carlos Canseco Jr., president of the Rotary Club of Monterrey, March 12, 1956, vol. 77; serie Asociaciones Civiles; sección Correspondencia; fondo MC, AHM; on the construction of the Escuela Club de Leones Número 3, see: Adrián Yáñez Martínez, Secretario del Ayuntamiento, to Lic. León A. Flores, president of the Lions Club of Monterrey, July 20, 1956, vol. 77; serie Asociaciones Civiles; sección Correspondencia; fondo MC, AHM.

Legion of Decency.²⁶⁹ Though not commonly associated with moralization, civic associations like service clubs and chambers of commerce along with the state also joined the growing chorus of moral crusaders. This impetus led by civic clubs, business organizations, and Catholics paralleled a policy of the Alemán administration, which in 1947 launched a campaign to clean up government bureaucracies but later extended beyond public office.

The next section will examine how service clubs discussed and proposed solutions to improve the morality of their communities. Service clubs looked for ostensibly non-political solutions to make their cities cleaner, more functional, and harmonious. But inevitably the service club campaigns began to have political implications as they made normative arguments about how society *ought* to function—arguments that were founded on the cultural, political, and class assumptions of service club members.

THE MEANINGS OF MORALITY

Rotary and Lions in the United States and elsewhere shared the belief that their clubs should function in their communities as beacons of moral rectitude (see Chapter One). As supposedly apolitical and disinterested civic groups, gathered only by the desire to serve, members believed they represented society's higher moral standard. This notion, which was developed in the US, grafted on well in the Mexican context. The Lions, Rotary, and Sowers clubs of Mexico in their speeches and official literature articulated this clearly. "It is the individual club that comprises the initial nucleus of our organizations," a Lions of Mexico manual stated. "It is [the club's] role to promote the participation of its members [...] in all civic and economic issues that are related with the social and moral welfare of their respective communities."²⁷⁰ One of the clearest examples was in the service club promotion of ethical practices among businessmen. It was, after all, in the context of the US Progressive Era in which businessmen formed the Rotary and Lions in the first place, responding to changes in the culture of business and the American economy.²⁷¹

Shortly after Rotary established its first clubs in 1920s Mexico, the new Rotarians often had to explain to the general public what exactly a "Rotary club" was and what purpose it served. In 1926, on the eve of a regional Rotary convention held in Coahuila, for example, the local Rotary club of Torreón presented in newspapers the basic ideals and benefits that Rotarianism had to offer the city and Mexico in general. Among these was the active promotion of moral behavior among businesses, or, as the Rotarian writing the article put it, "to combat

²⁶⁹ Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), especially chap. 3.

²⁷⁰ *Anuario Leonístico Mexicano*, 21.

²⁷¹ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

thousands of entrenched prejudices, and all kinds of suspicions and selfishness." Indeed, he explained that the objective of Rotary was to carry out "cleansing and moralizing work."²⁷²

In Mexico, this connection between transparent business practices and morality made sense. To speak of being an ethical businessman was to have good morals. In 1928, for instance, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Mining of Nuevo León called on other chambers from the country to launch a national "moralization campaign" of business. What the chamber meant by moralization had broad applications, including regulations to eliminate price speculation, excessive freight costs, "internal taxes" (*alcabalas*), and trademark infringement. "Everywhere one finds fake brands or crude imitations," the chamber of commerce complained. For instance, it noted, consumers could go to the store for a case of "Carta Blanca" beer and, if they are not careful, could mistakenly purchase a cheap knockoff called "Carta Clara" or "Carta Plata." It is worth noting that, in the moralizing of business, the state had a role to play: it needed to be the arbiter ensuring the playing field is leveled and that dishonest ("immoral") businessmen would be punished.²⁷³

Increasingly, moral rectitude was not seen among service clubs as exclusive to the business world. By the early 1940s, service clubs began gradually to articulate ideas of moralizing the habits of everyday citizens and even government officials. One early example involved the Rotary of Monterrey in 1943, which sent a memorandum to the mayor suggesting that something be done about the "problem" with brothels and prostitution in the city. The club president, Dr. Vela González, noted that "there are houses of prostitution in the city, which by no means should be allowed." And the reason was because "it is immoral."²⁷⁴

Petitions similar to these came on the eve of the state-led campaign launched by Miguel Alemán. In 1947, the president announced that it was his intention to "moralize" government, and rid it of the ill reputation that it had earned over the years as a den of thieves. Notably, his moralization call went beyond discourse. Alemán proposed a constitutional amendment (to Article 74) removing the special privileges of immunity (*fueros*) enjoyed by politicians, and passing the "Law of Responsibilities of Public Servants." These changes, he argued, would lay the foundation for a "regime of morality" (*régimen de moralidad*). "The social struggles of Mexico," Alemán argued, "entail the unwavering action against all unjust privilege, and as revolutionaries that we are, we must fight toward the elimination of privileges that emanate from *immoral* situations."²⁷⁵

²⁷² In Spanish: "labor de depuración y de moralización." "La próxima convención de rotarios," *El Siglo de Torreón*, February 17, 1926.

²⁷³ "Moralización del comercio," *El Siglo de Torreón*, July 16, 1928.

²⁷⁴ "Memorandum para el Sr. Dn. Constancio Villarreal, Presidente Municipal de la Ciudad de Monterrey, N.L." del Club Rotario de Monterrey, undated (ca. 1943), vol. 77; serie Asociaciones Civiles; sección Correspondencia; fondo MC, AHM.

²⁷⁵ Emphasis mine. "Ley de Responsabilidad: Reformas para castigar a malos funcionarios," *El Siglo de Torreón*, September 29, 1947, pp.1 & 12.

Alemán's law was initially applauded by various sectors in Mexico. Everyday citizens wrote to the president celebrating the campaign, such as Roberto Rodríguez Fuentes from Piedras Negras. "What an accomplishment it would be to achieve the complete moralization of the entire public administration!" he exclaimed. As could be expected, service clubs also expressed support. The Rotary Club of Huauchinango, a sleepy town in the state of Puebla, vowed to the president that it would provide "ample collaboration, spontaneous, and sincere" in the "moralization of public servants." Speaking on behalf of other Rotary and Lions clubs, chambers of commerce and industry, and the rest of the "active forces" (*fuerzas vivas*) the Rotarians assured Alemán that these organizations would carry out an "intense campaign" against immoral acts by government employees, particularly the infamous "*mordidas*," or bribes commonly requested by police and public servants to either "look the other way" at a traffic violation, or to speed up a process held up in a government office.²⁷⁶

Theoretically, the new federal law was supposed to work by having individual citizens denounce "corrupt" or "immoral" public workers and elected officials with the certainty that the law would prosecute them. In practice, however, there were far too many loopholes, and accused government employees could find ways to get out of sanctions, a fact that observers noted, feeding the cynicism of many critics of the post-revolutionary state.²⁷⁷ Alemán's moralizing crusade, however, had ulterior motives, involving more than just the noble duty of "cleaning up" government. The constitutional amendment was a piece of a larger puzzle of Alemán, who sought to create an image of political stability and "social peace," in order to attract foreign investment for industrial growth. But to do this, he first had to eliminate radical elements from the labor unions, including the CTM and its railroad workers' equivalent. Simply stated, his administration used the "moralizing campaign" in part to justify the removal of "corrupt" (meaning radical) union leaders, replacing them with bosses loyal to the government, better known as "*charros*."²⁷⁸

Although the actual effects of the campaign to eliminate corruption from government offices was limited at best, the initiative nonetheless had unforeseen effects. As mentioned, the Law of Responsibilities had the particularity of calling on everyday citizens to the initiative in denouncing public officials who committed "immoral" acts. This feature, though largely symbolic, was significant because the state was giving voice to the citizenry and incorporating them in the justice process. At the very least the law created a public discussion on the topic of civic participation in government affairs. Alemán's policy stimulated a public discussion over the need to eliminate immunities of politicians and make them accountable. At the same time, Alemán's moralization campaign was increasingly being applied to other areas, including those championed by Lions, Rotarians, and other service clubs. For example, in 1947, the Secretary of the Economy announced that, in accordance "with the moralization program launched by the

²⁷⁶ Roberto Rodríguez Fuentes to Miguel Alemán Valdés, August 6, 1947, exp. 545.3/112, caja 588, fondo MAV, RP, AGN; Club Rotario de Huauchinango, Puebla to Miguel Alemán Valdés, March 26, 1947, exp. 703.4/87, caja 800, fondo MAV, RP, AGN.

²⁷⁷ See, for example: "Adulterio periodística," *El Siglo de Torreón*, March 12, 1948; Lucio Mendieta y Núñez, "Moralización de la Administración Pública," *El Universal*, December 19, 1951.

²⁷⁸ Medín, *El sexenio alemanista*, pp.97-100.

President of the Republic," it would begin prosecuting businesses engaged in price speculation. In another case, Mexico City authorities in 1951 began to crack down on illegal brothels and similar houses of ill repute in compliance with the city's moralization campaign.²⁷⁹

SERVICE CLUBS AND ALCOHOLISM

With the increased interest in elevating the morality of public offices, businesses, and the behavior of everyday Mexicans, service clubs—along with other social actors—began to join a larger and amorphous moral reform movement. Among the major concerns was the abuse of alcohol. The Rotary Club of Monterrey in the 1940s, for example, made a pointed case to the mayor against the excessive number of bars in the downtown area, the poor *barrios*, schools zones, and close to the factories. The Rotarians urged the mayor of Monterrey to limit the number of permits for taverns and levy heftier taxes on alcoholic beverages. In the words of the club president, alcohol "did not constitute a necessity for the people," and thus should be limited.²⁸⁰ It was a surprising argument to make by businessmen, given that beer production was one of the main industries in the city. However, more than likely, since the Rotary of Monterrey in this period had only two members with ties to the beer industry, there were few voices within the organization to oppose such measures. As we saw in Chapter Three, it was the Sowers of Friendship Club of Monterrey that was closely linked to the Cuauhtémoc Brewery.²⁸¹

Comparable campaigns against alcoholism among the poorer classes were led by clubs in other cities as well. In the late 1950s, for example, Puebla's service clubs led a joint campaign. Luis Hinojosa González, a member of the Lions Club of Puebla, presented a proposal to the city's Board of Moral, Civic, and Material Improvement of Puebla (Junta de Mejoramiento Moral, Cívico y Material) to combat the rise in alcoholism in the city's poorest quarters. Other ideas that Hinojosa suggested involved having authorities censure movies with sexual innuendoes, and banning prostitution. Hinojosa, it should be noted, was also a militant of the PAN and the Catholic lay association, Christian Family Movement (Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, or MFC).²⁸² "What example can a child learn from an irresponsible, immoral, and

²⁷⁹ "Moralización de negociantes," *El Siglo de Torreón*, April 19, 1947; "No prosperarán ya los amparos de los propietarios de los centros de vicio," *El Nacional*, October 23, 1951, Second edition, p.4.

²⁸⁰ "Memorandum para el Sr. Dn. Constancio Villarreal, Presidente Municipal de la Ciudad de Monterrey, N.L." del Club Rotario de Monterrey.

²⁸¹ Member profile of the Rotary Club of Monterrey in: Diódoro de los Santos, *Crónica de las andanzas de los más o menos distinguidos miembros del Club Rotario de Monterrey* (Monterrey, N.L., México: Impr. Elizondo, 1951).

²⁸² In his youth, Hinojosa was also a member of Catholic student association, Confederación Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos, which was affiliated with the ACJM. See: Ricardo Tirado, "Los empresarios y la derecha en México," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 47, no. 1 (January 1, 1985): 107; on his links with the MFC and the PAN, see: "Luis Hinojosa González," *La Nación*, July 24, 1974; and also: Luis Enrique Palacios Martínez, *Una cruzada en la historia de Puebla: Historia del Partido Acción Nacional en el estado de Puebla* (Mexico City: Partido Acción Nacional, Fundación Rafael Preciado Hernández, 2016), 155. Within the conservative camp, his family would have a significant impact, not

drunkard parent?" asked Hinojosa.²⁸³ In another case, the Lions in Mexico City sponsored conferences for parents from poor neighborhoods to deter them from all kinds of vices, "especially alcoholism."²⁸⁴

While most clubs could agree that alcohol abuse was a social problem, club members in Mexico had a peculiar relationship with libations. Simply stated, drinking spirits and beer in dinner sessions and even mid-day luncheons was an integral part of the service club culture. Alcohol made sessions less formal—as they were supposed to be—and merrier; members valued it as an after-work relaxation, and it was thought to contribute toward the male camaraderie within the club. Since the 1930s, the Lions of Mexico had viewed with skepticism Cárdenas' temperance movement. The Lions regarded their "moderate" consumption of alcohol as a refined and cultured practice. "Every week, we Lions get together for a meal and we are accustomed to having a good cocktail or a good *cerveza* Moctezuma," wrote José González (an alcohol distributor), "but we don't go to our sessions with the purpose of getting drunk." "This is then, the correct use of alcoholic beverages," which, he argued, people ought to practice.²⁸⁵

Many Lions clubs throughout the republic became famous for the clubhouses they built, commonly referred to as "*casinos*" or "*cuevas*" (or "Lions' den"). Instead of meeting every week at a restaurant, the Lions of Monterrey, Puebla, and Mexico City, had their own venues with ample space for sessions. The Lions of Puebla moved into their first "den" in the late 1930s, which included a conference room, a bar, and game rooms.²⁸⁶ The Monterrey Lions Club in the 1950s built the largest casino in the country (which still exists). The area of the building itself was a mammoth 27 thousand square feet. It seemed to include everything: a main banquet and dance hall stretching over 100ft long and 75ft wide, two smaller dining halls, a kitchen, a swimming pool, library, and—last but not least—a fully equipped bar room.²⁸⁷

just in the state of Puebla, but nationally. José Hinojosa's nephew was former President of México (2006-2012) Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, also from the PAN.

²⁸³ Luis Hinojosa González, Plan de Moralización para la Ciudad de Puebla, September 19, 1959, fojas 442-454; exp. 1; caja Junta de Mejoramineto Moral, Cívico y Material, (hereafter JMMCYM), AGMP.

²⁸⁴ Comité de Educación, n.d., exp. Comité de Educación, Archivero 1954-1955, ACLCM.

²⁸⁵ José González, "Sobre el consumo de bebidas alcohólicas," *El León: Órgano de la Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana*, (likely January) 1936, 15, article found in Vol. 1935-1936, ANCL, ACLCM.

²⁸⁶ Josué Reyes Casián, "Puebla íntima: una vista al Club de Leones," *La Opinión*, June 14, 1937.

²⁸⁷ for the impressive clubhouse in Monterrey: "Casino Del Club de Leones Que Será Inaugurado Durante La Próxima Convención Nacional," *Rugido: Órgano Del Club de Leones de Monterrey*, May 1957, p.9.



Figure 12: Casino of the Lions Club of Monterrey. Picture taken weeks before its inauguration in 1957.

Source: *Rugido: Órgano del Club de Leones de Monterrey*, May 1957, 9.

It is noteworthy that, in many cases, the beer consumed at service club sessions was donated by brewery representatives, who had a good reason to do so. From the 1940s to the 1970s, it became commonplace to see in the society section of newspapers around the country articles with pictures of the weekly club sessions and parties. Without fail, one could see images of guests having a meal with a beer or making a toast. The society pages, in effect, provided "free" advertising for breweries. Beer companies became aware of this early on and began donating cases of beer to service clubs in major cities on the condition that no other brands be offered to guests. The Cuauhtémoc brewery in Monterrey even sponsored the beer given at national Lions conventions. On one occasion, the Lions Club of Mexico City in 1963 mistakenly offered a different beer, which prompted brewery representatives to complain. The Lions apologized and promised they would no longer serve other ales.²⁸⁸

Despite professing strict Catholic morality, the Sowers of Friendship clubs saw no contradictions regarding the consumption of alcoholic beverages. As stated earlier, many of the Monterrey Sowers were themselves directors at the Cuauhtémoc brewery. In Sowers' meetings around the country, like in those of the Lions, the consumption of alcohol was an important element of the culture in this male-dominated space. In certain clubs, such as in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, and Mazatlán, Sinaloa, the Sowers of Friendship organized competitions to see who could guzzle a beer the fastest or who could balance an empty bottle on their head the longest.

²⁸⁸ Acta No. 31 de la junta de Mesa Directiva del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México, March 11, 1963, exp. Actas Juntas Directiva; Archivero 1962-1963, ACLCM.



Figure 13: "Dantesco Torneo de Cerveza." Organized by the Mazatlán Sowers of Friendship Club in honor of Dante Alighieri's birthday.

Source: *Sembradores de Amistad*, July 1965, 26.

PART III: SERVICE CLUBS AND MEXICO'S "YOUTH PROBLEM"

Between the 1940s and into the 1960s, service organizations joined the growing band of moral crusaders who expressed anxieties over changing gender roles, generational gaps, sexuality, and so forth. Throughout the country, Lions, Rotary, and Sowers in particular expressed a common preoccupation with youth culture and what they considered a crisis of traditional morals. These final pages will demonstrate that the moral panics surrounding "unwholesome" movies and comic books were part of a larger impulse led by various groups to moralize Mexican youth—after all, it was adolescents and children who were "in danger" of falling victim to the evils of pornography and violent themes. Here I will examine the efforts carried out by the main clubs to solve Mexico's complex "youth problem," from preventing rebelliousness to promoting censorship in publications and film.

IMMORALITY AND MASS MEDIA

Along with the other campaigns to elevate Mexican society, clubs in cities across the country considered that comic books, magazines, films, and radio programming was laden with immoral themes, including violence, profane language, substance abuse, and sexual content or images. One of the earliest clubs to organize against immorality in the mass media was the

Sowers of Friendship in Monterrey, specifically targeting the local radio. In 1948, the club formed a committee that created a basic criterion for censoring talk shows, music, advertisements, and audio theater with "immoral or obscene" content, which could be rather capacious. Immoral themes could involve songs with sexual innuendoes to jokes that parodied the nation or the Catholic religion.

Leading the committee was the Sower Ernesto Casasús Delgado, then an active member of the Mexican Catholic Union, and former militant in the Mexican Catholic Action and Mexican Catholic Youth Association (AJCM).²⁸⁹ Likely a reflection of their distrust for state authorities, rather than urging the officials to regulate airwaves, the Sowers instead communicated directly with Monterrey's radio executives, presenting their pro-moralization case. Remarkably, the Sowers convinced eight directors to sign an agreement in which they would promise to filter the content of their station programming.²⁹⁰ The Sowers corresponded by setting up a permanent office where radio content was screened for profane language or suggestive themes. The task of vetting was given to Casasús who by 1951 was proud to say that he had red flagged a total of 244 "immoral" vinyl discs. The Monterrey Sowers, owing to their Catholic morality, were quite steadfast in their campaign to cleanse the radio, continuing it until the mid 1950s.²⁹¹ Among service clubs around the country, however, complaints over radio programming were not as common as those concerning publications and film.

The drive to moralize various forms of print media and movie theaters in the 1950s, as Rubenstein shows, was led primarily by Catholic-affiliated organizations. Service clubs and other civic groups also participated, in many cases because there was an overlap in membership.²⁹² In 1951, the Rotary Club of Morelia through its official organ *Morelia Rotario* exhorted locals to demand the banning of pornographic movies and magazines, "which offend the decency of men of integrity."²⁹³ The editor of the club's organ, it is important to note, was Arturo Vargas Cacho, an active member of the Mexican Catholic Action and in his youth was in the ranks of the ACJM.²⁹⁴ Another Rotarian from Morelia, Amado García Sánchez, who also

²⁸⁹ Ernesto Casasús, "Moralización de la radiodifusión," *El Sembrador: Revista conmemorativa de la VII convención nacional de Clubes Sembradores de Amistad*, October 1951, 22.

²⁹⁰ Of the eight radio directors they met, only one of them, Constancio de Tárnava from XEH, was a member of the Knights of Columbus.

²⁹¹ Casasús, "Moralización de la radiodifusión," 22; "Quinto aniversario de censura radiofónica," *Sembrador: Órgano mensual de la Asociación de Clubes de Sembradores de Amistad*, September 1953, 5.

²⁹² Manuel Reynoso Chacón, Rotary Club of Morelia, to President Miguel Alemán, October 10, 1949, foja s/n, exp. 704.11/34, caja 822, fondo MAV, RP, AGN.

²⁹³ "Entrevista con el señor Amado García Sánchez," *Morelia Rotario*, September 1, 1951, pp.3-4.

²⁹⁴ Arturo Vargas Cacho in 1958 became the president of the Diocesan Board of Morelia and regularly published in the Catholic Action's monthly organ of Morelia during the 1950s. See: "Campaña de moralización," *Pensamiento y acción: Boletín de la Acción Católica Mexicana*, May 1958, 11; and

was a member of the chamber of commerce, blamed the public for allowing the evil of pornography to continue. Society, he argued, "is absolutely the culprit, because it allows it, tolerates it, and applauds it by purchasing indecent publications and by frequenting immoral shows."²⁹⁵

Similar to the Morelian case, in Puebla, the Rotary and chamber of commerce member Abelardo Sánchez Gutiérrez helped organize a campaign against immoral films 1954.²⁹⁶ The Rotary Club wrote letters to the local Lions and JCI clubs to suggest they carry out a joint effort to ban "pornographic" movies shown in downtown venues like the Cine Variedades. The Puebla Lions' president replied that his club gladly would work on a joint project pursuing this goal. He noted also that as a club they had recently also discussed the issue of immoral movies and publications "which produce a tremendous impact in the minds of the youth and children who have the disgrace of watching them."²⁹⁷ The Rotary club then penned a letter to Puebla's mayor stating its concern over the lax regulations governing movie theaters. "Our Clubs," wrote the Rotarian (and university professor), Dr. Manuel Lara y Parra, "founded on morals, good manners, and service toward society have to protest" against the theaters that "seek only to profit at the expense of lustful and sexual thoughts of the masses who have not yet developed sufficient moral principles." City authorities commended the intention of the Rotarians but noted that, following President Alemán's "Moralizing Campaign," they had already formed a special "Commission for Entertainment, comprised of citizens in charge of monitoring" and ensuring that screenings are "within the norms of morals and good manners."²⁹⁸

The response and initiative by state authorities for the most part was welcomed by moral crusaders. And yet some organizations, like the Mexican Catholic Action or the Lions clubs in various cities, opted for not leaving the task to the state, which did not always prosecute offenders. Instead they pursued their own fight to protect the souls and minds of Mexico's youth.²⁹⁹ In March of 1955, the Puebla Lions Club sent letters to all the Lions of Mexico, urging them to collaborate on the campaign against "harmful publications," such as comic books (known as "*paquines*") and magazines like *Vea*, which featured pictures of pinup girls. The club noted that, as Lions, it was their "patriotic duty" to contribute toward elevating the morality

Francisco García Urbizu, *Bocetos biográficos: documental en retratos* (Zamora, Mich., México: Talleres "Alfa," 1972), sec. Arturo Vargas Cacho.

²⁹⁵ "Entrevista con el señor Amado García Sánchez," pp.3-4.

²⁹⁶ Although not affiliated with any Catholic lay organization, Abelardo Sánchez had a close relationship with members of the clergy. See: José Refugio Muñoz Nava, "La privatización de la educación superior en Puebla," in *La educación superior en el proceso histórico de México*, ed. David Piñera Ramírez, vol. II (UABC, 2001), 658.

²⁹⁷ Alberto Parra Valdez, Lions Club of Puebla, to Manuel Lara y Parra, Rotary Club of Puebla, July 26, 1954, Exp. Correspondencia Instituciones; Archivo 1954-1955, Vol.1, ACRP.

²⁹⁸ Manuel Lara y Parra, Rotary Club of Puebla, to Nicolás Vázquez Arriola, Mayor of Puebla, July 14, 1954, Exp. Correspondencia Instituciones; Archivo 1954-1955, Vol.1, ACRP.

²⁹⁹ "Cruzada de moralización la emprende la Acción Católica," *El Sol de Puebla*, July 12, 1955.

"especially among youth of both sexes who in recent years have been victims of the insidious effects of pornographic and gangster-like publications." The Lions of Puebla further exhorted their fellow Lions to work in conjunction with others in their respective cities, including the JCI and Rotary clubs as they were already doing.³⁰⁰



Figure 14: The cover of the "scandalous" magazine *Vea*, from July 17, 1954.

In addition to Catholic organizations and service clubs, chambers of commerce in various cities were also joining the movement against offensive media. In 1953, for example, the Monterrey chamber of commerce, "representing the city's *fuerzas vivas*," filed a lawsuit against distributors of "indecent literature." The chamber lobbied also to have bookstores and newspaper stands ban the sale of such materials. The case, however, was dismissed by a federal judge, which the chamber of commerce viewed as a major setback to the moralizing efforts of the SEP and of Monterrey's citizens. Chambers of commerce from other cities, such as Puebla, were submitting similar complaints to authorities, and in some cases well-informed of what developments elsewhere in the crusade against pornographic material. For instance, as the

³⁰⁰ Club de Leones de Puebla to Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México, March 28, 1955, exp. 7, caja 13, serie Asuntos Legales, sección Vida y Teatro, fondo EI, AHDF.

chamber of commerce in Morelia led its local campaign against immoral literature, the members followed closely what their counterparts in Monterrey were doing.³⁰¹

The crusade against offensive publications, radio, and film lasted through the end of the 1950s. Magazines and comics with nudity and foul language did not disappear entirely from newspaper stands as many who joined the crusade wanted. In the case of publications, this largely had to do with the ineffectual and weak regulating commission (Comisión Calificadora) that was reopened as part of Alemán's moralization policy. Nevertheless, after several years of pressure mounting from various sectors in society, the state in the late 1950s responded by coordinating with the private National Chamber of Broadcasting Industries in which the Catholic-inspired League of Decency was represented. In coordination with the secretary of communication, the National Chamber began regulating content and imposing fines on movies with nudity or censoring music that was indecent. The move was applauded by conservative elements. As Eric Zolov has shown, the state benefitted by finding a way to promote themes in movies and music albums that celebrated Mexican nationalism. At the same time, the state began to act upon the perceptions held by parent groups, the Church, and service clubs, namely that the "rebelliousness" of Mexico's youth needed to be reeled in.³⁰²

SERVICE CLUBS AND YOUTH REBELLIOUSNESS

As the moral panic surrounding offensive media was ongoing, Rotary, Lions and Sowers of Friendship clubs expressed a related over youth culture in general. Across the country, in club sessions, conferences, newspaper articles, and club publications, members believed that a striking and alarming pattern of youth rebelliousness was increasing. Like authorities, Catholic prelates, and parents, service club members complained of the rise of the so-called *rebeldes sin causa* (rebels without a cause). Adolescents, it seemed, were more than ever engaging in acts of delinquency, while others dropping out of school, and showing little respect towards adults. Within the clubs themselves, members attributed the rise in youth rebelliousness to dysfunction within Mexican families. Poor and working-class parents, they believed, spent little time raising their children, as they worked long hours or multiple jobs to make ends meet. Fathers were often alcoholics who drank their paychecks or, worse yet, single mothers were raiding children from multiple partners. Unsupervised children and adolescents with access to pornographic magazines or unwholesome radio shows only made a bad situation worse.

³⁰¹ The Chamber of Commerce of Monterrey story was reprinted in: "Propósitos Moralizadores," *Morelia Comercial: Órgano Mensual de la Cámara de Comercio de Morelia*, December 1954; on Morelia's campaign, see: "Editorial: Hacia una meta de moralización," *Morelia Comercial: Órgano Mensual de la Cámara de Comercio de Morelia*, August 1, 1951.

³⁰² Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation*, 109; Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 53–58; for a discussion on radio in Mexico, see: Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920-1950* (University of Arizona Press, 2000).

Since their arrival in Mexico during the 1920s, service clubs had proclaimed to be organizations that gathered upstanding citizens and impeccable morals. As such, members believed they could contribute toward addressing the issue with youths in Mexico. As early as the late 1930s, for instance, city authorities had reached out to the Rotary Club of Guadalajara for "moral and material" support in curbing youth delinquency in the city.³⁰³ In other places, members believed they could contribute toward halting the "moral insanity" fueling the "unrestrained youth," as the Lions from remote cities as Ixmiquilpán, Hidalgo and Torreón, Coahuila called it.³⁰⁴ Rotarians, Lions, and Sowers considered that problems with youth rebelliousness could not be resolved by relying on public school teachers or state agencies. As leaders in their community, they had the moral imperative to help. Accordingly, clubs in various urban centers began holding conferences or attending talks on the subject of youth culture, given by experts in the field. In the case of the Lions Club of Mexico City, the members had regular contact with the Mexican Society of Pediatrics, which occasionally invited the Lions to a series of lectures on the psychology behind youth delinquency.³⁰⁵

Certain service clubs noted that the so-called youth problem was not exclusive to Mexico's poorer classes. In the late 1950s, the Lions of Gómez Palacio in Durango complained publicly in local newspapers that the so-called rebels without a cause "especially among the middle class" had become "the scourge of society." The Lions argued that "more than repressive and energetic action from authorities," what was needed was "direction and counsel by those who have the obligation to lead them on the right path." Accordingly, the club announced that it would launch a campaign against immoral music, radio dramas, and movies, which they considered were a factor in the "relaxation" of moral standards.³⁰⁶ Locals praised the Lions' initiative to address the issue, publishing congratulatory letters in the papers. "It is admirable," an unnamed citizen from Durango wrote, "that the 'Lions' have recognized on this occasion the scandalous [problems] within the middle classes and well-off."³⁰⁷ And by the late 1950s, one of the places that many Mexicans began to associate with the middle-class youth and rebelliousness was the university.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ "Cooperación de los rotarios para suprimir la delincuencia infantil," *El Informador*, December 20, 1939, pp.1-2.

³⁰⁴ Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, *Memoria de la XXIV convención nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, celebrada en la C. de México, D.F. los días 4, 5, 6 y 7 de junio de 1958* (Mexico D.F., 1958), 75.

³⁰⁵ "Carta del Dr. Rafael Álvarez Alva," *Leones: Órgano oficial del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México*, September 1, 1958, 33.

³⁰⁶ "Moralización de la juventud," *El Siglo de Torreón*, August 7, 1959, p.2.

³⁰⁷ "Comentarios," *El Siglo de Torreón*, September 1, 1959.

³⁰⁸ The topic of student and labor movements and the reaction of service clubs during the long 1960s is the topic of the next chapter.

In early April 1951, a group of infuriated parents approached the Lions of Mexico City requesting its intervention in a scandal that occurred at UNAM. Their sons recently had been admitted to the school of architecture. As part of a longtime student tradition, they were subjected to a "*novatada*," a hazing ritual that involved parading freshmen as if they were dogs through the streets of Mexico City and "torturing" them with electric shocks. Allegedly, their children had severe injuries and several other newly admitted students had died as a result of the brutal hazing. The parents claimed they went first to university officials and to the police, but in both instances their complaints were brushed aside. Speaking on behalf of the parents, the Lions Club wrote directly to the interim chancellor of the UNAM, Juan José González Bustamante, demanding an investigation and a stop to the hazing tradition. The chancellor answered that the incident could not be confirmed by the school of architecture, but vowed to probe the matter further, "this way hoping to satisfy the request of your respectful Association."³⁰⁹

As in previous years, the hazing incident of 1951 received much attention from the national press. Editorials boards and opinion pages from around the country condemned the *novatada* led by architecture students, despite the fact that the students denied all accounts.³¹⁰ Famous conservative journalist Nemsio García Naranjo railed against the hazing, calling it a "stupid tradition" that "penetrates the jurisdiction of barbarism." He blamed "The student mayhem" on the university authorities for condoning the tradition. A Mexico City news radio show accused the students of "university gangsterism." Notably, the involvement of the Lions also made headlines in the major papers, including *Excelsior*, *El Universal*, and *Últimas Noticias*. One news outlet reported the students' actions were so terrible that "it has made an institution as respectable as the Lions Club demand the affirmative intervention from the university authorities and police."³¹¹

The Lions' plea certainly did not bring the end of *novatadas* at UNAM. Nevertheless, this incident shows that by the early 1950s, service clubs had come to command a level of recognition, if not respect, in Mexican society. No longer were they just charitable clubs with businessmen, they were becoming civic advocates and guardians of morality. Concerning youth rebelliousness, all service organizations in Mexico offered approaches to resolving the dilemma. Among these included creating spaces for young men and women to socialize in a wholesome environment.

³⁰⁹ Juan José González Bustamante, Rector Interino de la UNAM, to Roberto Serralde, Presidente del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México, May 14, 1951, and also "El Club de Leones ha recibido denuncias," *Excelsior*, April 27, 1951, both in: exp. Correspondencia Oficial, Caja Archivero 1950-1951, ACLCM.

³¹⁰ "Rechazan grave acusación los alumnos de arquitectura," *El Universal*, April 27, 1951, exp. Correspondencia Oficial, Caja Archivero 1950-1951, ACLCM.

³¹¹ Información radiada a través del Diario del Aire Cada Hora, April 24, 1951, exp. Correspondencia Oficial, Caja Archivero 1950-1951, ACLCM.

YOUTH GROUPS FOR OTHERS

Since the arrival of Rotary and Lions in the 1920s and 30s, funding youth organizations and activities designed for children of poorer neighborhoods became one of the key missions of clubs throughout Mexico. The notion guiding this policy was that if adolescents were gathered around wholesome activities, be it sporting or recreational, and led by responsible adults they could look up to, then the chances of them falling prey to delinquency were lessened. Both organizations worked closely with the so-called scouting associations in Mexico, including those affiliated to the International Boy Scouts Association and Mexican organizations such as the "Exploradores de México," renamed later to the "Asociación de Scouts de México" in 1932. On some occasions, they also collaborated with their female equivalent, the Guías de México (Girl Guides of Mexico). Often, youth organizations and service clubs would participate in joint events. Recall that the first international Rotary and Lions conventions held in Mexico City during 1935 included the participation of the Guías de México and boys from the Exploradores. The same would occur in 1952, during the international conventions of Rotary and Lions hosted in Mexico City. Indeed, it became common for youth groups to volunteer support during regional, national, and international conventions of both service clubs, in return for the financial patronage of the Rotarians and Lions.³¹²

The affinity between recreational youth associations and service clubs was not particular to Mexico. In most countries where clubs existed, both youth and businessmen's groups often worked in tandem on the premise that the goals of these organizations overlapped. Like the adult clubs, the Boy Scouts taught adolescents to carry out service in their community and goodwill towards others. The Scouts, also similar to Rotary and Lions, promoted civic values, nationalism, and proper morals. Another similarity with Scouting in other parts of the world including Latin America was the involvement of the Catholic Church.

The Scout movement in Mexico (and in major Latin American countries), was largely overtaken by individuals closely linked with the Catholic Action and the Knights of Columbus.³¹³ In Mexico two men who figured prominently were Jorge Núñez Prida, founder of the Exploradores de México and the Scouts de México, and his successor, the Knight of Columbus, Juan Antonio Lainé Roiz, chief architect of the Asociación de Scouts de México (Scouts of Mexico Association). After several schisms within the scouting movement, Lainé's organization united various groups in 1943 that became affiliated it with the international Boy

³¹² Donations in Archivo 1956-57-I(6).pdf; For a general history of the Scouting movement in Mexico, see Ramón M. Ponce S. and Enrique Zenil V., *La flor de Lis: entre vientos y tormentas: historia de los scouts en México, 1913-1941*, vol. 1 (México: Sigar, 2004).

³¹³ On the links between the Boy Scouts and the Catholic Church in Chile, see: Jorge Rojas Flores, *Los boy scouts en Chile: 1909-1953* (Santiago, Chile: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, 2006); and in Brazil: Max Eduardo Brunner Souza, "Pensamento social conservador na modernidade brasileira contemporânea: estudo de caso sobre o movimento escoteiro" (M.A. Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2010).

Scouts committee in London. By the late 1940s, the Scouts of Mexico Association claimed a membership of 12 thousand in cities across the country.³¹⁴

Lainé's understandings of the need to guide Mexican youth was in many ways compatible with those of the Lions and Rotary clubs. "Rotarians and Scouters, see each other as members of the same great Universal family," declared Juan Lainé to the Puebla Rotary Club in August of 1950. Lainé was himself a native from Puebla who spent several years organizing clubs throughout the republic. On this occasion, he and representatives from the Boy Scouts of Mexico were the guests of honor at club's dinner session in Puebla. What united men like them, Lainé noted, was the "desire to serve others." "And there could not be a more opportune moment than the present to see the decadence of the moral values in society," Lainé stated. Mexico's youth was being poisoned by "exotic doctrines" and materialist impulses, leading them to treat their parents without respect. "In the face of these problems, which our generation must solve... there exist none other than one path: to follow God, and return to the spirituality from which the world has turned away," concluded Lainé. While Rotary and Lions clubs were officially non-sectarian, there was no problem embracing the Catholic-inspired program of the Scouts.³¹⁵

In the case of the Sowers of Friendship, since the 1940s it was active in promoting activities for the working-class and poor youth. Some clubs, such as the Sembradores of Irapuato in the state of Guanajuato were invested in providing financial support to the Boy Scouts association in their city. In other case, the Monterrey Sowers spearheaded the construction of the "Club Deportivo Juvenil," a sporting center with restrooms, soccer and baseball fields, a cafeteria, and even sleeping quarters. The Monterrey club built it specifically for orphaned boys who sold newspapers or shined shoes to make a living. Reflecting their religious beliefs, the Sowers placed the management of the youth center to a Salesian priest, Guillermo M. Beguerise, who would also give the boys "a proper moral education." During its inauguration in early 1947, the Sower Ricardo Margáin Zozaya, referring to the children taken in by the center, declared that "from now on, these little ones, abandoned by the State, forgotten by society will have a common home, guidance, clothing, and bread."³¹⁶

Likewise, the Lions clubs of Mexico invested heavily in the promotion of the Boy Scouts of Mexico. Lions clubs throughout the country, such as the Lions of Colima and Tijuana, held

³¹⁴ Report "Mexican Boy Scout Organizations, February 27, 1950, file: 812.4612/2-2750, Mexico, Ciudad Juárez Consulate GR, Box 4497 (1950-1954), RG 59; NACP; Ponce S. and Zenil V., *La flor de Lis*, 1:A-III, of the appendix.

³¹⁵ Discurso del Sr. D. Juan Lainé, Presidente del H. Consejo Nacional de los Scouts de México, August 23, 1950, exp. Trabajos; Archivo 1950-1951, Vol. II, ACRP.

³¹⁶ "Discurso del Sr. Lic. Ricardo Margáin Zozaya, pronunciado en la inauguración del Club Deportivo Juvenil," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles*, March 1947, 19.

fundraising events to sponsor the formation of local troops.³¹⁷ Even then former president of Mexico Miguel Alemán with the support of his club in Mexico City led in 1966 a national fundraising campaign, whose goal was to collect 3 million pesos for the youth association. By then, the Boy Scouts of Mexico had expanded considerably, to the point that the organization's leadership was considering building an international scouting center in Ensenada, Baja California, some 90 miles south of the US-Mexico border. The service club interest in organizing youth groups as a way to instill morality and discipline extended also to the children closest to the members themselves.³¹⁸

YOUTH GROUPS FOR THEIR OWN

Beginning in the mid 1950s, the Lions and Rotary International headquarters in Chicago opened discussions on the possibility of forming parallel youth organizations. The idea to organize adolescents who were both relatives of members and non-relatives was born out of two developments. On the one hand, the Lions and Rotary had neglected this segment of the population, which already had a demonstrated interest in forming service clubs. Since the 1910s, there existed throughout the United States several service organizations targeting youths to young adult men. In the city of St. Louis, Missouri, 1915, the first Junior Chamber International (JCI) club for young adults between the ages of 18 and 35 was formed (its original name was the Young Men's Progressive Civic Association and later the Junior Citizens). The original founders saw the JCI as natural follow-up organization for former Boy Scouts who were too old for singing around a campfire in short pants and pith helmets, and sought instead professional networking. Along the same lines were two other organizations formed in 1922: The Active International, in Aberdeen, Washington, and the 20-30 International, in Sacramento, California, both established for young men, ages 20 to 30. If these organizations were attracting youth, why could the Lions and Rotarians not do something similar?³¹⁹

The second development was related to the 1950s and 60s perception of youth culture in the United States and abroad. By then, there was a consensus that a crisis of morals and rebelliousness existed among younger generations. "In many parts of the world we have heard about our changing, challenging youth problems," noted Joseph A. Abey, president of RI in 1962. Responding to the so-called youth crisis, Lions and Rotary officials in Chicago considered that one approach to this problem was forming groups that could instill civic and moral values in

³¹⁷ "Kermesse Organizada Por Los Boy Scouts," *Diario de Colima*, May 19, 1955, p.1; *Anuario Leonístico Mexicano*, p.66.

³¹⁸ *Boletín: Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México*, December 1, 1966, p.35.

³¹⁹ J. Ed Cain and Cal H. Huntley, "Meeting of the 20-30 Association, December 11, 1926," *The Twenty-Thirtian*, December 1926, p.2; Andrew R. Boone, "Rotary's Younger Brother," *The Rotarian*, August 1929; "Founders - Junior Citizens," accessed September 1, 2017, http://www.usjayceefoundation.org/founders/junior_citizens.htm. Since the 20-30 and Active International goals were so similar, leadership from both agreed to merge, becoming the Active 20-30 International in 1960.

boys and young men. Of the two organizations, Lions International was the first to launch a youth club in 1957, calling it Leo (an acronym for Leadership, Experience, and Opportunity), modeled after a boys' club formed by the Lion Jim Graver from Abington, Pennsylvania. The Lions created two tracks within Leo clubs: one for adolescents ages 12 to 18, and the second for young adults up to 30.³²⁰ A few years later, in 1962, Rotary also formed its equivalent, called Interact, for boys (ages 12-18) who RI believed "will be the businessmen and professional leaders of tomorrow."³²¹ Not coincidentally, in the context of the 1968 student protests and violence worldwide, RI created the next step for young adults under 25, through Rotaract. The Chicago headquarters viewed the creation of Rotaract clubs as a way "to stimulate acceptance, of high ethical standards in all occupations...develop leadership and responsible citizenship, and to promote international understanding and peace."³²²

Although promoting the youth-focused groups became official international club policy after the late 1950s, local Lions and Rotary clubs in Mexico—and likely in other countries—had already begun to organize their own years prior. The earliest to do this was the Lions of Mexico City in 1949, forming the "Club de Cachorros" (the Cubs Club), which was open for the sons, daughters and younger siblings of adult members the below the age of 21. Later, an additional category of members was created to allow Cubs to "recommend" friends to join. Using the Mexico City example, the Mexican Lions headquarters (NALC) began encouraging other clubs in Mexico to form their own, sending the Mexico City club's charter and bylaws as templates.³²³

Rotary in Mexico did not have a comparable nation-wide impulse to form youth groups, largely because of the lack of a national headquarters. Nevertheless, some local Rotary clubs showed an interest in developing them. Such was the case of the Rotary Club of Puebla in 1955, whose members encouraged their children and young relatives to join a youth club called the "Club Piccolinos." It is worth noting that Piccolinos, which is Italian for "Club Little Ones," reflects a preference for a more European-sounding name, giving it an air of sophistication. In other cities, Rotary club members preferred to have their children join more formal and recognized clubs. The Rotary Club of Mexico City in 1951, for instance, collaborated with 20-30 International by having their children join the newly-arrived youth service organization. The Sowers of Friendship also did not have a formal youth club, but did find ways to incorporate

³²⁰ "History of LEO," *Lions 324A6 District Directory (2014-15)*, September 13, 2015, p.103-04.

³²¹ *Proceedings: Fifty-Third Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1962), p.230.

³²² *Proceedings: Fifty-Ninth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1968), p.398.

³²³ "Modelo de un acta constitutiva para un club de cachorros," in *Anuario leonístico mexicano: ejercicio social 1949-1950* (México, D.F.: Asociación Nacional de Clubes de Leones de la República Mexicana, 1950), 269.

their children into club activities. The Sowers of Culiacán, Sinaloa, for example, created a musical band for their youth to play at sessions and public events.³²⁴

Much like the adult service clubs, the youth groups were formed officially to provide service toward the community, including park cleaning, planting trees, or volunteering at a clinic. Internally, the Lion Cubs, Piccolinos, and others of the sort also functioned to instill a variety of values, including discipline, proper morals, and civic pride. Parents thought that their children in these youth clubs could learn to avoid the "bad examples in pernicious films, television, radio, theater, press, and other publications without integrity."³²⁵ It was common for the boys to organize sporting tournaments and teams, thus inculcating teamwork, camaraderie, and exercise. The more social events, such as dances, costume parties, and dinners were always under the close supervision of their parents. The Lions of Mexico City, for instance, were relieved their "*cachorros*" could enjoy dances "without needing the artifice of alcohol."³²⁶ As groups under the tutelage of the adult ones, youth clubs also emphasized their position within the traditional patriarchal family structure. And if children would get in any predicament, they could count on their parents. On one occasion, the Piccolinos Club in Puebla, organized a charity dinner party at a restaurant in which they charged guests an entrance fee. After a small turnout, the Piccolinos were left with a hefty restaurant bill, and resorted to asking the Rotary Club (their parents) for funds to cover it—which it did.³²⁷

The social gatherings and events of youth clubs also reinforced traditional male and female gender roles. Boys were expected to ask girls to a ball, dance as a couples, buy girls sodas, and the boys escort their dates back to their homes. A mainstay of Lions and the JCI's were the traditional "club queen" contests, which were the object of much fanfare both within the clubs and local newspapers. Every year, a number of adolescent girls were proposed as candidates, who again were usually the daughters, younger sisters, or other female relatives of the men. The girls would launch a campaign with the patronage of her father or male relative, and whoever received the most votes would (literally) be crowned the club's queen during a special coronation ceremony. Though largely a symbolic role, since they did not have any authority, the "queens" would have a public role, inaugurating a new school or attending an orphanage. These activities, then, served to replicate the "normal" social relations, according to their gender roles.

³²⁴ "Club Piccolino" afiliado al Club Rotario de Puebla (fundado en el período 1955-56), n.d., foja 107, exp. Club Piccolino, Archivo 1955-1956, Vol. III, ACRP; Ray M. Fletcher, 20-30 International Coordinating Director in Mexico, to Dr. Eliseo Gómez G., Rotary Club of Puebla, May 12, 1952, exp. Correspondencia General, Archivo 1951-1952, Vol. I, ACRP.

³²⁵ Rodolfo Balmaceda Arratía, "Los cachorros," *Boletín: Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México*, September 14, 1959, 1-2.

³²⁶ Balmaceda Arratía, 2.

³²⁷ Jaime Molina Landero, Club Piccolino de Puebla, to Alfredo Canales, Rotary Club of Puebla, February 9, 1959, exp. Correspondencia con instituciones, Archivo 1958-1959, Vol. I, ACRP.



Figure 15: Queen of the Lions Club of Mexico City, ca. 1950s.

Source: In the author's possession.

Membership in these groups was also a source of status both for the young boys and girls and their parents. With the attention in the press and within the club, fathers of queens were proud that their daughters were the representation of feminine beauty. Notably, the queen's typical white gown, crown, and scepter were modeled after European or fairytale images of royalty—and not after an Aztec or Mayan queen, for example—which can be seen as a claim to whiteness or "Europeanness." For the young boys and girls, it was also prestigious to hold membership in one of their city's most exclusive clubs. In some urban centers, it was common for youth clubs (like the adult ones) to have a special column in newspapers' society page dedicated to announcing group news, social functions, birthdays, and charitable events. And local dailies could not be more direct about highlighting the exclusivity of these gatherings. "The cream of society will attend the *Cachorros'* dance," read a 1954 column from *La Opinión* in

Puebla. Celebrating their first anniversary, the sons and daughters of the Lions were entertained by famous radio personalities and film actors, along with a live orchestra which played "songs in vogue in Mexico City's dance halls."³²⁸

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown the increased involvement of service clubs in the social, material, and moral uplift of mid-century Mexico. In doing so, I have demonstrated that clubs were willing to collaborate with state-led projects, such as the literacy, schoolhouse, and moralization campaigns. However, there were limits to how far clubs would go along with the state. In the case of the anti-corruption, the government showed it was not entirely committed to cleaning up bureaucracies, and the clubs, with their self-congratulatory arrogance and moral purity, became disillusioned with trying to work with the state. Over time, service clubs more readily formed alliances with Catholics and businessmen's groups than with the state.

Service club participation in the campaigns to build schools and teach literacy was an important change in the relationship between the middle classes and the state. Giving the need of schoolhouses and high illiteracy rates, the state was willing to moderate its policy towards public education and invite the private sector. At the same time, this allowed service clubs to collaborate on their own terms. In the case of the Sowers' "*maestras misioneras*" in Puebla, as we saw, they joined the crusade to teach literacy, but added their own agenda by peaching "proper" Catholic morals and personal hygiene.

By the mid-1950s another trend was becoming noticeable. Increasingly Rotary, Lions, Sowers, and other clubs were collaborating on joint projects, not only with the state, but with other civic organizations, including the chambers of commerce, the Employers Unions (Centro Patronal), and Catholic lay organizations. This pattern would continue, having greater implications in the context of the so-called long 1960s, which witnessed the rise of radical student movements and popular protests.

³²⁸ "Lo más Granado de la Sociedad asistirá al próximo Baile de los Cachorros," *La Opinión*, April 17, 1955, p.4.

CHAPTER 5
SERVICE CLUBS, ANTI-COMMUNISM,
AND THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION:
THE CASES IN 1960S PUEBLA AND MONTERREY

Throughout the early 1960s, the city of Morelia, Michoacán became the battleground of violent confrontations between leftist and conservative student factions, vying for dominance over the state university. Dailies critical of the left-wing students characterized them as traitors and claimed they were being duped by Cuban subversives. Angered by the headlines, students on one occasion in 1963 retaliated by smashing the windows one of the newspaper's offices. Amid the violence, the Lions and Rotary clubs in Morelia coordinated with chambers of commerce to temporarily shut down supermarkets, restaurants, department stores, radio stations, and other places of business in order to pressure the governor to remove the "communist cells" from the university. In a joint effort, these and other conservative groups also published insertions in regional and national newspapers denouncing the so-called communists.

The intense pressure placed upon the authorities by Morelia's "*fuerzas vivas*" compelled the governor to call on federal authorities for assistance. Then, on October 6, 1966, (two years before the infamous 1968 student massacre in Mexico City), President Díaz Ordaz sent the army rolling into Morelia to occupy the university. Three days later, one student was killed, dozens injured, and over 620 students and university professors arrested on charges of sedition. Upon imposing martial law and reestablishing order, PRI-linked labor, peasant, and teachers' unions, conservative groups (the PAN and UNS), and service clubs of Michoacán in unison congratulated the authorities, or as they called them the "progressive government" of Díaz Ordaz, for "punishing the communist elements with exemplary fashion."³²⁹

The mobilization of Morelia's service clubs against university students was certainly not an isolated case in Mexico. Rather, the concerted efforts from service clubs with civic and religious organizations to demand the state's most heavy-handed response to student and labor protests became frequent in major cities. Unlike in the 1950s, service clubs in the 1960s went beyond condemning popular movements—they were now actively collaborating with other institutions to organize boycotts and campaigns to pressure the state to safeguard the nation from a God-less, communist takeover.

The activism of Rotarians, Lions, Sowers, and other club members in Mexico came as a result of several factors that converged by the early 1960s. As the following pages will show, global trends and ideas that circulated among service clubs around the world, including a Cold War hysteria furthered by the Cuban Revolution and the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion, had a direct influence among Mexican clubmen. But there were also local conditions that made

³²⁹ The case of Morelia is taken from: Copies of DFS Report 7-X-66, "Estado de Michoacán," October 7, 1966, fojas 329-45, exp. 9, caja 2947, DGIPS, AGN; "La iniciativa privada con los gobiernos progresistas," *Diario de México*, April 22, 1966, 5, newspaper clipping in exp. 33, caja 2985-A, DGIPS, AGN; "Protesta general del comercio por los disturbios en Morelia," *La Voz de Michoacán*, October 8, 1966; "La intervención del ejército fue perfectamente legal," *La Voz de Michoacán*, October 10, 1966.

these developments possible. Since the 1940s, the state invited the participation of clubs in issues relating to public education—a trend that continued into the 1960s. As a corollary of their inclusion, service clubs developed the sense that they were entitled to engage with the politics of education. By then, however, a new element completed the politicization process of service organizations: the specter of communism infiltrating the school system and poisoning the minds of Mexican children.

This chapter will begin by tracing the growth of anticommunist discourse among international service clubs in the Americas during the 1950s. While Mexican clubs followed the anticommunist position of their global peers, rarely did local Rotary, Lions, and other service organizations in Mexico act in collaborative efforts to address the problem of communism. This began to change, however, as popular movements became more frequent and student politics became radicalized. As the Morelia example above illustrates, service clubs responded by uniting with other civic organizations to demand the state use whatever means necessary to stop the "red menace." To illustrate these developments, Part II will examine the politicization of service clubs in the city of Puebla against a radical university student movement. Finally, Part III zeroes in on the case of the Sowers of Friendship and their fight against the influence of Marxist ideas in elementary school textbooks printed by the state.

PART I: SERVICE CLUBS AND POPULAR MOVEMENTS, 1940s – 1950s

A fundamental component of service clubs since their emergence in the United States has been the promotion of capitalism and the rejection of communism, a policy that characterized clubs in both the US and overseas. Lions International, for instance, was largely supportive of McCarthyism.³³⁰ During the 1950 convention held in Chicago, Lions delegates from 28 countries (of which 15 were Latin American) agreed to combat the "infiltration of communism into the educational institutions, press, radio, and screen, labor business, and into the governments of the countries where Lions clubs are established."³³¹ In some part of Latin America, Lions clubs went as far as to banish those who were known members of the communist party, as was the case in Ecuador during the late 1940s.³³²

The climate of anticommunism of the 1950s in the US motivated clubs to reach out to fellow Rotarians and Lions in other parts of the world, asking them for their solidarity in the fight against communism. And while most clubs overseas were cooperative, these calls to action did not always elicit the response that Americans sought. In 1952, for instance, the Rotary Club of Maracay, Venezuela replied to a US club that such an invitation would be "in violation of

³³⁰ Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society*, 144–45.

³³¹ Thomas Morrow, "World Combat Against Red Voted by Lions," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 21, 1950, sec. Part 1, 16.

³³² Acta de la Reunión de la Junta de Relaciones Internacionales en Nueva York, Nueva York, July 17, 1949, p.4, Vol. 1950, NALC, ACLCM.

Rotary International norms" and urged the Americans to "strictly observe the statutes of Rotary."³³³

Although Rotarians opposed Marxism, the international organization was careful to avoid making official statements that sounded too "political." Committed to its non-political intervention policy, RI followed a more implicit anti-communist discourse, never as combative as the Lions. Even at the height of the McCarthy era, the president of RI stated that "It is obvious that everything for which Rotary International stands is the very antithesis of Communism." While "Communist spokesmen have declared Rotary to be a mere political prop of the bourgeois rule which must be destroyed under Communism," he argued, instead Rotary promotes "liberty of the individual, for freedom of thought, speech, and assembly, freedom of worship, and freedom from persecution."³³⁴

In Mexico, international service clubs during the 1950s also opposed communism for being a dangerous political ideology. Lions and Rotary in Mexico often invited US ambassadors and consuls as guests of honor to dinner sessions, which gave them platforms to tell of the horrors of communism in Korea and Russia.³³⁵ However, Mexican club members also based their rejection on religious grounds. The Rotary Club of Morelia, for instance, attributed the rise of communism around the world to the "lack of faith." Communism, it argued, had especially flourished in places "where atheism and crime live in disgusting promiscuity."³³⁶

As was the case with many other developing countries, in Mexico there was a growing concern that communism would find adherents within the poorer segments of society, especially the working classes but also university students. As labor strikes and student movements became more common after the late 1940s, these forms of popular protests became the target of critics who downplayed them as communist agitations. Service clubs in Mexico became part of this swelling tide of critics who equated organized labor and student movements with communism—regardless of whether or not they actually were. Well before the infamous 1968 student movement in Mexico City, Rotary, Lions, Sowers, and other clubs in cities across the country were among the most ardent supporters of the state having a zero tolerance towards so-called communist-inspired movements.

Not all student activism took place in the nation's capital. Student-led movements were quite common throughout the country, such as in Guadalajara, Puebla, Durango, and so forth. For instance, in Morelia, students organized a strike in July 1949 after learning that the governor of Michoacán, José María Mendoza Pardo, had used 1 million pesos of state funds to pay for an open-air theater in which his daughter would dance the ballet. For a government

³³³ Mario Briceño Perozo, *Por el ojo de la rueda dentada* (Caracas, Venezuela: s.n., 1977), 36.

³³⁴ Nitish C. Laharry, "Rotary in World Affairs," *The Rotarian*, April 1954, 9.

³³⁵ Discurso del embajador William O'Dwyer ante el Club Rotario de Puebla, October 3, 1951, Archivo 1955-56, Vol. 1, exp. Correspondencia, Trabajos, Crónicas, etc., encontrados sin encuadernar, ACRP.

³³⁶ "El consorcio americano," *Morelia Rotario*, April 1, 1951, 1.

facing budgetary problems, using state funds for something other than for public services was an egregious example of fraud. During one of the protest rallies, two students were shot and killed by soldiers who claimed the youths were inebriated, had committed theft, and were violent. Justifying the military's use of force, governor Mendoza Pardo blamed the regional Communist Party and the Popular Party as the culprits behind the student agitation. Accusing students of having links to communism or socialism was particularly ironic, if not hypocritical. As a student of the University of Michoacán in the 1930s, Mendoza Pardo himself was a pro-Cardenista activist who helped lead the conversion of the university into a "socialist" institution.³³⁷

The deaths of the two students at the hands of the army caused outrage in Morelia and outside of the state. Locally, student groups and their supporters called for the removal of government powers. President Miguel Alemán also received messages deploring the army's actions and demanding justice from citizens in Puebla, Aguascalientes, and Mexico City. In Mexico City, thousands of students from the National University (UNAM) and the National Polytechnic Institute (IPN) and other institutions marched to the Deputy Senate building demanding punishment for the Michoacán authorities.³³⁸

However, not everyone who raised their voice did so to condemn the governor of Michoacán. As could be expected, the PRI regional committee office, mayors, and labor unions from around the state vouched for Mendoza Pardo by telegraphing the president.³³⁹ Also advocating on Mendoza Pardo's behalf was the Lions Club of Morelia, of which the governor was a member. In a telegram to Alemán (who was also a Lion), the Lions Club stated that it was "desirous for peace to return to Morelian society" and demanded that the "the right of authority

³³⁷ Donald J. Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State: Student Conflicts, 1910-1971* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), 203–4; Directorio Universitario [Universidad Michoacana] to President Miguel Alemán Valdés, August 1, 1949, exp. 534.9/1, leg. 3, foja s/n, caja 523; fondo MAV, RP, AGN; It was ironic, if not hypocritical, for Mendoza Pardo to blame the PCM and PS for the activism since he benefited from both parties' support during his electoral campaign. See the following: Governor José Ma. Mendoza Pardo to President Miguel Alemán Valdés, July 28, 1949, exp. 534.9/1, leg. 1, foja s/n, caja 523; fondo MAV, RP, AGN; Miguel Ángel Gutiérrez López, *En los límites de la autonomía: la reforma socialista en la Universidad Michoacana, 1934-1943* (Zamora, Mich., México: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2011), 91; and also: Verónica Solano Oikón, "Poder regional y oposición política en Michoacán, 1944-1950," *Estudios de Historia moderna y contemporánea de México* 18 (1999): 199–219.

³³⁸ Federación Estudiantil Universitaria [UNAM] to President Alemán Valdés, August 3, 1949, exp. 534.9/1, leg. 4, foja s/n, caja 523; fondo MAV, RP, AGN; on the protest outside of the Deputy Senate in Mexico City, see: Manuel Mayoral García, Dirección Federal de Seguridad, to President Alemán Valdés, August 3, 1949, exp. 534.9/1, leg. 3, foja s/n, caja 523; fondo MAV, RP, AGN; surprisingly, a Masonic Lodge (which was generally pro-state) from Aguascalientes condemned the violence. See: Logia Perseverancia No. 243 to President Alemán Valdés, August 18, 1949, exp. 534.9/1, leg. 6, foja s/n, caja 523; fondo MAV, RP, AGN; Sociedad de alumnos de la Escuela Nocturna "Flores Magón" [Puebla] to President Alemán Valdés, August 2, 1949, exp. 534.9/1, leg. 3, foja s/n, caja 523; fondo MAV, RP, AGN.

³³⁹ See inbound telegrams from the cities of Zamora, Morelia, Quiroga, and Nahuatzen August 3, 1949, exp. 534.9/1, leg. 4, foja s/n, caja 523; fondo MAV, RP, AGN.

be respected." Further, since it was the Lions Club's policy to always "support a righteous government" (*buen gobierno*), the club "considered it just to offer a vote of confidence for their fellow Lion, Licenciado José Ma. Mendoza Pardo, Governor of the State."³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the mounting pressure against Mendoza Pardo compelled the Secretary of the Interior to ask the governor to resign in August that year.³⁴¹

In other cities, such as Guadalajara, conflicts involving students also generated reactions from service clubs and other civic associations. In March 1956, for instance, the Colegio Cervantes, a private Catholic school, was attacked by a rival group of public high school students affiliated to the University of Guadalajara. According to police reports, the incident was the result of an exchange of insults between students from both institutions. Conservative newspapers, however, suggested that the attack on the Catholic school had been instigated by communist student organizations. Locals siding with the Colegio Cervantes claimed that public high school students—or as one put it, "the hordes of Genghis Khan"—had carried out the "sinister plan" because they were influenced by the Marxist directive to "put an end to the bourgeoisie."³⁴² The incident also drew the ire of parents' associations, the chamber of commerce, and service clubs. In particular, the Guadalajara Sowers of Friendship Club denounced the "irresponsible" and "vandalistic" acts carried out against the school. Echoing the calls made by local and regional parents associations, the Sowers called upon the authorities to "intervene forcibly in order to restore order."³⁴³

Student-related incidents were not the only forms of popular movements that service clubs considered needed to be reined in by the state. Between the 1940s and 50s, clubs also denounced labor stoppages and called on state authorities to clamp down on organized labor. As could be expected, they were particularly vocal in their opposition to the massive 1958 railroad workers' strike, which ended violently a year later and led to the imprisonment of its famous leader, Demetrio Vallejo. Among those to applaud the state's use of force were service clubs. In Puebla, for example, the Lions of Puebla during a regular club meeting gave public recognition to the state for showing a hardline against the "communist agitation," as they referred to the labor strike. In a jointly-written telegram to López Mateos and Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (a native *poblando*), which also appeared in national newspapers, the Rotary, Lions, Sowers, Junior Chamber International (JCI), and other clubs expressed their support for ending the railway strike: "The members of the service clubs of the city of Puebla send the President of the Republic our most warm congratulations for the measures taken to restore order."³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Telegram from Lions Club of Morelia to Miguel Alemán Valdés, March 26, 1947, exp. 534.9/1, leg. 6, foja s/n, caja 523, fondo MAV, RP, AGN.

³⁴¹ Mabry, *The Mexican University and the State*, 203.

³⁴² "Buzón de nuestros lectores," *El Informador*, March 6, 1956, 2.

³⁴³ "Club Sembradores de Amistad profundamente indignados," *El Informador*, March 3, 1956, 2.

³⁴⁴ "Sigue el alivión," *El Sol de Puebla*, April 3, 1959, 3; Telegram to Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, March 30, 1959, Exp. Correspondencia con instituciones; Archivo 1958-1959, Vol. 1, ACRP; "Sr. Lic.

Being the service clubs most closely linked to the elite circles of the PRI, the Lions of Mexico City also applauded the repression against the railway workers. In the days following the arrests of the unionists, the Mexico City Lions congratulated the federal government in multiple occasions. In one club dinner, the president of the Lions gave a toast in honor of Attorney General Fernández López Arias—one of the state actors involved in cutting the railroad movement short. The Lions, he noted, concurred with the Attorney General's belief that Mexicans "must understand that liberty is a responsibility," but when the "exercise of that liberty exceeds limits, it becomes debauchery." In other words, the Lions president continued, "it becomes anti-social conduct that must be punished." The following week, the Lions of Mexico City invited as their guest of honor Benjamín Méndez, the newly-appointed, pro-state general director of the Railway Company of Mexico.³⁴⁵

And yet as long as the post-revolutionary state maintained a hardline against student and labor movements, service club involvement in anticommunism was largely limited to sending telegrams and printing insertions in the papers. However, after 1960 service clubs began to change their approach. In Mexico and in many parts of the world, service clubs altered their position once it became clear that the Cuban Revolution was leading a more radical path. Fearing that workers and students would emulate Castro's revolution, Rotary, Sowers, and Lions clubs ramped up their anticommunism, demanding the state use whatever means necessary to halt the spread of leftist politics.

SERVICE CLUBS AND THE ANTICOMMUNISM OF THE POST-1950S

As the previous section illustrated, before the 1960s it was rare for Mexican clubs to carry out concerted efforts with other clubs or civic organizations to fight communism.³⁴⁶ (The exception, of course, was the Sowers of Friendship Club as we saw in Chapter Three.) After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, this would no longer be the case. The news of the CIA-backed attack on Cuba provoked an outpouring of support for Castro's revolution, particularly among state university students. In cities across Mexico, students organized rallies to protest against the "Yankee imperialism," some of which became violent. Even Lázaro Cárdenas led a

Don Adolfo López Mateos," newspaper clipping from *Novedades*, March 30, 1959, Exp. Correspondencia Instituciones; Archivo 1955-1956, Vol.1, ACRP.

³⁴⁵ Speech by Ing. Guillermo Liera B., Presidente del Club de Leones, April 2, 1959, Archivero 1958-1959, exp. Discursos y Programas, ACLCM; for the dinner in honor of general manager of the railroad company: Invitation to Session on April 16, 1959, April 13, 1959, Archivero 1958-1959, exp. Discursos y Programas, ACLCM; On the history of the railroad strike, see Alegre, *Railroad Radicals in Cold War Mexico*.

³⁴⁶ One exception was the Lions Club. As Julia María Schiavone Camacho discovered, the Lions of Mexico during the 1950s lobbied for the return of Chinese Mexicans who had been repatriated to China during the 1930s and 40s and were living under a communist regime. *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 148–49.

pro-Cuba demonstration in the *zócalo*, pledging to visit Havana. Cárdenas further fanned the flames of anti-communism when he spearheaded the National Liberation Movement (MLN), which sought to unify Mexico's leftist organizations.³⁴⁷

Of course, the sympathy for the Cuban Revolution was not ubiquitous in Mexico—quite the contrary. Many segments opposed the Castro government, including the Catholic Church, business organizations, service clubs, right-wing student groups, and even former presidents Abelardo L. Rodríguez and Miguel Alemán.³⁴⁸ Thus, for these actors, the sight of student rallies with thousands of Mexican students championing Castro's revolution across was not just unsettling, it was a call to action.

SERVICE CLUB RESPONSE IN MEXICO

Like many others, Rotarians across the globe viewed with trepidation the developments in Cuba and feared other Latin American countries might become ensnared by communists. At the 1961 Rotary International conference held in Tokyo, just weeks after the Bay of Pigs invasion, attendees at a special session on Latin America asked the panelists "what Iberoamerican Rotary Clubs [were] doing to combat Communism?" The question confounded a delegate from Mexico City, Adolfo E. Autrey, who recognized that Rotarians in Latin America, just as those in the rest of the world, were limited to proclaiming that the spread of communism was a problem. Afterwards, Autrey wondered wouldn't it be possible for Rotary to treat communism "the same way that Rotary helps the handicapped?"³⁴⁹ In other words, Rotary International should view communism not as a political problem but as a social issue like poliomyelitis or vision impairment that needed to be addressed.

Within this context, all service clubs in Mexico responded by strengthening their commitment to anti-communism. Among Rotary Clubs, the Mexico City chapter, which included in its ranks very influential men from the business world, took on a leadership role in September, 1961. In light of the US-Cuba crisis, the club directors met to exchange opinions regarding the threat that communism posed to Mexico and the hemisphere. Referring to the struggle against communism, Guillermo Guajardo Davis (president of the CONCAMIN and former Sower of Friendship in Monterrey) remarked that "it was time for everyone to act in

³⁴⁷ For example of protests turning violent in Puebla, see: Wil G. Pansters, "Social Movement and Discourse: The Case of the University Reform Movement in 1961 in Puebla, Mexico," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 9, no. 1 (1990): 79–101; and in Morelia, see: Eric Zolov, "¡Cuba Sí, Yanquis No! The Sacking of the Instituto Cultural México/Norteamericano in Morelia, Michoacán, 1961," in *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with The Cold War*, ed. G. M Joseph and Daniela Spenser, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

³⁴⁸ Renata Keller, *Mexico's Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 119–27.

³⁴⁹ Letter from Rotary Club of Mexico City to Rotary Club of Puebla, September 18, 1961, Archivo 1961-62, Vol. 1, Exp. Correspondencia con otros clubes, ACRP.

humanity's definitive battle." Rotary "must reject the slavery that is Communism," he argued. While all could agree that communism was an evil in society that needed to be stopped, there was disagreement about what Rotary should do about it.³⁵⁰

Clemente Serna Martínez, another Rotarian and founder of the Catholic-inspired businessmen's association USEM (Unión Social de Empresarios Mexicanos), opined that "the condemnation toward the communist system [sic] is a general sentiment among our members and I don't see why we cannot say it openly." Another member argued that as long as they held the belief that "Communism is a political party," Rotarians would be "unable to carry out a program that directly addresses these [socially] dissolving groups," referring to individuals on the left. As Rotarians, he exclaimed, "we have tied our own hands."³⁵¹

As Rotarians knew all too well, clubs were officially barred from discussing any "political" topic, and so the question of how to even begin to address communism as a social problem was a thorny one. The Club president of Mexico City, Jacobo Pérez Barroso, however, thought of a possible loophole that would allow Rotary clubs to openly denounce communism. Rather than opposing communism on political grounds, he suggested using "the globally accepted thesis" that communism was, in fact, a "philosophical idea" that sought to "absorb all human activity" and create an "all-powerful State" that "supplants our faith in God with the cult of the men of International Communism." Based on these reasons, Rotary International could make an argument to openly reject communism. The Rotarians from Mexico City agreed to contact other clubs around the country, and then present a proposal to RI to revise the organization's policy and "officially declare itself against the practice of Communism."³⁵²

Despite the Mexican Rotarians' efforts to marshal support, there is no indication that Rotary of Mexico ever submitted a proposition to the Chicago headquarters.³⁵³ Nevertheless, American Rotarians welcomed the willingness of Mexicans to denounce communism and, by implication, to support the United States. Reflecting on the solidarity expressed by Mexican Rotarians, RI president Charles Pettengill noted in 1964 that between the US and Mexico was "a border which is almost imaginary; a pausing place rather than a barrier, a meeting place of good neighbors."³⁵⁴

Following the policy of the international office, Lions Clubs in Mexico also maintained an anti-communist line. However, Mexican Lions' understanding of the Cuban Revolution was

³⁵⁰ Letter from Rotary Club of Mexico City to Rotary Club of Puebla.

³⁵¹ Letter from Rotary Club of Mexico City to Rotary Club of Puebla.

³⁵² Letter from Rotary Club of Mexico City to Rotary Club of Puebla.

³⁵³ If the club did submit a proposal, there is no indication that it gained traction within Rotary leadership. Another possibility is that the proposal never received sufficient support from other Mexican clubs.

³⁵⁴ *Proceedings: Fifty-Fourth Annual Convention of Rotary International* (Rotary International, 1964), 261.

informed by their (close) ties to Cuban Lions. Recall that after Lions International severed relations with the Lions of Mexico in 1940, the Cuban Lions defied the Chicago headquarters and invited their Mexican brethren to that year's international convention in Havana as guests of honor, cementing a lasting friendship between the two countries (see Chapter Two). Over the years, it became customary for Cuban and Mexican Lions delegations to host each other in either the Mexico City or La Habana clubs. During the first year of the establishment of the Cuba's revolutionary government, Cuban Lions did not just welcome the new regime, they were pro-Castro lobbyists among Lions Clubs in other parts of the world, particularly in Mexico.³⁵⁵

In September 1959, months after the fall of Batista, the Mexico City Lions Club hosted for six days a numerous delegation of Lions from across Cuba. On the 19th, the Mexicans indulged their guests with a lavish feast, cocktails, dance, and musical performances by mariachi and marching bands as well as a number by the Mexican singer/actor (and fellow Lion) Tito Guízar. While for the Mexicans the evening was intended to celebrate their fellowship, for the Cuban Lions the occasion allowed them to give testimony of the "reality" in Cuba under the Revolution and of the challenges it was facing.

That night, Cuban delegates took the podium to inform Mexicans that Cuba was "experiencing a moment of happiness with a Revolution that has brought calm, liberty, and peace." In addition, the Lions from Cuba aimed to disprove the "erroneous information" circulating in the international press, which had been critical of the Revolution's goals, such as the agrarian reform. It was their concern that Lions across the world were making conclusions about the Revolution based on "false propaganda" emanating from the United States. Contrary to what news agencies were reporting, they argued that the Revolution was "an honest and well-intentioned effort to fulfill the democratic ideals of Bolívar and Martí, of Lincoln and Juárez."³⁵⁶

³⁵⁵ It is quite possible that Cuban and Mexican Rotary Clubs also had close ties. However, the conflicts between Lions of Mexico and Lions International created a special solidarity among Latin American clubs.

³⁵⁶ Declaración del leonismo cubano a través de sus delegados que visitan México en una excursión de confraternidad americana, April 1959, Archivero 1958-1959, exp. Discursos y Programas, ACLCM.



Figure 16: Tito Guízar entertaining the Cuban delegation during their visit to the Mexico City Lions Club in 1959.

Source: *Boletín: Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México*, August 31, 1959, p. 7.

The president of the Havana club, Dr. Mario H. Zayas Portela also took the opportunity to attack the anti-Castro propaganda, claiming that it "ranged from tragic to farcical." The press, he claimed, was misleading the world by depicting the leaders of the Revolution as "Marxists." Some commentators, Zayas Portela noted, had gone as far as to suggest that "Cuba is a center of international disruption." As Cubans and Lions, it was their duty to convey the message that the Revolution sought "political sovereignty, economic freedom, and social equality" much like the "Roosevelt's New Deal." The Lions Club of La Habana, he concluded, "believes that informing the Lions of the world, and particularly of the United States and Latin America, about the Cuban reality, will contribute toward ending the false publicity."³⁵⁷ The Lions of Mexico responded sympathetically to the Cuban cause and offered to send a copy of the film recording of the dinner event along with the speeches made by the Cubans to Lions International in Chicago. The

³⁵⁷ Dr. Mario H. Zayas Portela, "El leonismo habanero y la realidad cubana," April 1959, Archivero 1958-1959, exp. Discursos y Programas, ACLCM.

president of the Mexico Club, Colonel Rodolfo Balmaceda, noted that he was certain the reel would be "the most objective proof" that could speak to their "cause."³⁵⁸

Despite the support pledged by Lions Clubs in Cuba toward the Revolution, in the summer of 1961 the Cuban government decreed that all private associations were illegal, which dissolved Rotary, Lions, and even masonic lodges.³⁵⁹ Soon after, the Mexican Lions' perception of the Castro's Revolution also started to change, especially when the Mexico City Club began received occasional letters from Cuban Lions asking for help to cross into the United States as political refugees.

More importantly, however, the Lions Clubs of Mexico were avid supporters of the Mexican state and its policy towards Cuba. Shortly after Mexico's foreign minister (and fellow *león*) Manuel Tello declared at the Organization of American States (OAS) meeting at Punta del Este that communism was incompatible with the ideals of the OAS, a move that his club applauded. "We approve without reservations the position of our Chancellor at Punta del Este," stated Jesús Vidales Marroquín. Furthermore, he raised a call of awareness to Lions throughout Mexico: "We must commit ourselves to fight the outbreaks of [Marxism] that have appeared in our country."³⁶⁰

As the prospect of a Latin American state turning to communism became a reality, Lions, Rotary, Sowers, and other service clubs increased their civic activism as a way to safeguard the nation. The area in which all service club members and their relatives believed they could push back against the influence of communism was in education. Since the 1940s, involvement in SEP-sponsored literacy programs and schoolhouse construction crusades gave service clubs license to intervene in the politics of education. The following sections will delve into this topic by focusing on two cases of service club politicization: in Puebla and in Monterrey during the early 1960s.

PART II: SERVICE CLUB ACTIVISM IN PUEBLA

Between the months of April and August 1961, the city of Puebla witnessed numerous mass rallies, violent student confrontations, attacks on businesses, and a university reform

³⁵⁸ Col. Rodolfo Balmaceda to Dr. Mario H. Zayas Portela, September 9, 1959, Archivero 1958-1959, exp. Discursos y Programas, ACLCM.

³⁵⁹ Lions Clubs in Cuba even supported programs launched by the Revolution, including raising funds for the agrarian reform. On the history of one particular club in Holguín, Cuba, see: Cesar Hidalgo, "Club de Leones de Holguín," *Aldea Cotidiana: Club de Leones de Holguín* (blog), September 29, 2016, https://aldeacotidiana.blogspot.com/2016/09/blog-post_29.html; on the banning of international civic associations, see Rafael E. Tarragó, *Understanding Cuba as a Nation: From European Settlement to Global Revolutionary Mission* (Taylor & Francis, 2017), 99.

³⁶⁰ "Sesión Comida Número 1277," *Boletín: Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México*, February 12, 1962, 8.

movement led by leftist groups. In reaction to the street violence and the activism of left-leaning students, a powerful coalition of civic associations dominated by Puebla's service clubs and chambers of commerce emerged to stop what they viewed as irrefutable proof that communists had overrun the educational system. To counter the university strike and exert pressure on the state to quash the movement, this coalition coordinated multiple demonstrations, a meticulous public relations campaign, temporary shutdowns at factories and businesses, and boycotts on tax payments. By August, the pressure forced the government to use military force to end the student activism. But before turning to the details of this formidable pressure placed on the regional and federal governments by civil society, the following pages will briefly examine the development of cooperation between service clubs and other organizations in Puebla prior to the university crisis of 1961.

Along with the economic recovery of the 1930s, Puebla developed a vibrant culture of associationalism, a process whose roots began in the latter half of the nineteenth century.³⁶¹ Growth and diversification in Puebla's manufacturing and service sectors during the 1940s allowed the expanding urban middle classes access to skilled and managerial jobs. This process was paralleled by the proliferation of various kinds of recreational, social, professional, and service clubs, which both elites and middle-class Mexicans joined in droves.³⁶²

By the late 1950s, Puebla had several service clubs: two Rotary Clubs, a Lions Club, a Junior Chamber International (JCI), a Sower of Friendship, a Club 20-30 (a service club for men ages 20 to 30), and one women's Lion's club (the Damas Leonas). Some service organizations were also forming coed youth clubs for their children: Rotary had the Club Piccolinos and the Lions the Club Cachorros. In addition, there were multiple professional associations, which fulfilled many of the purposes (networking) and activities (dinners, seminars, charitable acts) of the international service clubs: the Sales and Marketing Executives International, the Mexican Automobile Distributors Association, and the Traveling Salesmen's Chamber.³⁶³ Finally, Puebla

³⁶¹ According to Forment, Puebla during the nineteenth century had a strong associative life, which was influenced by Benito Juárez's rebel militias during the War of the Reform (1857-1861) and the French invasion (1861-1876). Associationalism took root mainly in the forms of electoral clubs in urban and also rural areas of Puebla. However, Forment notes that there was a decline in voluntary associations after the presidency of Manuel González (1880-1884) and Díaz's subsequent administrations. Carlos A. Forment, *Democracy in Latin America, 1760-1900: Civic Selfhood and Public Life in Mexico and Peru* (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 334-40.

³⁶² For a comparative analysis of the development of social and service clubs in two Mexican cities, see: David Tamayo, "'Clubismo' in Post-Revolutionary Mexico: An Overview of the Emergence of Service and Social Clubs in Puebla and Tijuana, 1920-1960," in *Mexico in Focus: Political, Environmental and Social Issues*, ed. José Galindo Rodríguez, Latin American Political, Economic, and Security Issues (Hauppauge, New York: Nova Science Publisher's, Inc, 2015), 217-36.

³⁶³ These are: Ejecutivos de Ventas y Mercadotecnia, Asociación Mexicana de Distribuidores de Automóviles, and the Cámara de Agentes Viajeros.

also had over ten trade associations, including the Chamber of the Textile Industry of Puebla and Tlaxcala, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Employers Union (COPARMEX), among others.³⁶⁴

As was the case in many cities, service clubs in Puebla became very popular among the middle classes and had a dynamic, public presence. This was evident not only in the number of clubs, but also in the frequency and variety of activities that clubs announced in the newspapers. Events and news usually were featured in the community section, and by the early 1950s most clubs began to pay for their own column which featured especially charitable activities and earned them praise from local politicians and journalists.

Once service clubs began to have a salient public role and gain popularity among elites and the middle classes, they also started to command the admiration of other local groups, such as the Mutual-Aid Society for Dependents (Sociedad Mutualista de Dependientes), one of the oldest associations of aid, established in 1873.³⁶⁵ By the 1950s, it was still active, but compared to the modern and dynamic service clubs, the Dependents appeared as a dull, outdated society, mainly providing members with financial assistance for hospitalizations and funerals. Once Lions and Rotary clubs began to invite them as guests to sessions in the mid 1950s, the mutualists regarded it as an honor. In 1954, the president noted that the invitations "elevates the prestige of our society" and is an incentive to be more like service clubs with a "a social life outside of our building not cooped up within its walls."³⁶⁶

Indicative also of their popularity was the creation of a holiday specifically for service clubs. In 1955, it occurred to members of the JCI that service clubs in Puebla should have a day each year to celebrate their commitment to serving the community. Beginning that year, every February 6, the main clubs in Puebla (Rotary, Lions, Sowers, JCIs, Club 20-30, and others that came later) celebrated the "*Día del Club de Servicio*" (Day of the Service Club). On each occasion a different club would host the other associations for dinner and drinks at either their club's exclusive party room (such as the Lions Club casino) or at a fancy restaurant in downtown Puebla. On the Day of the Service Club, members "were no longer Rotarios, Leones, Sembradores, or Jaycees (JCIs)," according to an article from *El Sol de Puebla*, "they were

³⁶⁴ Including the Cámara Harinera de la Zona de Puebla, Cámara Nacional de la Industria de la Transformación, Cámara Nacional de Comercio en Pequeño, Cámara Española de Comercio de Puebla y Tlaxcala, Cámara de Comercio Libanés, Cámara de Propietarios de Puebla, Cámara Agrícola de Puebla, and the Cámara de la Industria Farmacéutica.

³⁶⁵ The first mutual-aid societies began to appear in cities with sizeable laboring classes, such as Guadalajara, Mexico City, and Puebla. For a history of these associations, see: Juan Felipe Leal, *Del mutualismo al sindicalismo en México: 1843-1910* (México, D.F: Ediciones El Caballito, 1991).

³⁶⁶ Acta No. 24 de la Junta Ordinaria, February 29, 1956, fojas 122-23; Libro de Actas de 13 de octubre de 1954 al 15 de agosto de 1956, Archivo de la Benemerita Sociedad Mutualista de Dependientes de Puebla (hereafter ABSMD).

gentlemen of the ideal, who fight ceaselessly so that their hunger for the greater good of humanity shall become a reality."³⁶⁷

As we have seen in the previous chapters, service clubs throughout Mexico often collaborated with other clubs and organizations on joint projects (literacy campaigns, building schools, clinics, etc.). However, in certain cities, including Puebla, Morelia, and Oaxaca, clubs and other civic groups tended to have a much closer relationship. In 1953, for example, all of Puebla's service and social clubs, along with the newspaper *El Sol de Puebla*, and the Archbishop of Puebla Octaviano Márquez y Toriz together raised funds for the restoration of a Catholic temple, the Santuario Santa María de Guadalupe in the city of Tehuacán, Puebla.³⁶⁸ As a result of the first Day of the Service Club celebration, the Lions Club in 1955 decided to invite the Rotarians to establish a clinic to treat polio free of charge. The idea was a success and two years later, the foundation had expanded to include the Club 20-30, the JCI, the Rotary Club 5 de Mayo, and the Sowers of Friendship as benefactors.³⁶⁹

Collaboration between service clubs and other associations further increased after the Ruíz Cortines presidency (1952-58) encouraged the forming of Municipal Boards of Moral, Civic, and Material Improvement.³⁷⁰ These Municipal Boards were intended to act as non-partisan, apolitical civic groups, with access to limited public funds, and headed by leaders of local trade organizations, service clubs, newspapers, labor unions, and other associations. As their name suggests, their purpose was to "improve" public services with the participation of the private sector, in turn lessening the burden of the state (a goal of Ruiz Cortines). When Puebla's was formed in March 1958, service clubs were well represented on the Board's leadership, especially Rotary. The Board's first president, vice-president, and vice-secretary were active members, while the secretary and treasurer were former Rotarians. Members of the Lions, the Sowers, and the JCI also served on different committees. Noticeably, during the first years of existence, labor union leaders regularly were absent from the meetings or never participated.³⁷¹

Because the Board had access to funds and a direct line to city authorities, it almost immediately became a lobbying group for the personal and business interests of its members.³⁷²

³⁶⁷ "Fue una demostración de acercamiento y amistad la celebración del día de los clubes de servicio," *El Sol de Puebla*, February 6, 1958, 2.

³⁶⁸ "Todos los clubes sociales de Puebla en una junta," *El Sol de Puebla*, March 1, 1953, 1.

³⁶⁹ Acta de la sesión extraordinaria de la mesa del Club Rotario de Puebla, August 25, 1955, Exp. Juntas de Directiva; Archivo 1955-1956, Vol.1, ACRP; Relación del movimiento de tesorería, July 1959, Exp. Fundación contra las secuelas de la polio; Archivo 1958-1959, Vol.III, ACRP.

³⁷⁰ By the end of his presidency, there were at least 3,000 municipal Boards across the country.

³⁷¹ Constitución de la asamblea general para la integración de la Junta de Mejoramiento Moral, Cívico, y Material del Municipio de Puebla, March 5, 1958, fojas 2-17; exp. 1; caja JMMCM, AGMP.

³⁷² This was true in most municipalities that had Juntas de Mejoramiento. They often became boards in which wealthy and upwardly-mobile men sought to influence or gain political power. For example: Heather Fowler-Salamini, *Working Women, Entrepreneurs, and the Mexican Revolution: The Coffee Culture of Córdoba, Veracruz* (U of Nebraska Press, 2013), 258-59; in Puebla, the Board was

For instance, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Board led temperance campaigns in working-class neighborhoods. It also pressed the city for stricter codes against street peddling, which members argued unfairly took business from already established stores. For these reasons, Puebla's municipal Board was often criticized by locals, its members were even accused of embezzlement.³⁷³ Although it was meant to be a non-partisan civic organization, by drawing these various groups together and granting them a voice in society, the Municipal Board opened the doors for civic organizations to engage together in political activism. And when a major crisis emerged in 1961, this is precisely what occurred.

SERVICE CLUBS AND CHAMBERS OF PUEBLA UNITE: 1961

Following the Bay of Pigs incident on April 17, students in Puebla marched on the streets to protest the US involvement in Cuba. That day a small contingent from the Autonomous University of Puebla (UAP) marched to the offices of the regional conservative voice, *El Sol de Puebla*, to pelt and set the building on fire with Molotov bombs. The newspaper building had become a favorite stopping point for protestors who deplored the journal's right-wing inclination and its criticism of leftist students, which the editors regularly referred to as "brats" and "riffraff agitators."³⁷⁴ Anti-riot police ended the attack on the newspaper but injured several students in the process. The pro-Castro rally, in turn, spurred the retaliation of the ultra-conservative group called the Anticommunist University Front (Frente Universitario Anticomunista, or FUA), which on several occasions clashed violently with the leftist students. In one instance, the left-wing students marched to the Colegio Benavente to smash the windows of the private Catholic school.³⁷⁵

What began as an anti-US protest soon evolved into a fierce conflict between conservative and radical student factions, and a university reform movement led by a leftist group. The history of Puebla's 1961 student movement and of the polarization of the two student

closely tied to the extremely wealthy William Jenkins. See: Andrew Paxman, *Jenkins of Mexico: How a Southern Farm Boy Became a Mexican Magnate* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 351.

³⁷³ For an example of anti-peddler lobbying, see: Letter to Ing. Arcadio Medel Marín, Mayor of Puebla from the Municipal Board, July 4, 1967, oficio número 8953/358/67; exp. 8 (1966-1968); JMMCM, AGMP; regarding the embezzlement scandal, see: "Al pasivo por activo," undated but likely September 1958, foja 315; "Diversos;" exp. 1; JMMCM, AGMP; Letter to General Manager of *El Sol de Puebla*, September 2, 1958, Exp. Correspondencia Particulares; Archivo 1958-1959, Vol.1, ACRP.

³⁷⁴ This occurred during the protests against the increase in telephone service costs, days before the Bay of Pigs invasion. See: "Agitadores profesionales azuzaron a la chusma," *El Sol de Puebla*, April 7, 1961, 1.

³⁷⁵ "Sangrientos sucesos en esta ciudad," *La Opinión*, April 18, 1961; for a journalistic account of the FUA and other far-right organizations, see: Álvaro Delgado, *El Yunque: La ultraderecha en el poder* (Random House Mondadori, 2006).

camps has been studied by others, so I will not dwell on it here.³⁷⁶ Instead, the following pages will focus on the role played by the coalition of civic associations, which organized to counter the leftist student movement and to compel the state to act with force.

News of the student-led attack on the Catholic school triggered an incandescent reaction among parents, Puebla's business class, and the Catholic Church. On April 24, following the incident, a group of some 150 individuals met at the Municipal Board offices to discuss their concern over the vandalism carried out by so-called communist students against the newspaper *El Sol de Puebla* and the private school, and to express their disapproval over the state's role in stopping the violence. As might be expected, the event gathered school principals, parents' associations, and various chambers of commerce. Local journalists covering the story noted that representatives from all service clubs in Puebla were also present. The fact that reporters noted their presence suggests that these men identified themselves in the assembly as Rotarians, Lions, Sowers, and so forth because it mattered.³⁷⁷

The purpose of the meeting was to create a united front against the "communist" onslaught by creating a proxy organization for Puebla's chambers of commerce, the COPARMEX, parents' associations, and service clubs. They called it the Coordinating Committee of the Private Sector (Comité Cordinador de la Iniciativa Privada, or CCIP). In other words, by having the CCIP as the face of these organizations, service clubs in particular could engage openly in university politics without compromising their apolitical status. Leading the CCIP were six individuals whose affiliations overlapped in various ways: all were members of the Municipal Board; two were members of the COPARMEX; three were Rotarians; and two were linked to Catholic associations.

One of the two key figures in the CCIP was its president, Abelardo Sánchez Gutiérrez, a wealthy businessman with close ties to the powerful mogul William Jenkins, and a long-time member of the Rotary Club and of the Chamber of Commerce. He was also a devout Catholic who helped establish in Puebla two important lay organizations: the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano (MFC) and the Unión Social de Empresarios Mexicanos (USEM) for Catholic businessmen). Another was Eligio Sánchez Larios, a law professor affiliated to the FUA, a COPARMEX member, and a high-ranking official in the Mexican Catholic Action in Puebla.

³⁷⁶ Wil G. Pansters, *Politics and Power in Puebla: The Political History of a Mexican State, 1937-1987* (Amsterdam: CEDLA, 1990), 97–117; Pansters, "Social Movement and Discourse"; Paxman, *Jenkins of Mexico*, 349–51; Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México*, 322–38; Alfonso Yañez Delgado, *La manipulación de la fe fías contra carolinos en la Universidad Poblana* (San Andrés Cholula, Puebla: Imagen Pública y Corporativa, 1996); Abraham Quiroz Palacios, *Las luchas políticas en Puebla, período 1961-1981* (BUAP, 2006), 111–23.

³⁷⁷ The chambers were: the Cámara Nacional de Comercio de Puebla, the Cámara Nacional de Comercio en Pequeño, the Cámara de la Industria Textil de Puebla y Tlaxcala, and the Cámara Harinera de Puebla y Tlaxcala. See: *La Opinión*, 25 April 1961, 1, 6; *El Sol de Puebla*, 25 April 1961, 1, 3.

Sánchez Larios also had a close relationship with the Rotary Club of Puebla where he frequently gave talks, and at least on one occasion on the topic of *hispanidad* and the *día de la raza*.³⁷⁸

At the ad hoc assembly, Sánchez Larios suggested that the violence was proof that communists had already infiltrated into Mexican schools. The director of the Colegio Benavente even ordered a massive banner placed on top of the damaged school that read: "here is the evidence of the communist attacks." But the ultimate fault was put on the authorities for failing to stop the violence. Marcos Mastretta characterized the response of the governor as "incompetent" for not calling on the army sooner. Afterwards, Luis Hinojosa González, a member of the Lions Club (and of the PAN and MFC), echoed Mastretta's criticism toward the governor, arguing that free rein had been given to the communists. In a particularly "heated" speech, as the papers described it, Hinojosa shouted: "These schools are ours, we cannot let the communists destroy them!" which was met with a thundering applause.³⁷⁹

To pressure the state to end the ongoing leftist student movement and university strike the CCIP pursued various avenues. One of first acts was to schedule temporary closures of businesses and factories, which began on April 28.³⁸⁰ However, student activism continued until August of that year, and the CCIP accordingly orchestrated more temporary closures throughout the state. At the same time, leadership urged members of the chambers of commerce and industry to cease payment of taxes as a way to exert further pressure on the federal government. Additionally, it coordinated with principals of Catholic schools in Puebla to remain closed until the government could guarantee their safety.³⁸¹ The CCIP vowed to send thousands of telegrams to the Secretary of the Interior Gustavo Díaz Ordaz and President Adolfo López Mateos demanding immediate and forcible action—a clear sidestepping of local and regional authorities.

Acting independently, the Archbishop of Puebla, Octaviano Márquez y Toriz used the pulpit to denounce communism. He also organized several massive demonstrations outside of the Cathedral, stirring the thousands of followers to shout out, "*cristianismo sí, comunismo no*,"

³⁷⁸ For Sánchez Larios' talk on hispanism, see: Informe Mensual de Rotary Club de Puebla, October 1952, Exp. Informe Mensual; Archivo 1952-1953, Vol.III, ACRP; Sánchez Larios in the late 50s was invited to join the Rotary Club of Puebla, but had to decline because of his busy schedule. See: Eligio Sánchez Larios, Vice-President of the Junta Diocesana de la Acción Católica Mexicana, to the Rotary Club of Puebla, February 7, 1956, Exp. Correspondencia Instituciones; Archivo 1955-1956, Vol.1, ACRP; and for Sánchez Gutiérrez: (Untitled) List of Rotary Club of Puebla members and affiliations to other organizations, n.d., Exp. Gobernador; Archivo 1962-1963, Vol.V, ACRP; Manuel Rodríguez Concha, "In memoriam: en el 10o. aniversario de su encuentro con Cristo. Don Abelardo Sánchez G., poblano ejemplar, mexicano y patriota," *El Universitario (UPAEP)* 3, no. 82 (January 25, 1993): 3.

³⁷⁹ "Tormentosa sesión de un grupo de padres de familia," *La Opinión*, April 26, 1961, 1, 6; for the banner on the Benavente, see: Alfonso Yañez Delgado, "¡Cuba sí, yanquis no!" *Gaceta Tiempo Universitario*, no. 7 (2012).

³⁸⁰ "Piden el castigo de los agitadores," *El Sol de Puebla*, April 26, 1961, 1, 5.

³⁸¹ They also agreed not to have Catholic-school students participate in the festivities commemorating the upcoming 99th-anniversary of 5 de mayo Battle of Puebla "Los grupos patronales le dan su apoyo al Benavente," *La Opinión*, April 27, 1961, 1, 6.

in response to the radical students' chants of "*¡Castro sí, yanquis no!*" While the CCIP played no part in organizing these rallies, it applauded the Archbishop's ability to mobilize his flock and attract the nation's attention.³⁸²

Despite the pressure from the business and Catholic Church, the left-wing students were able to negotiate with the regional authorities, who were far more sympathetic to their cause than to that of the conservative students, the CCIP, and the Archbishop.³⁸³ On July 23, the state senate approved a new law that in essence limited the interference of the state in its internal affairs. Specifically, it gave students and faculty the exclusive right to nominate university council members and the chancellor, who until then had been selected by a board appointed by the governor. However, the new legislation also prohibited faculty with ties to the Catholic Church from holding positions of authority. The new law caused an explosive reaction among conservatives who bemoaned the governor's decision. The CCIP-affiliated Chamber of Textiles considered that with the law "the communists [had] achieved a complete and unmistakable victory in Puebla."³⁸⁴

In response, throughout the following week the CCIP ramped up its pressure closing businesses and factories for several hours a day and placing a hold on the payment of taxes.³⁸⁵ The Catholic Church organized more anticommunist rallies in the central square, gathering tens of thousands of people to listen to the Archbishop rail against communism. This time, the pressure compelled Governor Ortega to reverse his decision and partially repeal the law. Outraged, the leftist student group again attacked *El Sol de Puebla*, setting the building on fire with cocktail bombs. Finally, after months of the CCIP demanding federal intervention, Díaz Ordaz deployed the army, ending the violence and the student strike.³⁸⁶

Although seemingly an incident taking place in the "province" (as locals from Mexico City refer to anything outside of the nation's capital), the events in Puebla were closely followed

³⁸² Minutos de la Asamblea General Extraordinaria, April 27, 1961, foja 24b; Libro 2 de Actas de Asambleas Generales, Sesiones Ordinarias y Extraordinarias; Fondo VII, ACITPT; Loeza notes that some of the anticommunist sermons Márquez y Toriz gave were also read by other prelates, including at the Basílica de Guadalupe in Mexico City. *Clases medias y política en México*, 330, n. 130.

³⁸³ State senators were particularly critical of the CCIP and of the Church. Rather than considering the left-wing students to be communists, they viewed them as the heirs of the Revolution, and thought the conflict was as part of a longer struggle between liberals and conservatives. See, for example, the House debates in: Versión taquigráfica de la sesión pública ordinaria, August 3, 1961, Exp. 30; Libro Mayo-Diciembre 1961 (XLI Leg.), Archivo del Congreso del Estado de Puebla.

³⁸⁴ Minutos de la Asamblea General Extraordinaria.

³⁸⁵ "Protestan contra el Gobierno del Estado," *El Sol de Puebla*, August 1, 1961, 1; "Primer paro de tres horas hizo el comercio organizado," *El Sol de Puebla*, August 2, 1961, 1; "Obligado a cerrar su negociación," *La Opinión*, August 1, 1961, 1; "Firme actitud del comercio," *El Sol de Puebla*, August 2, 1961, 1.

³⁸⁶ "Vándalos estudiantiles incendiaron y lapidaron ayer El Sol de Puebla," *El Sol de Puebla*, August 5, 1961, 1 and 5.

throughout the country. As the conflict unfolded, observers from both sides of the political spectrum offered their opinions. On the left, perhaps the most memorable observation came from a young Carlos Fuentes, who chronicled the events for the left-leaning magazine *Política*. In an article titled "Puebla de Los Ángeles vs Puebla de Zaragoza," Fuentes interpreted these events as evidence that the nineteenth-century conflict between conservatives and liberals had been rekindled in Puebla. On the right, the PAN's official journal *La Nación* and the large chain of conservative regional dailies owned by José García Valseca (such as *El Sol*) concluded that communists had overrun Puebla's public university. From their pulpits, Catholic priests also cautioned their flock of the imminent threat posed by communism to the faith.³⁸⁷

In the context of the Cuban Revolution and an emboldened left, Puebla's student conflict had a ripple effect among conservatives who viewed this as irrefutable evidence that communist cells had infiltrated into Mexico. In León, Guanajuato, Guadalajara Querétaro, Morelia, Monterrey, Mexico City, Oaxaca, and many other cities, prelates organized anticommunist rallies, using the Puebla case as an example for Catholics to mobilize against the red tide. And in their dinners and luncheons, service clubs throughout the country also viewed with consternation the incident in Puebla and began discussing contingency plans—but perhaps none more than the Sowers of Friendship.³⁸⁸

PART III: THE SOWERS OF FRIENDSHIP AND THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION

Although the Sowers of Friendship opted not to join the state-led crusade to build public schools (Chapter Four), they regarded the "educational problem" in Mexico as a fundamental concern of their organization since founding the club. In sessions, conferences, and in official publications, the Sowers had been for decades discussing a crisis brewing. Millions of Mexicans lacked access to schools, and educators were either poorly trained by state-sanctioned teacher's colleges (*escuelas normales*) or were influenced by Marxism. This general deficiency was contributing toward a related problem: the decay of traditional morals, evidenced by youth rebelliousness. The Sowers believed that to be spared from communism, Mexico's younger generations needed to be educated with civic values and, above all, traditional Catholic morals—which the state prohibited in public schools.

"Youths today respect no one," wrote Manuel Canseco Landero in a 1957 edition of the Sowers' magazine. By losing the "fundamental concepts of civics and education," students were increasingly engaging in misanthropic acts. Dailies reported too often about "Students who attack the Police, who rob or vandalize vehicles, who disrespect their teachers for the noble desire to teach." According to the Sower from the Oaxaca club, at the root of this rebellious behavior was a state-managed educational system that failed to instill morality and civic virtues. "Sadly, we know too well that schools today have intolerable errors." But as parents and as Sowers of Friendship, Canseco Landero argued that they needed to act, not remain as bystanders.

³⁸⁷ Carlos Fuentes, "Puebla de los Ángeles vs. Puebla de Zaragoza," *Política*, June 1, 1961, cover pages 2 and 4.

³⁸⁸ Loeza, *Clases medias y política en México*, 302.

"We must convince ourselves that the household is the basis of a child's education and that we, as parents, are the ones who must ensure the education of future generations."³⁸⁹

In club meetings and in official publications, the Sowers actively engaged in a discussion regarding the educational problems in Mexico. In an editorial from the Sowers' mouthpiece, Dr. Alfonso Garza from Monterrey explained that "*Sembradores* often have to be reminded that our Club emerged in a period of struggle with forces of evil." Garza noted that during the Cárdenas years, the state allowed communism to flourish: workers sang the International instead of the national anthem and parents were deprived of the right to educate their children. In public and private schools throughout the country, "children learned to read with textbooks printed in Russia," and parents who sought to "educate their children with Christian principles had to do so clandestinely." Incredibly, "all of this took place in a country of illiterates." Though he was referring to Mexico during the Cárdenas era, Garza's words alluded also to the persistent problem of illiteracy and access to public schools in the late 1950s.³⁹⁰ During the Alemán and Ruiz Cortines administrations (1946-58), the Sowers of Friendship remained unresponsive to the state's campaign to build public schools. However, their position started to change in late 1958. During the national convention held in Acapulco in November 1958, the Sowers Clubs agreed to make education the priority of the entire organization. Later that year, Jaime Torres Bodet began his second stint as head of the SEP.

Confronted with an enormous deficit in elementary schools and teachers, the newly-elected Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964) called on Torres Bodet to address the crisis his predecessor José Ángel Ceniceros at the SEP had failed to solve.³⁹¹ Soon after taking office in 1958, López Mateos instructed the SEP to carry out study of the problem and a strategy, called later the Eleven Year Plan, which would provide children with "free and mandatory elementary education."³⁹² The study, which was hastily finished in February of 1959, provided a somber picture. Despite the efforts of previous administrations, illiteracy rates among children remained high, and the lack of classrooms and teachers left 1.7 million children without an education, a number that was estimated to reach an alarming 3 million within a decade.³⁹³

³⁸⁹ Dr. Manuel Canseco Landero, "Señalemos rumbo a la juventud," *Sembradores de Amistad*, July 1957, 34.

³⁹⁰ Dr. Alfonso Garza, "Editorial," *Sembradores de Amistad*, April 1958, 1.

³⁹¹ Valentina Torres-Septién, "Estado contra Iglesia/Iglesia contra Estado. Los libros de texto gratuito: ¿un caso de autoritarismo gubernamental. 1959-1962?," *Historia y grafía*, no. 37 (December 2011): 49.

³⁹² The full name of the Eleven Year Plan was "Plan para el Mejoramiento y la Expansión de la Educación Primaria en México." For the decree that created the plan, see: "Decreto que establece la Comisión para formular un Plan Nacional destinado a resolver el problema de la Educación Primaria en el país," *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, December 31, 1958, sec. second, 13.

³⁹³ Fernando Solana, Raúl Cardiel Reyes, and Raúl Bolaños Martínez, *Historia de la educación pública en México*, 5th ed. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011), 367; Enrique Casamayor, "Un plan de once años para la Educación," *Revista de Educación - Crónica* 46, no. 132 (1960): 13.

Torres Bodet proposed a far-reaching solution that involved building thousands of rural and urban schools and opening more teachers' colleges to train 10,000 new teachers every year. In addition, his plan included printing textbooks to distribute free of charge, while making them compulsory in all elementary schools. The massive and costly endeavor required all three levels of government to commit to funding the project—with the federal shouldering the largest share of 59 percent. But the scope of the crisis was such that it warranted inviting all sectors of Mexican society. As the SEP had done in 1944 and in 1948, Torres Bodet once again issued appeals on media outlets and in speeches to the private sector ("*la iniciativa privada*") and organizations for their contribution towards public education. The SEP will have to consider, stated Torres Bodet, "the creation of local and regional committees" (*patronatos*), which would bring "teachers, parents, and representatives of the Federation, state, and municipality, *and of the private sector*" into the crusade for education.³⁹⁴



Figure 17: Jaime Torrest Bodet distributing free textbooks to grade-school children, circa 1961.

Source: <https://www.gob.mx/agn/articulos/agnrecuerda-el-libro-de-texto-gratuito>

Among the first organizations Torres Bodet visited to make his plea was the Sowers of Friendship of Mexico City, which extended an invitation to a luncheon in his honor on January

³⁹⁴ Emphasis mine. Torres Bodet's speech was read in major newspapers across the country. "El caso de la educación," *El Siglo de Torreón*, December 7, 1958.

30, 1959. The attendance of the head of the SEP and the entourage of officials drew presidents from all 27 Sowers Clubs from across Mexico in addition to leaders of chambers of commerce and of the banking industry.³⁹⁵ Before the session, held at the upscale Hotel del Prado, the Sowers gave a press conference in which they explained the purpose of meeting with Torres Bodet. Answering questions was the Mexico City club president Roberto Guajardo Suárez—previously the director of the Technological Institute of Monterrey and president of the COPARMEX—who told reporters that the educational question was of paramount concern to the Sowers of Friendship, and because it was a "complex problem," they believed that "immediate action" was required.³⁹⁶

At the start of the session, Guajardo Suárez thanked Torres Bodet and the rest of the SEP officials for accepting their invitation. While the Mexico City club was hosting, the acting president from Monterrey, Emilio Guzmán Lozano, offered the opening remarks to Torres Bodet on behalf of all Sowers. He started by giving a brief background of the Sowers, which was a "Mexican organization" founded in 1936 as "an apolitical community comprised of fifteen hundred individuals." Avoiding any inklings of their conservative politics of Catholic *hispanismo*, Guzmán Lozano described his club as striving for "the conservation, enrichment, and dissemination of the values of our culture, for ethical practices in the workplace, and for a greater awareness to [Mexico's] social problems." Of singular importance to the Sowers was the educational issue, which they viewed as "the mother of all problems." Although building more schoolhouses and training more teachers was basic, Guzmán Lozano noted that the problem went beyond infrastructure. "The student's spirituality and the teacher's vocation must be necessarily factored into the equation," he argued. "To overlook these factors is to mutilate or deform the solution."³⁹⁷

Concretely, the Sowers of Friendship offered suggestions to the head of the SEP that implied placing far greater school control in private hands—an argument often made by the Catholic Church-linked National Parents Union (Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia, or UNPF).³⁹⁸ First, in the case of building new schoolhouses, Guzmán Lozano agreed with Torres Bodet's idea of organizing local committees comprised of citizens or corporations—the so-called *patronatos*. To encourage their involvement, he suggested that the state make loans available, with a matching contribution from the federal government. Once the loans were paid off, the local committees could have the option of owning and managing the school. In other words, this plan would provide a path for creating scores of private schools. "The Sowers of Friendship

³⁹⁵ By 1959, the Sowers of Friendship had clubs in the following cities: Aguascalientes, Ciudad de México, Ciudad Valles, Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Victoria, Culiacán, Chihuahua, Durango, Guadalajara, Matamoros, Hermosillo, Irapuato, León, Monterrey, Mexicali, Mazatlán, Nuevo Laredo, Oaxaca, Orizaba, Puebla, Reynosa, Saltillo, San Luis Potosí, Tampico, Torreón, Tecate, and Veracruz.

³⁹⁶ "Los Sembradores de Amistad inician su lucha contra el analfabetismo," *Sembradores de Amistad*, February 1959, 5.

³⁹⁷ "Los Sembradores de Amistad inician su lucha," 6.

³⁹⁸ For a concise overview of the UNPF, see: Torres-Septién, "Estado contra Iglesia/Iglesia contra Estado."

consider indispensable the construction of schools through committees," argued Guzmán Lozano.³⁹⁹ Second, the Sowers concurred with Torres Bodet's view that the curriculum needed to be updated. To that end, he proposed that Sowers of Friendship and/or other private associations form "committees of education" (*patronatos de educación*), which would be in charge of evaluating student and teacher performance, and of presenting recommendations to the SEP.⁴⁰⁰

With regards to the training of new school teachers, Guzmán Lozano offered a couple of suggestions, which would also give private interests more influence. As a long-term solution, the Sowers supported Torres Bodet's idea of opening new teaching colleges (*escuelas normales*) throughout the country with private contributions. "The Sowers of Friendship Clubs," stated Guzmán Lozano, "are willing to collaborate" by organizing ten "regional committees to collect the necessary funds to carry out this ambitious program."⁴⁰¹ As for a short-term fix, the Sowers offered to establish club-funded and supervised training centers in major cities that would provide a 6- to 12-month intensive teaching course. Informed by their class and gendered values, the Sowers recommended recruiting women over 17 years of age from the "middle classes or superior levels who are idle or work without need." The proposal to train female teachers was initially made by the Puebla Sowers Club, which during the 1940s literacy crusade had formed a brigade of *maestras misioneras* (see Chapter Four). According to that club, women from the middle and upper classes were ideal candidates to teach because, first, they "had a patriotic and eager soul that desires, before marriage, to offer its service to the nation." And second, "Mexican women" naturally possessed an "endless quarry of generosity and love for children."⁴⁰²

After hearing the proposal by the Sowers, Torres Bodet read his reply, though he noted that he was not prepared to give a detailed answer to all of the suggestions made by Guzmán Lozano. He first thanked the Sowers for their desire to help, calling it both "generous and opportune." Being a member of the Lions Club, Torres Bodet also noted that "the roots of this organization are not unknown to me," in reference perhaps to the original Monterrey Rotary Club's fallout with Rotary International. He then welcomed their interest in solving the educational crisis and was impressed in particular by their idea of forming training centers for women. Nevertheless, Torres Bodet subtly reiterated that the crusade was a project that the SEP intended to maintain close control over. As the head of the SEP, his goal was to "expand the educational system, which his office had the responsibility of orienting and coordinating." As for the gathering resources for schools and training centers by local committees, he affirmed that

³⁹⁹ "Los Sembradores de Amistad inician su lucha," 8.

⁴⁰⁰ For Torres Bodet's suggestion of updating the curricula, see "El caso de la educación," 4; "Los Sembradores de Amistad inician su lucha," 8.

⁴⁰¹ "Los Sembradores de Amistad inician su lucha," 7.

⁴⁰² "Ponencia Presentada a los demás Clubes de Sembradores de la República, en la reunión de Presidentes de Clubes celebrada en Tampico," *Sembradores de Amistad*, May 1959, 19–21.

this could be done as long as it was "within the purview of the law."⁴⁰³ Though he did not respond to the idea of granting ownership to the schools, it is highly doubtful that Torres Bodet even considered it a viable option.



Figure 18: Torres Bodet as the guest of the Sowers of Friendship Club of Mexico City. To his *left* is Guzmán Lozano and *standing* is Guajardo Sánchez.

Source: "Banquete del Club Sembradores de Amistad en el H. del Prado asistiendo el Ministro de Educación Torres Bodet," 4 de febrero (*sic*) de 1959, no. 13.254, Fondo Hermanos Mayo, AGN.

⁴⁰³ Palabras pronunciadas por el Sr. Torres Bodet, Secretario de Educación Pública, en el almuerzo organizado por "Los Sembradores de Amistad," January 30, 1959, fondo: JTB; caja 37; carpeta 165; exp. 13, IISUE-AHUNAM.

The meeting with the SEP officials was overall a cordial affair but it left the Sowers disappointed. A few months later, club directors from all Mexico met in Tampico to exchange impressions and make a decision on whether or not to cooperate with the crusade. The general concern expressed by most at that meeting was that the SEP would have "complete and sole control" over the 10 teaching centers that the Sowers sought to establish. The SEP "would decide how to use the money, where to place the schools, and which teachers and students to select," the Sowers claimed. Since it seemed to them that the state would not give control over to private citizens, the club presidents voted unanimously against participating. Guzmán Lozano concluded that the "strict official control" shown by Torres Bodet went contrary to the "principles of educational freedom and of the rights of parents to educate their children, which all Sowers cherish and from whence our club ideals emanate."⁴⁰⁴

In choosing once again not to collaborate with the state, the Sowers of Friendship maintained their resolve for promoting private and Catholic education, as they had been doing since the 1940s. The Monterrey Sowers, for instance, organized to provide funds for the renovation of a local elementary school and the addition of a technical middle school, both of which were ran by the Catholic Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Poor.⁴⁰⁵ In early 1960, the wives of the Mexico City Sowers Club established a close relationship with Mother Leonor Baqueriza Figueroa who managed a Catholic school and literacy facility called Centro Familiar Obrero (Workers' Family Center) for the blue-collar community of San Pedro de los Pinos.⁴⁰⁶

THE SOWERS OF FRIENDSHIP INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, 1961

The year 1961 brought important developments and milestones to the Sowers of Friendship. That year the organization held its sixteenth annual convention in the city where the first club had originated (Monterrey) twenty-five years prior. By 1961, the Monterrey club's membership had grown to a robust 300 and the Sowers had expanded to 28 cities in Mexico with a membership of over 1,500. It had also achieved the status of "international" service organization after establishing clubs in the United States (Texas) and in El Salvador, developments which captured the attention of local dailies on the other side of the border.⁴⁰⁷ (It was also unique in that no other Mexican service club had ever expanded to other countries.) But 1961 was also significant because of the global political climate of the Cold War—in

⁴⁰⁴ Mendirichaga, *Sembrando amistad*, 100–102.

⁴⁰⁵ The renovation and construction were completed in April 1961. The Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Poor also managed the orphanage Hospicio León Ortigosa in Monterrey, which the Sembradores de Amistad sponsored as well. See: "Construirá una secundaria el Club de Sembradores," *El Porvenir*, April 14, 1961, sec. B, 6.

⁴⁰⁶ *Sembradores de Amistad*, July 1962, 14.

⁴⁰⁷ "Friendship Delegates," *Express and News*, October 15, 1961, 4.

particular the influence of the Cuban Revolution—and its effects in Mexico and on the Sowers of Friendship.

By 1961, there were several factors that, compounded, elevated the sense of urgency on the right. As mentioned earlier, the Bay of Pigs invasion triggered waves of demonstration and in certain urban centers, such as Morelia and Puebla, it exacerbated preexisting tensions between groups on the left and the right. Adding to the heightened fear of communism was the SEP decision to impose official textbooks in elementary schools (whether private or public). Within the state of Nuevo León, the business and industrial leaders (many of whom were Sowers) opposed the PRI's selection of Eduardo Livas Villarreal for governor in 1961, whom they accused of being affiliated with the Mexican Communist Party (PCM).⁴⁰⁸ Cárdenas' newly-created MLN had also generated anxiety among *regiomontanos* after it organized a branch in Nuevo León.⁴⁰⁹ All of these developments provoked a backlash among conservatives, especially the Sowers of Friendship.

For three days in October of 1961, Sowers from Mexico, the US, and El Salvador met in Monterrey to celebrate their international convention. Two issues engrossed the approximate 600 attendees, which took sessions and workshops into the long hours of the night: Mexico's educational crisis and the existential threat of communism, both of which they saw as intimately linked.⁴¹⁰ At the gathering, the Mazatlán club submitted the most radical proposal in Sower convention history. In essence, it sought to expand the scope of the Sowers' activities, from Catholic service organization to a political watchdog denouncing state government officials and educators.

The time had come, the Mazatlán club's proposal stated, for the "social and civic consciousness among Sowers to awaken." The club from the pacific coast proposed, first, that all Sowers clubs in Mexico coordinate with other organizations to build private schools as quickly and as many as possible. Having more institutions in the hands of private, responsible citizens, such as the Sowers, would guarantee that children would not be exposed to the dangerous and immoral ideas, such as Marxism, that ran rampant in public schools. Second, the club proposed that the Sowers of Friendship's headquarters in Monterrey form a committee in charge of examining the mandatory textbooks used in elementary schools. The goal of this would be to "identify the communist ideas" found in the books, submit a formal complaint to the SEP, and demand their immediate removal. Third, each individual club would take the initiative to identify and denounce "communist elements" within the SEP and have them removed. To help prevent communism from gaining adepts from the lower classes, the Mazatlán Sowers even recommended that clubs invite labor union leaders to club luncheons to teach them that

⁴⁰⁸ Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México*, 352.

⁴⁰⁹ The MLN began publishing insertions in local newspapers to gather supporters of the movement. See, for instance, "Al pueblo de Nuevo León," *El Porvenir*, January 26, 1961, sec. A, 19.

⁴¹⁰ For an estimate of the guests, see: "Convención de los Sembradores de Amistad," *El Siglo de Torreón*, October 11, 1961, 11.

"communism is the true enemy of the Mexican people." Finally, the proposal suggested that the Sowers of Friendship as an organization declare its intention to "combat communism."⁴¹¹

The Mazatlán proposition was approved unanimously by a special committee comprised of eight Sower leaders from around Mexico, some of whom had close ties with both the Catholic Church and the National Action Party (PAN). For instance, Sergio Francisco de la Garza from the Monterrey Club who was a prominent legal scholar who as a law student became a militant of the firebrand Catholic student organization UNEC (Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos, or National Union of Catholic Students). Because of his relationship with Efraín González Luna, it is very likely he was also a supporter of the PAN.⁴¹² Another was José Luis Llamas A., a banker whose family helped found the PAN in Coahuila, and also was a Knight of Columbus.⁴¹³ And finally, Alberto Avilés from Culiacán who, in addition to co-founding the PAN in Sinaloa with his brother Alejandro, was also member of the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano—a Catholic organization for married couples.⁴¹⁴

The Sowers convention ended on October 12—a date which proponents of *hispanismo* commemorate as the *Día de la Hispanidad*.⁴¹⁵ After three days of workshops and discussions, club leadership determined to become more active in the political sphere, a development which they announced to the press.⁴¹⁶ They concluded that "two themes [were] of fundamental interest to all Sowers: education and the social question," referring to the influence of communism. By

⁴¹¹ All quotes taken from: "Ponencia presentada por el Club Sembradores de Mazatlán," *Sembradores de Amistad*, November 1961, 15–16.

⁴¹² Luis Calderón Vega, *Cuba 88: Memorias de la UNEC*, 2nd ed. (Morelia, México: n.p., 1963), footnote 33 on p.129; there is evidence that De la Garza corresponded with the founder of the PAN, González Luna. See: Jorge Alonso, *Miradas sobre la personalidad política de Efraín González Luna* (Universidad de Guadalajara, Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, 2003), 168–69.

⁴¹³ José Luis Llamas came from a family of prominent Catholics who founded the Knights of Columbus chapter in Torreón. See: "Aniversario del C. de Caballeros de Colón, hoy," *El Siglo de Torreón*, February 12, 1958; "C. de Colón y Cámara Junior," *El Siglo de Torreón*, March 13, 1959, 7; "'C. de Colón' en la L. de Softball," *El Siglo de Torreón*, November 13, 1959, 9; "Marco Cultural," March 13, 2007, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/61685.marco-cultural.html>.

⁴¹⁴ "El PAN de Avilés," *La Nación*, April 18, 2005, 38–39; Sarahí Melissa Araiza Grijalva, "Elecciones municipales en Culiacán de 1965 a 1980: una mirada a través de su cultura política ciudadana" (M.A. Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2013), 81; the Avilés also had business ties with another prominent family in Culiacán: the Clouthiers. See: Diana Sugey Burgos Aguilar, "La dinámica empresarial de la familia Clouthier en Culiacán. 1950-1982" (M.A. Thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2009), 45.

⁴¹⁵ In Mexico October 12 is an official holiday to celebrate the Día de la Raza. Among *hispanistas* in the Americas and in Spain, the *Día de la Hispanidad* is observed in honor of their Spanish-Catholic heritage.

⁴¹⁶ "Sembradores se declara trinchera irreductible contra el marxismo," *El Porvenir*, October 13, 1961, sec. B, 1 and 13.

then it became clear to the *sembradores* that these two issues could not be treated separately. In a rebuke to the SEP's educational crusade, Sergio Francisco de la Garza in his closing ceremony speech warned that building schools and donating equipment was not enough to solve Mexico's problem. In a call for greater action, he argued that it was imperative for Sowers "to assume direct or indirect responsibility" in the management of the many new public schools that were to be built.⁴¹⁷ Doing so would protect Mexican children from immoral educators spreading Marxism and other dangerous ideas.

The Sowers of Friendship also declared its commitment to propagating Catholic social teaching (*doctrina social cristiana*) as a response to Marxism.⁴¹⁸ As a service organization that claimed to be apolitical, this was an especially political move since it was an ideology espoused primarily by the Catholic Church, Church-affiliated associations, and the PAN.⁴¹⁹ Going further, the Sowers believed that their organization could not be limited to "theoretical analyses" of the threat of communism, which were insufficient stopping its spreading. To protect the nation from the supposed communist assault (particularly in schools), the Sowers vowed to actively denounce and demand the removal of state bureaucrats, educators, and unionists for advocating communist ideas. "With our characteristic optimism and readiness to action," declared de la Garza, "we *sembradores* must contribute toward the solution of these grave problems."⁴²⁰

SOWERS, THE CRAC, AND THE UNLPF

Despite their commitment to protecting schools from communism—namely textbooks and educators with Marxist influences—how exactly the Sowers of Friendship would accomplish these new goals was not entirely clear. Would they act individually as citizens concerned with social and political issues? Through their local Sowers Clubs? Or by joining other civic or political organizations? Though a concrete plan was not laid out, the members of the Sowers opted for a combination of these approaches to combat the "red" educators and bureaucrats. Members joined forces with other civic groups that addressed the issue of education and anti-communism head on. Some opted for forming a regional National Parents Union (Unión Neoleonesa de Padres de Familia, or UNLPF) to mobilize against the SEP's implementation of obligatory textbooks. To combat the influence of communism, other Sowers joined a parallel

⁴¹⁷ "Discurso pronunciado por el Lic. Sergio Francisco de la Garza en la asamblea de clausura de la XVI convención nacional de los Clubes de Sembradores de Amistad," *Sembradores de Amistad*, November 1961, 20.

⁴¹⁸ This was proposed by the Mexico City Sowers Club during the convention. "Acta levantada el día 10 de Octubre de 1961," *Sembradores de Amistad*, November 1961, 14.

⁴¹⁹ Social Catholicism, or Catholic social teaching originated with *Rerum Novarum*—the Vatican's late 19th-century response to Marxism's social question. Among the Catholic-inspired lay organizations that promoted Social Catholicism was the Social Union of Mexican Businessmen (Unión Social de Empresarios Mexicanos, or USEM) founded in 1962.

⁴²⁰ "Discurso pronunciado por el Lic. Sergio Francisco de la Garza," 21.

organization called the Regional Anti-Communist Crusade (Cruzada Regional Anti-Comunista, or CRAC).⁴²¹ While the Sowers of Friendship Club did not spearhead the creation of the two civic associations, the presence and influence of individual *sembradores* in both is unquestionable.

Founded in October 1961, the CRAC's alleged architect and leader was Pedro Reyes Velázquez, a federal congressman from the PAN, a professor of journalism at the Technological Institute of Monterrey and—since the early 1950s—a member of the Sowers of Friendship.⁴²² Other highly-involved Sowers included Ernesto Casasús (see Chapter Four) and José P. Saldaña (COPARMEX). The purpose of the CRAC was to gather men and women, regardless of their class and profession, who believed that communism had become a palpable threat and were determined to stop its growth. Because it attempted to draw people of all backgrounds, the CRAC also drew individuals from outside of the Sowers, including the local Lions and Rotary clubs.⁴²³

Leadership defined the CRAC as a "civic organization" that meant to be the face of a broader social "movement" of citizens who opposed communism. It claimed also that their "movement was not political," by which they meant it was not a political party. Rather it meant to organize citizens who sought "a radical change in our society, and implement a new order inspired in the principles of Christian Social Justice." And although this seemed like an organization linked to the Catholic Church, CRAC assured that it was "not religious, nor does it depend on any ecclesiastical hierarchy." Its sole purpose was to thwart the spread of communism.⁴²⁴ As could be expected, journalists on the left derided the CRAC and in general the anti-communist crusade in Nuevo León even going as far as to suggest that the whole movement was being orchestrated by the American Consul in Monterrey.⁴²⁵

To accomplish this mission, the CRAC operated in two ways. First, it gathered anti-communists and sought to proselytized more followers, or "militants," as they called members, in order to form an even larger organization. Members were then organized into small cells of ten members each. Second, throughout its existence (1961-1965), the CRAC actively led a public relations campaign, attacking any manifestation of communism locally or nationally. One way it accomplished this was by giving lectures on the threat of communism. Occasionally, CRAC leaders spoke at local service clubs such as (not surprisingly) the Sowers of Friendship, but also

⁴²¹ In its early stages, the first "C" in CRAC was for Campaign (*Campaña*) but was later changed to Crusade (*Cruzada*).

⁴²² 1962 article in *Tiempo*, cited in Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México*, 363; Vega, *Personalidades de Monterrey*, 307; "Sembradores de amistad regiomontanos," *Sembradores: Revista conmemorativa de la VII convención Nacional de Clubes Sembradores de Amistad*, October 1951, 31.

⁴²³ For instance, Héctor González (Rotary Club) and Carlos Marín Foucher (Lions Club).

⁴²⁴ "Declaración de principios de la Cruzada Regional Anti-Comunista," *Mensaje Quincenal*, February 20, 1962, 2–3.

⁴²⁵ For example, see "Nuevo León: Despedidos al por mayor," *Política*, May 1, 1962, 35.

others such as the Club Sertoma of Monterrey.⁴²⁶ It also organized lectures open to the public, which sought to influence public and state opinion. For example, on the eve of the OAS meeting at Punta del Este in 1962, the CRAC invited Dr. Ramón Infiesta, an exiled Cuban professor from the University of Havana and a former Catholic priest, to speak on the horrors of the Castro regime. Notably, before his talk with CRAC, Dr. Infiesta had spoken to a meeting of the Sowers of Friendship Club, an indication of the close ties with of the CRAC.⁴²⁷

Integral to its anti-communist crusade was a public relations campaign through printed media. One was its official organ, called *Mensaje Quincenal*, in which the CRAC emitted opinions to pressure a hardline Mexican foreign policy toward Cuba. It also used the organ to denounce individuals with Marxist ties.⁴²⁸ For instance, one piece provided a list of "communists who have infiltrated into the government of Nuevo León." In it, the CRAC named the governor of Nuevo León, public school educators, university deans, directors of state hospitals, and other as "Reds." After governor Livas Villarreal appointed José Alvarado as the head of the University of Nuevo León in late 1961, the CRAC condemned the provost and claimed had ties to communist groups from the UNAM. In addition, the CRAC paid for insertions in regional dailies, such as *El Norte* and *El Porvenir*. Typically, these paid articles provided "proof" of state officials with communist ties. On one occasion, it published a 1954 photograph showing high-level state bureaucrats and SEP officials attending a PCM meeting with a caption that read: "why are individuals with communist links allowed to infiltrate a Government whose People hold that the Marxist-Leninist doctrine is incompatible with the Democratic Doctrine of the Free peoples of the Americas?"⁴²⁹

The CRAC also had a clear position with regards to education in Mexico, which aligned with those of the right. Like the PAN, the Catholic Church, and the National Parents Union, the CRAC held that the federal government had the responsibility to provide free education to all, but ultimately it was parents who had "the preferential right over moral or ideological education" of their children.⁴³⁰ The CRAC also considered that communist sympathizers had infiltrated the SEP and taken control over public universities, not just the UNAM but also in other provinces, including Puebla, Michoacán, and in Nuevo León.⁴³¹ When news of the state mandating official

⁴²⁶ "Por qué lucha la CRAC," *El Porvenir*, July 18, 1962, sec. B, 4.

⁴²⁷ "La amenaza del comunismo en Latinoamérica," *Mensaje Quincenal*, January 20, 1962, 1, 2 and 6; Christopher M. White, *Creating a Third World: Mexico, Cuba, and the United States During the Castro Era* (UNM Press, 2007), 94.

⁴²⁸ For example, see "CRAC en Punta del Este," *Mensaje Quincenal*, February 5, 1962, 3.

⁴²⁹ "Comunistas infiltrados en el gobierno de Nuevo León," *Mensaje Quincenal*, November 10, 1961, 2; "Los universitarios y el pueblo repudian al nuevo rector," *Mensaje Quincenal*, December 20, 1961, 1; "Entonces...¿por qué?," *El Porvenir*, February 15, 1962, sec. A, 7; "Cruzada Regional Anti-Comunista," *El Porvenir*, May 12, 1962, sec. A, 11.

⁴³⁰ "Declaración de principios de la Cruzada Regional Anti-Comunista," 2–3.

⁴³¹ "La universidad y el comunismo," *Mensaje Quincenal*, March 30, 1963, 1, 3 and 6; "150 estudiantes heridos por los Rojos en Morelia," *Mensaje Quincenal*, March 16, 1963, 3; "La Universidad

textbooks reached Monterrey in 1962, the CRAC joined the opposition movement led by the newly-created Parents Union in Nuevo León (UNLPF).⁴³²

Although in the northeastern state it erupted later, the issue with the official textbooks had its origins back in 1960 at the national level, after the SEP declared that "the use of the single and free textbook is mandatory in all elementary schools."⁴³³ The main headquarters of the National Parents Union—based in Mexico City—sent open letters of protest to president López Mateos as early as February of that year. The problem reached Monterrey when governor Livas Villarreal took office in October 1961 and ordered the distribution of the books to all elementary schools, a decision which generated protests from local parents. By and large, opposition was based on what parents considered to be "Marxist indoctrination" and also a critical view of the Catholic Church in Mexican history. According to one anecdote, a "wealthy parent" from Monterrey rejected the text because it included, "for instance, a story in which five children, each with one peso, decide to buy together a toy of better quality. That is misleading, [it's] communist," he complained.⁴³⁴ Nevertheless, in late January 1962, the SEP remained resolute in its commitment to implement the books.⁴³⁵

Shortly after, parents mobilized behind the UNLPF to spearhead their opposition. Leading the parents' organization, and the scores of parents from all socio-economic backgrounds, was Eliot Camarena Bretón, general manager of the factory "Nylon de México" in Monterrey and director of the ITESM's School of Engineering. Before relocating in the late 1940s to Nuevo León, Camarena studied chemical engineering at the UNAM and later obtained a Master's degree from MIT with a Roosevelt Fellowship. Through his profession and position at the ITESM, he became acquainted with many important industrialists and faculty who were also Sowers of Friendship—such as Bernardo Elosúa, Eugenio Garza Sada, Virgilio Garza Jr., among others. By the early 1960s, Camarena had also joined the ranks of the Monterrey *sembradores*. According to one account, although he was not affiliated to any Catholic lay association, Camarena was a Catholic and a "devout believer" in the Virgin of Guadalupe.⁴³⁶

de Puebla queda bajo el control marxista," *Mensaje Quincenal*, May 1, 1963, 7; "La unidad cultural 'La Ciudadela' se utiliza para adoctrinamiento del comunismo," *Mensaje Quincenal*, March 16, 1963, 1.

⁴³² "250 mil regiomontanos desaprueban en pacífico mitín las proyectadas reformas educativas," *Mensaje Quincenal*, February 5, 1962, 1, 2 and 6.

⁴³³ *Excélsior*, February 9, 1960, quoted in Valentina Torres-Septién, "Estado contra Iglesia/Iglesia contra Estado. Los libros de texto gratuito: ¿un caso de autoritarismo gubernamental. 1959-1962?," *Historia y grafía*, no. 37 (December 2011): 59.

⁴³⁴ "Punta a Punta del Este," *Política*, February 15, 1962, 20.

⁴³⁵ On Livas Villarreal's decision to distribute the textbooks, see: Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México*, 351; news of the UNLPF's organization appeared in "El comité organizador de la Unión Neoleonesa de Padres de Familia," *El Porvenir*, February 1, 1962, 10.

⁴³⁶ One DFS report states that Camarena was a member of the Unión Nacional Sinarquista. I have not found any evidence to corroborate the claim. Most likely, the DFS agent was either mistaken or attempted to smear him by suggesting he was a *sinarquista*. Memo from Agent Manuel Rangel Escamilla,

As Soledad Loaeza notes, though it was seemingly a cross-class organization, the UNLPF was by and large led by middle-class and elite individuals. Most of the grassroots-level work, however, had been carried out by parents of more humble backgrounds. Nevertheless, several influential employers and businessmen many of whom, like Camarena, were Sowers of Friendship, took the leadership positions of the UNLPF. A few were members of the PAN in Nuevo León, including Pablo Emilio Madero, nephew of the revolutionary leader, Francisco I. Madero. And some, such as Ernesto Casasús, had memberships in the UNLPF, the Sowers, and the CRAC.⁴³⁷ Some observers on the left noted the links, and some went as far as to claim that the UNLPF was a puppet of the PAN. Other commentators derided the movement, calling it the "triple alliance" of the Catholic Church, the Monterrey bourgeoisie, and Yankee imperialism—suggesting the US was somehow involved. In other words, he argued, they were Mexico's version of the "Ku Klux Klan" but focused on SEP textbooks instead of people of color.⁴³⁸

As could be anticipated, the UNLPF counted on the support of the UNPF based in Mexico City, Catholic lay organizations including the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano and the Knights of Columbus, and the PAN. With a broad base, the UNLPF on February 2, 1962 led a massive demonstration the likes of which had not been seen in Monterrey since the 1936 protests against Cardenismo. Industrialists contributed by halting operations and pressuring their employees to attend the rally in exchange for a day off. The scale of the march, which according to different sources assembled somewhere between 100-300,000 people, was such that it was covered by national newspapers and from other parts of the Americas.⁴³⁹

February 2, 1962, exp. 100-17-1; Versiones Públicas: "UNLPF"; DFS, AGN; the rest of Camarena's background is from: Institute of International Education, ed., *Annual Report of the President*, vol. 23, S (New York: The Institute of International Education, 1935), 37; Juan René Vega, *Personalidades de Monterrey: Diccionario biográfico con microbiografías de los hombres más destacados del Monterrey actual* (Vega y Asociados, 1967), 40–41; S. Guzmán Velázquez, "Crónica de la séptima convención de Sembradores de Amistad en Monterrey, N.L.," *El Sembrador: Publicación mensual dedicada a la difusión de ideas culturales y otras causas nobles (Guadalajara)*, November 1951; *Directorio 1964* (Monterrey, México: Club Sembradores de Amistad de Monterrey, A.C., 1964). "Un hombre vivo," accessed June 8, 2018, <https://fridaguerrera.blogspot.com/2007/12/un-hombre-vivo.html>.

⁴³⁷ For a highly critical examination of the developments in Monterrey, see: "Punta a Punta del Este," 18–20; Soledad Loaeza also notes that the inclusion of Camarena and other middle-class and elite regiomontanos became the source of conflict with the parents who had done the earlier organizing work. *Clases medias y política en México*, 356 and 360. Of the individuals I have identified as members of the Sowers are: Ernesto Casasús Delgado, Rafael Alonso y Prieto, Andrés Marcelo Sada, Juan Celada Salmón, Alfonso Garza Garza, Arturo Pérez Ayala, Luis J. Prieto González, and Luis Santos de la Garza.

⁴³⁸ "Punta a Punta del Este," 18; Jorge Carrión, "Pedagogía a lo china poblana," *Política*, May 15, 1962, 25.

⁴³⁹ Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México*, 355; "150 mil personas protestan pacíficamente la reforma educativa," *El Porvenir*, February 3, 1962, second edition, 1; for coverage in other parts of Mexico, see: "La manifestación de Monterrey," *Excelsior*, February 5, 1962, 6; "Manifestación contra la enseñanza en Monterrey," *El Informador*, February 4, 1962, second edition, 1; the incident even made

Following the march, several actors came to the defense of the SEP's textbooks—among them Torres Bodet who refuted to the charges of the UNLPF, which privately he considered a "far-right" organization.⁴⁴⁰ Although "a certain organization that calls itself the 'National Parents Union,' has insisted on censuring the free textbooks and school curriculum," he claimed that the SEP was acting upon the democratic principles of the Constitution.⁴⁴¹ The most visible support came from a group called the Committee for the Defense of the Constitution, which was organized in haste, gathering PRI and state-affiliated organizations, including the freemasons of the Grand Lodge of Nuevo León—the perennial foes of the Catholic Church.⁴⁴²

Following the UNLPF march, the pro-SEP committee responded by organizing a counter rally on February 11, which according to one observer was "unimpressive" compared to the one organized by the parents. Not only did fail to muster a large contingent, but many of those present were said to have been *campesinos* trucked in from the Nuevo León countryside.⁴⁴³ With the uproar created by the UNPLF, the movement received the national attention its leadership was hoping for. Regionally, it allowed Camarena and other members of the Parents Union to engage in talks with the SEP and with state government. The governor of Nuevo León, who surprisingly expressed his sympathy with the parents, agreed to create a special commission comprised of SEP officials to study the complaints and help reach a solution.⁴⁴⁴ In the big picture, the state's willingness to establish a dialogue with the UNLPF opened the possibility that similar results might be obtained by other branches in other states, setting a precedent for future concessions.

headlines in Brazil: "Partido mexicano protesta contra livro obrigatório," *Correio da manhã*, March 25, 1962, 12.

⁴⁴⁰ In one of his multiple resignation letters to President López Mateos, Torres Bodet described the UNLPF as "extrema derecha." See document titled "Renuncia J.T.B.," undated but likely mid 1962, fondo: JTB; caja 13; carpeta 89; exp. s.n.; foja 10, IISUE-AHUNAM.

⁴⁴¹ "Declaraciones del C. Secretario de Educación Pública," *El Porvenir*, February 10, 1962, 11.

⁴⁴² Among the pro-textbooks organizations were teachers and campesinos unions, the regional PRI committee, veterans of the Revolution associations, and the CNOP. See: "El Comité de defensa de la Constitución," *El Porvenir*, February 6, 1962, second edition, 4; "El Comité de defensa de la Constitución," *El Porvenir*, February 9, 1962, 12; "Invitación: La Gran Logia de Nuevo León," *El Porvenir*, February 11, 1962, second edition, 4.

⁴⁴³ Dispatch No. 90 from John F. Killea, Consul General, March 6, 1962, p.2, file 712.00/3-662, Monterrey, GR; Box 1510, RG 84; NACP.

⁴⁴⁴ For Livas Villarreal expressing sympathy: Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México*, 357; for coverage of the march in Nuevo León, see: "150 mil personas protestan pacíficamente la reforma educativa," 1.

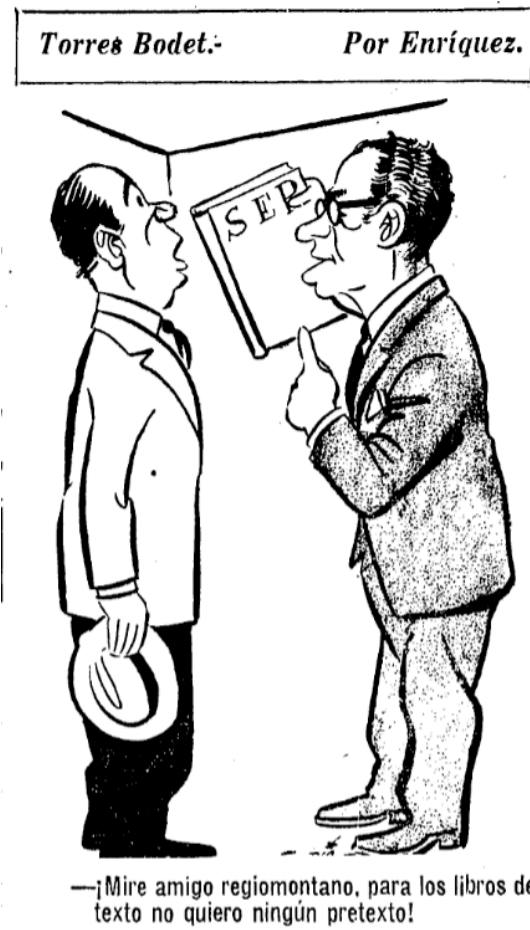


Figure 19: An editorial cartoon printed in major Mexican newspapers lampooning the 1962 disagreement between the Torres Bodet and the Monterrey parents. It reads: "Look, *amigo regiomontano*, regarding the texts, I don't want any pretexts!"

Source: Enríquez. "Torres Bodet." *El Siglo de Torreón*. February 16, 1962, p. 4.

THE SAN LUIS POTOSÍ INCIDENT

Seeking to capitalize on the momentum created by the *regiomontanos*, UNPF offices from around the country increased their mobilization against the official textbooks. Several from northeastern Mexico, including in Saltillo, Torreón, Nuevo Laredo, and San Luis Potosí contacted directly Monterrey's leadership for advice on how to build on their success. However, conditions in Nuevo León were not necessarily the same in other states. In one particular example, that of San Luis Potosí in 1962, the local UNPF, the Sowers of Friendship, and other civic associations became the target of repression by a notoriously intolerant state government,

which was under the influence of the former revolutionary general and *cacique* (political boss), Gonzalo N. Santos.⁴⁴⁵

In San Luis Potosí, the UNPF and Sowers were linked to a particularly staunch and successful opposition movement, called "*navismo*," after its leader Dr. Salvador Nava Martínez. In 1958, Dr. Nava defeated the PRI candidate, claiming the mayoral seat of the state's capital. Two years later, he ran again as an independent for governor, but this time lost to the PRI in an election widely considered to have been fraudulent. When *navistas* took to the streets to protest the results, violence broke out and President López Mateos sent the army, which occupied the city for three months and detained Dr. Nava for two weeks. Though decidedly weakened, *navistas* continued their activism against the authoritarianism of the state, including with the textbook issue, until 1963. Among the many civic associations that still supported Nava were the local UNPF and the Sowers of Friendship Club of San Luis—both of which were related and in contact with their Monterrey counterparts.⁴⁴⁶

Just as the anti-textbook activism was gaining traction in Monterrey, leaders of the UNLPF—Eliot Camarena, Ernesto Casasús (both Sowers), and Pablo Emilio Madero (PAN)—traveled to San Luis Potosí to give the local UNPF counsel on how to organize against the official textbooks. State agents, however, were aware of their activities. Arriving on March 21 from Monterrey, the Monterrey men met at a local café with several representatives of the UNPF, among whom was Dr. José Nava Martínez—brother of Dr. Salvador Nava and a member of the San Luis Potosí Sowers of Friendship. Their plan was to rendezvous later that day with the presidents of the local and national offices of the UNPF, Roberto Mercado Aguirre and Ramón Sánchez Medal (respectively).

Suddenly, 15 armed agents in civilian garb walked to their table. Without providing a warrant, the men told them the members of the UNPF that they were being arrested for colluding with the *navistas* against the government. After refusing, the agents dragged them out of the restaurant and to prison. The agents charged them with criminal association, resisting arrest, carrying weapons, slander, and threatening public officials. Although the accusations were fabricated, Camarena, Casasús, Madero and the other UNPF members were placed in jail where they were questioned and beaten.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ In his report, the American Consul in Monterrey noted that parents unions were in touch with the UNLPF. See, Dispatch No. 90 from John F. Killea, Consul General, p.3.

⁴⁴⁶ Dr. Nava became one of the first independent politicians (not affiliated to the PAN) to win a mayorship. In 1947, the candidate from the PAN, Manuel Torres Serranía, won the first municipal election in Quiroga, Michoacán. On the history of *Navismo*, see: Wil G. Pansters, "Citizens with Dignity: Opposition and Government in San Luis Potosí, 1938-93," in *Dismantling the Mexican State?*, ed. Rob Aitken et al. (Springer, 2016), 244–66; Dan La Botz, *Democracy in Mexico: Peasant Rebellion and Political Reform* (South End Press, 1995), 130–37; F. Miguel Carreras L., "El *Navismo* en San Luis Potosí: historia de un movimiento regional" (B.A. thesis, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa, 1986).

⁴⁴⁷ Dispatch No. 105 from John F. Killea, Consul General, April 6, 1962, file 712.00/4-262, Monterrey, GR; Box 1510, RG 84; NACP; DFS Memorandum, March 22, 1962, exp. 100-22-1-62; foja

The interrogators accused the three men from Monterrey of coming to San Luis Potosí to agitate and aid the *navista* movement. All three denied the charges and insisted that their sole purpose was to discuss the textbook issue with local members of the UNPF. But the agents were aware also of their affiliations to the CRAC. "We know that you are a member of the CRAC," one officer asked Casasús, which he confirmed. Another agent asked what were the goals of the CRAC, which Casasús explained was an organization to protect Mexican society from communism. "Well, all that is very good," the agent responded, "but you should know that here in San Luis Potosí we do not have that Communism problem [sic]." Casasús then clarified that they had come in a different capacity, which was to "illustrate to the president of the [San Luis] Parents Union what topics should be discussed" with the regards to the textbooks.⁴⁴⁸

After word got out about their detention, the UNPF presidents of the local and national branches, Mercado Aguirre and Sánchez Medal, scrambled to find them legal representation. On the day of their arraignment, help had arrived from Monterrey: three lawyers who were members of the Sowers of Friendship. After spending several days jail, the Monterrey men were freed on bail, while the San Luis members of the UNPF remained in custody. On the day of his release, March 26, it was reported that Eliot Camarena (UNLPF and Sower) was placed on a bus bound for Monterrey by a state agent who offered him a word of advice: "it would be best if you never come back to San Luis Potosí."⁴⁴⁹

Less than two weeks later, however, the Monterrey Sowers received more disquieting news from San Luis Potosí: the local Sowers chapter had been victims of state-led terror. On April 5, the Sowers of Friendship Club in San Luis were holding a dinner session in the Instituto Carlos Gómez, a private Catholic (Salesian) school. This was not an ordinary Sowers dinner; it was being held in a different place than the usual venue (a hotel), and it was a joint meeting with members of the local UNPF, some of whom had recently been released from jail. As they were dining, police stormed into the meeting hall, yelling insults to the Catholic Church, and threatening to make arrests on the grounds of conspiracy against the government. According to

165; Versiones Públicas: "Salvador Nava Martínez"; leg. 3; DFS, AGN; Antonio Estrada M., *La grieta en el yugo* (México, 1963), 257–58.

⁴⁴⁸ "La democracia pisoteada en San Luis, con la detención del Ing. Pablo E. Madero y Casasús," *Mensaje Quincenal*, April 5, 1962, 6.

⁴⁴⁹ The three lawyers and Sowers from Monterrey were: Felipe Gutiérrez Zorrilla, Luis Santos de la Garza, and Jesús Montaña, whose names can be found in: *Directorio 1964*; Memo by DFS Agent Félix L. Alvahuante, March 23, 1962, exp. 100-22-1-62; fojas 168-69; Versiones Públicas: "Salvador Nava Martínez"; leg. 3; DFS, AGN; Report to the Director Federal de Seguridad, March 26, 1962, exp. 100-22-1-62; foja 22; Versiones Públicas: "Salvador Nava Martínez," leg. 3; DFS, AGN; Gerardo Medina Valdés, "San Luis Potosí: El gobierno inventa 'conjuras' para aplastar la libertad," *La Nación*, April 1, 1962, 18.

reports, the Sowers convinced the agents that it was a peaceful, civic gathering and the men left without making any detentions.⁴⁵⁰

Afterwards, the heads of the San Luis Sowers of Friendship Club, Julián Abud and Vicente Martínez Chávez, traveled to Monterrey to discuss the recent events with the headquarters. The Monterrey office then sent complaints to the governor of San Luis Potosí and to the federal authorities. During the Monterrey Sowers' next dinner session, the president of the *regiomontano* club José Emilio Amores delivered a protest, which members of the press recorded. Resorting to the official "apolitical" status of the Sowers of Friendship, Amores noted that the "activities of the authorities were entirely reprehensible" since it was a civic meeting to discuss "acts of charity by a community service organization."⁴⁵¹

Although for the all Sowers of Friendship the thought of having a club session raided by police was worrisome, there is little indication that the incident meant to do more than instill fear. First, the state agents sent to storm the Sowers' event were members of the "*policía ganadera*," or livestock police—an unusual agency to call on to search a service club meeting since it mainly dealt with affairs relating to the countryside. Second, the fact that no arrests were made makes it quite plausible that their intrusion was meant to disrupt. Finally, this was one of many similar incidents in early 1962 involving the San Luis police, the navistas, and organizations linked to it, which included searches, arrests, interrogations, beatings, and other forms of harassment.⁴⁵² In other words, it was an act of terror intended to suffocate what was left of the *navista* movement, which was achieved by early 1963 with the second arrest of Dr. Nava.

The episode in San Luis Potosí demonstrated that locally the *cacicazgo* was committed repressing the navista movement, which in turn affected the anti-textbook groups.⁴⁵³ Because of the close association with navistas, the UNPF and the Sowers confronted the limits of engaging in the politics of education, despite being seemingly apolitical associations (in the case of the latter). Even the Rotary Club of San Luis became entangled in 1963, when the club president Luis Martínez Narezo (former Unión Nacional Sinarquista leader) was arrested along with Dr. Nava and other supporters.

⁴⁵⁰ Thanks to Germán Vergara for tracking down this *El Norte* reference: "Sembradores protestan por atentado," *El Norte*, April 13, 1962, sec. B, 1; "Terrorismo oficial en San Luis Potosí, S.L.P.," *Mensaje Quincenal*, April 30, 1962, 4–6; "Los Estados," *La Nación*, April 15, 1962, 23.

⁴⁵¹ "Sembradores protestan por atentado," 1.

⁴⁵² In less than one month, between February 10 and March 5, there were over 10 episodes in which collaborators of Salvador Nava were harrassed or imprisoned, including the UNPF and Sowers of Friendship. Medina Valdés, "San Luis Potosí: El gobierno inventa 'conjuras' para aplastar la libertad," 16–17; "Los Estados," 23.

⁴⁵³ After almost two decades of a political hiatus, Salvador Nava reemerged with the support of the PAN and the Mexican Democratic Party in the 1980s to challenge the PRI. In 1982, he won for the second time the municipal presidency of San Luis Potosí. See: Pansters, "Citizens with Dignity: Opposition and Government in San Luis Potosí, 1938-93"; and also Carreras L., "El Navismo en San Luis Potosí: historia de un movimiento regional," chap. 4.

As for the Lions Club of San Luis Potosí, it followed the pattern seen in other locations by expressing support for the post-revolutionary regime. While the Rotary club protested the imprisonment of its president and Dr. Nava, the Lions Club of San Luis issued a public announcement, declaring it was an association that does not "intervene in political or religious affairs," but advocates "harmony and good government" (*buen gobierno*). Nevertheless, the Lions "congratulated the authorities and the people of San Luis" for restoring the peace.⁴⁵⁴

Nuevo León was a different story. Political conditions there allowed the Sowers and other anti-textbook organizations to obtain a more favorable outcome than their counterparts in San Luis. Though discussions with state officials throughout the first half of 1962 proved to be unfruitful encounters, by the end of year the SEP had to offer concessions. Despite López Mateos' unwillingness to give up the official textbooks, the state of Nuevo León allowed educators the option of using other books, a decision which had national ramifications. Throughout the country, private schools retained the right to teach either from the official or "commercial" texts, as they were called. And, in the words of Valentina Torres-Septién, the SEP's "textbook ceased to be compulsory and became supplementary."⁴⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

The stories of service clubs and civic groups in 1960s Puebla, Monterrey, San Luis Potosí, and elsewhere examined here have shown two interrelated processes. On the one hand, both cases exemplify the extent to which service clubs in Mexico became more invested in the politics of education. This tendency, of course, had its roots back in the 1940s after the state extended an invitation to the private sector to participate in a noble cause: in the education of Mexico's children. This civic and patriotic call meshed perfectly with the philanthropic mission of the international service organizations as well as with the interests of its Mexican members.

On the other hand, the preceding pages have illustrated the increased activism of Mexican service clubs against leftist ideologies and popular movements—in many ways mirroring a hemispheric pattern triggered by the Cuban Revolution and the Cold War. By the end of the 1950s, however, the politics of education and communism were becoming further interlaced. Mexican clubmen and women no longer viewed these as separate issues; rather they were intimately related. Stated differently, for many service clubs, to speak of Mexico's educational crisis was to address the problem of communism, which the state had either condoned or promoted. And yet, there are points of commonality and divergence in the incidents in Puebla and Monterrey that are important to highlight.

In both case studies, the question of education allowed service clubs with an entryway for becoming actors in an issue that was highly politicized. As such, engaging in the politics of education forced service clubs to challenge the post-revolutionary state, though increasingly via

⁴⁵⁴ The Rotary Club's protest and Lions Club congratulation appear in: Report to the Director Federal de Seguridad, February 9, 1963, exp. 100-22-1-63, L-5; foja 257; DFS, AGN.

⁴⁵⁵ Torres-Septién, "Estado contra Iglesia/Iglesia contra Estado," 68 and 73.

proxy organizations that would not compromise the "apolitical" status of clubs—hence the CCIP (Puebla) and the UNLPF and CRAC (Monterrey). But in Puebla, the coalition of civic associations led by club members confronted the regional authorities for what it considered to be excessive leniency, if not aloofness, towards a dangerous student movement. The disenchantment with the governor forced these organizations to call on the federal state and the military, which in the end heeded their demands.⁴⁵⁶

As for the Sowers of Friendship, the Monterrey-based organization remained consistent with its general disdain for the post-revolutionary state—at the regional and federal levels. By the 1960s, however, the Sowers also utilized parallel organizations to resist the SEP's policy of mandatory textbooks. But as we saw in San Luis Potosí, there were limits to how far civic activism could take the Sowers before provoking the backlash from state authorities. Nevertheless, the incidents in Puebla, Monterrey, and San Luis provided service clubs throughout the country with invaluable lessons moving forward.

⁴⁵⁶ This was no small detail. Pansters argues that the bypassing of the governor amounted to a major crack in the *cacicazgo* created by the Ávila Camachos. *Politics and Power in Puebla*.

EPILOGUE

Shortly after Gustavo Díaz Ordaz was sworn in as President of Mexico in December 1964, the CRAC (Cruzada Regional Anticomunista) published an editorial applauding the arrival of the nation's new leader. Among the qualities that the CRAC emphasized was his strong record stamping out "communist" agitators. "The future President will be a zealous defender," the organization stated, who will "not tolerate communist conspiracies that threaten the peace and happiness of Mexicans... We place our faith in you."⁴⁵⁷ The tone of the editorial was exceptionally positive for a member of the PRI, given the skepticism that the Monterrey-based organization harbored toward the post-revolutionary state.

As a president who promised to clamp down on popular movements that threatened to disrupt the status quo, Díaz Ordaz certainly did not disappoint the Mexican right. Two years after talking office, he sent the army into Morelia to repress leftist students, an approach he repeated again during the infamous 1968 student movement in Mexico City. Díaz Ordaz's zero tolerance toward left-wing movements was not only overwhelmingly welcomed by Mexican service clubs, it was a specific demand they had been making for years. After the bloodbath caused by the military in the historic Plaza de las Tres Culturas, the Sowers of Friendship Clubs concurred with Díaz Ordaz view that it was urgent to solve the "student problem" by properly "educating" Mexico's imprudent youth.⁴⁵⁸

Similarly, the long-time member of the Lions Club Francisco Doria Paz also sang the praises of the Díaz Ordaz administration. In a ceremony honoring his grandfather's role fighting the Second French Invasion, Doria Paz in January 1969 condemned the student "agitators" for the shameful events that had taken place just months before. One hundred years after misguided Mexicans had helped overthrow a representative government and in its place supported a European monarch, he declared to an audience that included Díaz Ordaz, "another foolish group of Mexicans" had again "paraded through the streets of Mexico effigies of bearded foreigners," referring to the banners with the images of Che and Castro carried by students. "You, *Señor Presidente* and the Army of the Republic," he stated, "have once more shown [bad Mexicans], as we did in the glorious era of Juárez, that there is only one option when dealing with traitors: *el Cerro de las Campanas*."⁴⁵⁹ The "Cerro de las Campanas" (or Hill of the Bells) in Querétaro is where the Benito Juárez's men executed Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg and two disloyal Mexican generals, officially ending the French intervention. In the estimation of the national leader of the Lions Clubs, like the treacherous conservatives who supported the monarch, the

⁴⁵⁷ "Celoso defensor de las esencias de México no tolerará al Comunismo," *Mensaje Quincenal*, December 1964, 1 and 8.

⁴⁵⁸ Roberto Guajardo Suárez, "El problema o problemas de los estudiantes en México," *Sembradores de Amistad*, May 1969, 13.

⁴⁵⁹ "Condena de malo mexicanos, en el acto ante la tumba del Corl. Doria," *El Informador*, January 17, 1969, 1–2.

hundreds of unarmed students massacred at the hands of the Mexican army also received their just deserts.

* * *

This dissertation has traced the story of how thousands of Mexican men and women gathered every week in the meeting halls of their local service clubs. At first glance it would seem that the significance of these clubs of the Mexican middle classes was that they represented a novel, cosmopolitan setting in which to business network, fraternize with colleagues, and create new social bonds, all for the sake of carrying out acts of charity. But in service clubs Mexicans did far more than that. During the early years of the post-revolutionary period, roughly between 1920 and 1940, Rotary and Lions clubs provided a meeting place for an expanding group of people that shared deep ideological misgivings about the nature of the emerging state, as well as uncertainty about their place in the new national project. While they did function as philanthropic organizations for businessmen, service clubs also played a fundamental role in structuring the sociability and the incipient collective politics of the disaffected Mexican middle classes. Clubs in essence provided a forum to discuss the most pressing social, political, and economic issues and to imagine solutions. In the absence of a truly effective organization (state-sanctioned or otherwise) that could gather this dispersed group of middle-class Mexicans, service clubs afforded a framework to articulate specific demands to the post-revolutionary state.

In general terms, all service club members envisioned a state that did not neglect the needs of the middle classes as they aided popular groups. Harmony between the social classes was an attainable goal, most believed. But this had to occur naturally without the interference of aggressive labor unions and legislation, as had happened during the 1920s and 30s. The historiographical consensus is that the election of Avila Camacho in 1940 signaled a new era of the state, which pursued moderate policies and overall was friendlier to industrialists and the business community. This dissertation has shown that service clubs were part of the voices of dissent that helped temper the post-revolutionary state's radicalism. From the 1940s onward service clubs demonstrated that they were willing to collaborate and even support some of the less radical policies of the PRI, as in the moralization, literacy, and schoolhouse crusades.

The case of the Lions Clubs was the most extreme example of a service organization coming to have an ideological affinity with the state and the official party, while the Sowers of Friendship remained consistent in their distrust for the PRI, especially in regards to education. As the preceding chapters have shown, there were limits to how far clubs could partner with the state projects. In a sense, then, Rotary, Lions, Sowers, and other clubs functioned as a crucial escape valve in which the middle classes were able to oppose, challenge, or collaborate independently with the state. It can be further argued that this had an added, unintentional effect: by channeling middle-class discontent and cooperative energy, service clubs in a way contributed to the longevity of the post-revolutionary state, which proved unable to furnish an organization that could accomplish similar goals.

Finally, this story has broader implications for understanding the transnational relationship between US non-state actors and locals in foreign contexts. By midcentury, middle-class professionals and businessmen across Latin America were well aware of the prestige that

membership in a Lions or Rotary Club International entailed. The popularity of American service clubs in Mexico and Latin America in general should leave no room for doubt that individuals overseas by and large welcomed their message of pro-capitalism, democracy, and of hemispheric cooperation (led by the US). However, the preceding pages have also provided ample evidence to refute the notion that service clubs were ultimately successful agents of American cultural imperialism. Stated differently, Mexican Rotarians, Lions, and others did more than embrace service club ideology; they adopted, molded, and transformed it in ways their American architects never intended nor imaged. As one American sociologist researching in 1960s Mexico candidly put it, US "service clubs now are as Mexican as *huevos rancheros*."⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁶⁰ Robert Jones Shafer, *Mexican Business Organizations: History and Analysis* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1973), 97.

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Archivo del Club de Leones de la Ciudad de México

Archivo del Club Rotario de Puebla

Archivo del Congreso del Estado de Puebla

Archivo General de la Nación (AGN)

DFS: Dirección Federal de Seguridad

DGIPS: Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales

RP: Rama Presidentes:

LCR: Lázaro Cárdenas del Río

MAC: Manuel Ávila Camacho

MAV: Miguel Alemán Valdes

ARC: Adolfo Ruiz Cortinez

ALM: Adolfo López Mateos

GDO: Gustavo Díaz Ordaz

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